

Workers News



Paper of the Workers International League

No. 11 September 1988 30p

END COLLABORATION WITH THE STATE!

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD

DISCIPLINARY measures taken by the Trades Union Congress against the EETPU will not resolve the crisis within the trade union movement.

Although Eric Hammond and the EETPU leaders pioneered single-union, no-strike deals with the employers, there is ample evidence to show that they are only the advance guard of the development of corporatism throughout the trade union bureaucracy.

By corporatism, Marxists understand the steady growing together of the privileg-

ed bureaucracies of the trade unions with the employers and the capitalist state in periods of deep economic crisis. This means the trade union leaders acting increasingly as policemen over the working class.

In the twelve months since the decision at last year's TUC Conference to defer action against the EETPU, other leading members of the TUC General Council have taken a leaf out of Hammond's book.

Officials of the GMB, AEU and T&GWU have all signed single-union agreements, some of them involving no-strike clauses. None of the

trade union leaders has any principled objection to this betrayal of fundamental trade union practices - they are only opposed to inter-union 'poaching' of members.

But what is involved is much more than a conflict within the bureaucracy for spheres of influence. It means a capitulation to the employers all down the line.

If the capitalist class have thrown the post-war system of 'industrial relations' overboard, it is because it no longer serves their class interests. Single-union, and preferably no-strike, agreements are the order of the day because international competition has remorselessly increased. In order to maintain profits, employers need the destruction of all existing manning agreements, the ending of demarcation between jobs, full labour mobility, and the ability to carry through such measures without opposition.

That such measures are already well under way is the consequence of a continuous retreat on the part of the trade union and Labour leaders in the face of Tory union-busting, and a complete acceptance of the four rounds of anti-union legislation.

No section of the bureaucracy, right or 'left', has any programme for the defence of jobs. Having undermined and sabotaged the struggles of miners, printers, hospital workers, seafarers and others, and sat by while hundreds of thousands of other jobs were destroyed throughout industry, the TUC now (!) launches a 'recruitment drive'. This in no way contradicts its previous policy. The drive is planned for the relatively few high-technology plants being built on 'greenfield' sites, requiring only small workforces, and low-paid catering and service industries which are difficult to organise because of the rapid turnover of staff. Though every socialist will support a campaign in the growing service industries to draw unorganised layers of youth and women workers into the trade unions, it must be stated that the trade union bureaucracy is entirely motivated by self-interest. The TUC and Labour leaders have taken the Tory speculative 'boom' at face value and are



NURSES CONDEMN PAY AWARD

- see story page three -

No confidence in Cyprus talks!

CYPRIOT workers must place no confidence whatsoever in the outcome of the UN-sponsored negotiations under way between President George Vassiliou and Rauf Denktaş.

The talks, held after 14 years of partition, are intended to establish a new working relationship between the two wings of the capitalist class on Cyprus at the expense of the interests of the working class and the small farmers. These moves are closely paralleled by the thaw in relations between the Greek and Turkish governments.

At stake are more than just the interests of the local bourgeoisie. Cyprus remains, by virtue of its proximity to the Middle East and the Black Sea, of primary strategic importance to British imperialism and the NATO Alliance; any move towards unity will have this as its first concern. It is for this reason that the talks were conducted under the auspices of the UN and the chairmanship of UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar.

A key role in these proceedings is played by millionaire 'socialist' President Vassiliou, who was elected last February on the basis of support from the Cypriot Stalinist party AKEL. By posing as the champion of reunification, Vassiliou attempts to play on the genuine desires of both Greek and Turkish Cypriot workers for unity.

The real intentions of this 'socialist' can be gauged by the fact that, following his recent visit to Britain during which Thatcher refused to pay a penny of the £250 million rent due for the British military bases, Vassiliou failed to call for their removal. He calls for a 'staged withdrawal' of Turkish troops from the north of the island, but remains silent on the presence of Greek troops.

Meanwhile the Stalinists, who have consistently refused to mobilise a united working class struggle against partition, give Vassiliou 'left cover' and cultivate illusions in the 'peace-making' role of the UN. Not for nothing were tributes delivered at the funeral in April this year of former AKEL leader, Ezekias Papaioannou, by representatives of all Cyprus's capitalist parties, the police, the judiciary and the church.

The Workers International League calls on all Cypriot workers to reject the fraudulent 'unity' talks. Avoid the trap that 'democratic' Greek forces are preferable to 'fascist' Turkish troops - both are on Cyprus to defend the interests of their capitalist ruling classes! Self-determination for Cyprus can only be secured by uniting the working class of both Greek and Turkish communities in the struggle for an independent socialist republic. Down with partition! Drive out all Greek, Turkish and NATO troops!

prepared to concede the entire industrial base of the organised working class without a fight.

The decimation of the old industries has led to a decline in the membership of TUC-affiliated unions of over three million since 1979. The current wave of trade union mergers is motivated not by any determination to defend the unions, but by the bureaucrats' instinct for preserving their incomes and privileges. Since last year's Congress, TASS and ASTMS have become the MSF and exploratory talks have begun between leaders of NUPE-NALGO and NGA-SOGAT.

The spate of pit closures since the end of the 1984-85 miners' strike has almost halved the membership of the NUM to below 91,000 - to the point where the NUM's automatic right to a seat on the TUC General Council is threatened. This is the context in which Scar-

gill is prospecting for a merger with other unions organising in the energy industry. Seafarers' leader and Labour Party treasurer Sam McCluskie presides over a union which has seen 30 per cent of its membership disappear in the last five years. Whilst he has refused to defend the sacked P&O ferry workers with anything more than bluster, he defends his own employment by canvassing for a merger with either the NUR or the T&GWU. Having spent decades betraying the fight of their own members against anti-union 'lump' labour, the leaders of the building workers' union UCATT have now dropped even their token opposition and thrown open the doors of their union to these scabs and sub-contractors.

Workers News is not opposed in principle to union mergers, but warns that the bureaucracy will use them

as a substitute for struggle. Only through the fight for full democracy within the trade unions can the interests of the working class be defended.

Workers must have no illusion that the expulsion of the EETPU will put an end to the class collaboration within the TUC. What is required is a programme to mobilise and unite the working class in a struggle to defeat the bureaucracy: ● Expel the EETPU - No to single-union and no-strike deals ● Break with the corporatist NEDC, the Training Commission and ACAS ● Force the TUC and Labour leaders to fight for the repeal of all anti-working class legislation ● For complete trade union democracy - officials to be paid no more than the average earnings of their members ● Build revolutionary leadership in the trade unions - join the Workers International League.

EDITORIAL

Rebuild Fourth International!

ON THE 50th anniversary of the Founding Congress of the Fourth International, we honour the memory of its martyrs killed in the struggle for the world socialist revolution, above all Leon Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov.

The Fourth International was founded in 1938, in the darkest period of counter-revolution, to uphold the continuity of revolutionary Marxism against the betrayals of Stalinism and social democracy, and to resolve the crisis of working class leadership.

The combined forces of Stalinism and capitalist barbarism failed to destroy the Trotskyist movement. Its forces emerged from illegality and repression at the close of the Second World War. The first major crisis of the International after the war occurred in 1948-50. The ebb of revolution in Western Europe, the extension of nationalised property relations into Eastern Europe and the Chinese revolution exposed the weaknesses of the International Secretariat led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel.

Compounding the confusion surrounding the overturn of capitalist property relations carried out by the Stalinist bureaucracy, they bowed to the apparent strength of Stalinism, endowing it with 'revolutionary' capacities.

The Third World Congress in 1951 crystallised Pabloite revisionism. It foresaw Third World War as inevitable and leading to 'centuries of deformed workers' states'. The sections of the Fourth International were to embark on an indefinite period of 'deep entry' into the Stalinist and reformist parties to 'pressure' the bureaucracies to the left. The complete liquidation of Trotskyism was threatened.

Only the French section fought Pablo at this stage. Pablo responded by bureaucratically expelling its elected leadership, and installing his own supporters. Having supported the Third World Congress decisions and Pablo's actions against the French section, the Socialist Workers Party of the United States and the British section, then functioning within the Labour Party, found themselves with hostile pro-Pablo minorities in their midst in the course of 1953.

Confronted by a series of party-wrecking provocations, the American Trotskyists, led by James P. Cannon, supported by the British and French sections, issued the 'Open Letter' of November 1953, splitting the world Trotskyist movement and establishing the International Committee of the Fourth International.

In denouncing Pablo's liquidationism and defending what Cannon termed 'orthodox Trotskyism', the 'Open Letter' and the documents produced by the SWP in 1953-4 laid the basis for a decisive fight against revisionism. A split was unavoidable, and entirely necessary. Its execution, however, was ill-prepared both theoretically and organisationally. Only six months had elapsed since Cannon had upheld the revisionist perspectives of the Third World Congress.

In place of an international offensive against revisionism, Cannon conceived of the split *defensively* to protect the 'historically-created cadres' of the SWP. Without thoroughly establishing the source of the centrist disease, by carrying the discussion into all the sections, the effect of such a precipitate split was to confuse and shock the ranks of the other sections, most of whom were lost to Trotskyism for good.

By late 1954, the SWP leaders had effectively shelved the theoretical struggle against Pablo. From 1957 onwards, already adapting to middle class radicalism at home, they moved for reunification with the International Secretariat, culminating in their unprincipled fusion in 1963. Despite the renegacy of the SWP, the British section (called the Socialist Labour League after 1959) registered a series of political and numerical advances. It played the leading role in exposing the SWP's capitulation to Castroism and the treachery in Ceylon of the LSSP which, up to the moment it joined a capitalist government in 1964, had been the official section of the Pabloite 'International'.

The year 1968 marked a watershed in the ICFI's development. The French OCI proved incapable of giving revolutionary leadership during the May-June events. The British SLL failed to fight the OCI's centrism and was itself adapting to Vietnamese and Chinese Stalinism. Without producing a single significant document against the OCI from 1969-70, the SLL split abruptly with it in 1971 on the pretext of 'for or against' dialectical materialism.

Now the dominant section of the ICFI, the SLL (renamed the WRP in 1973) increasingly sought surrogates for the working class, reproducing the errors of Pabloism. From its 4th to its 7th Congresses (1972-77), the ICFI descended the spiral of revisionism. The 7th Congress abandoned the perspective of building Trotskyist parties in the semi-colonial countries, and junked the theory of permanent revolution in favour of abstracting the 'necessary knowledge and resources' from a 'turn' to bourgeois nationalism. This international 'turn' resulted in uncritical support for the Libyan regime of Gaddafi, the Iraqi Ba'athists, the PLO leadership, the Iranian clerics and Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU. The WRP, led by Healy and Banda, took this resolution to its logical conclusion, appropriating vast material 'resources' from bourgeois nationalist formations. From this point onwards, the ICFI lost any residual claims to carry the banner of the Fourth International. The protracted sequel of this betrayal was the WRP's further adaptation to reformism and the trade union bureaucracy, leading to the explosive series of splits within the WRP and the ICFI following October 1985.

Issuing out of these splits have been a number of groups, most of whom have attempted in one form or another to resurrect the 'old' SLL/WRP/ICFI. Others, like Healy and Banda, have turned to Stalinism. To the various epigones and deserters we say: It was not the Fourth International which betrayed the working class, but successive waves of revisionism which betrayed the Fourth International.

The collapse of Cliff Slaughter's 'Workers Press' group's squalid attempt to 'regroup' with the opportunist Morenoites merely underlines the bankruptcy of any 'fusion' which is not based squarely upon the necessity of fighting revisionism and centrism, and of recognising and correcting past errors.

The Workers International League stands for the rebuilding of the Fourth International on this basis, and this basis alone.

Scargill covers for McCluskie

By Daniel Evans

AFTER dissociating the National Union of Seamen from the 'illegal picket' at Dover's Eastern Dock and handing sacked P&O strikers over to the capitalist state, Sam McCluskie, the union's general secretary, was given valuable 'left' cover by miners' leader Arthur Scargill.

At a mass rally on August 6, organised by the NUS leadership to cover its tracks and assure seafarers that it was doing everything possible to 'escalate the action', Scargill took the heat off McCluskie by turning his fire on the TUC for its 'lack of support'. He then portrayed McCluskie as a man who had defied the law - 'If every trade unionist in the past had abided by the law then there wouldn't be a trade union movement in 1988' - and went on to blame the working class for the isolation of the P&O seafarers - 'One lesson our class has got to learn is about commitment and loyalty'.

Scargill created the illusion that the TUC's failure to confront the Tory anti-union laws had effectively tied McCluskie's hands. 'If, he said, 'there had been action in support of my resolution at the TUC General Council, when I moved that trade unionists should take action, this dispute would have been over by now.'

Never once did Scargill attack McCluskie for refusing to mobilise seafarers in national strike action from the outset of the dispute or expose his role in actively heading-off such action. Nor did he mention the grovell-



Sacked P&O seafarers picket Dover's Eastern Dock

ing of the NUS National Executive in front of the High Court or that McCluskie, on High Court orders, notified the Kent police that the union did not 'condone, authorise or regulate' the picket at Dover. Scargill never told the gathered seafarers, miners and other trade unionists that McCluskie was not in principle opposed to P&O's vicious new working practices, only the speed of their introduction.

The collaboration of McCluskie and the TUC in an attempt to offer striking seafarers to P&O's rival, Sealink, and their joint campaign to direct the strike down the fruitless road of a 'boycott', also went unmentioned. Scargill cannot expose the way in which the trade union bureaucracy more and more takes on the role of policeman of the working class because he is part of that same bureaucracy. He has refused to lead a single struggle of mine-workers since the 1984-85

strike from which he gained so much prestige as a 'militant' but which he so skilfully contained.

The right-wing trade union bureaucracy, resting as it does on the working class, needs 'left' demagogues like Scargill, gifted in their ability to distort Marxism, who can act as a safety valve in the event of the working class, through its struggles, threatening to chuck them overboard.

On the back of Scargill's speech, McCluskie, who only a few days earlier stated he had no option but to end all official support for the Dover pickets because he was 'bound by the law of the land', rose to criticise the TUC for 'not doing enough to help us'. Presumably, when McCluskie takes his NUS resolution to TUC Congress pleading for more help, they too will point to the 'laws of the land' as an excuse for doing nothing.

There are others who find themselves, in common with

Scargill and McCluskie, opposing a national seafarers' strike. The seemingly ultra-radical Workers Revolutionary Party 'News Line' group advises seafarers that only a 'general strike can defeat the Tories'.

At the same time it employs the crude and opportunistic recruitment tactic of calling on workers to 'follow Scargill's lead'. This group parades the general strike in the same way that Scargill talks about socialism: neither have any programme for the working class to achieve these goals.

Seafarers must demand the recall of the NUS conference and sweep out the McCluskie leadership! For a national seafarers' strike! Reject the reformist rhetoric of the Scargills and the opportunism of centrists such as the WRP 'News Line' group who, in avoiding the struggle against the 'left' trade union leaders, only strengthen the hand of the right wing.

Extend shipyard action

THE STRIKE by Vickers shipbuilding workers in Barrow-in-Furness has continued despite all the efforts of national and full-time union officials to force a settlement favourable to the management.

Over 12,500 men walked out of the VSEL shipyard, which was privatised two years ago, on June 8. They were protesting at new holiday arrangements being imposed by management as part of a general drive to step up productivity and undermine trade union agreements. On the company's insistence, the national negotiating committee of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) has pressurised the local union

leadership to organise a ballot on the latest offer, despite opposition from the strikers who say the offer contains nothing new.

The company has offered each employee £250 immediately, plus five days' pay to accept the new holiday arrangements, prompting Alex Ferry, the negotiating committee's secretary, to conclude that this was the 'absolute limit of concessions'.

Behind the confrontation at VSEL lies a widening attack on shipyard jobs and working conditions. The CSEU has agreed a new productivity and pay deal at the Harland and Wolff shipyard, Belfast, which introduces a 24-hour shift system and abolishes demarcation barriers in preparation for

privatisation. The package also includes a further 550 redundancies to be added to the 2,000 jobs lost over the last three years.

The Tories plan to sell off all the remaining state-owned shipyards within a year, and more redundancies are being demanded in advance of this. North-East Shipbuilders in Sunderland is threatened with closure following the cancellation of an order for 24 ferries, and 1,000 men have already been laid off until Christmas on three-quarters pay. If a suitable offer to buy the yard is not made by then, they will be sacked. In 1977 there were 38,600 workers in nationalised shipyards; by last year the total had slumped to 5,484, and that figure has been halved by the recent

sale of Govan Shipbuilders in Glasgow.

The strength of the VSEL strike shows that shipyard workers are prepared to oppose management attempts to ride out the world shipbuilding slump at their expense. The urgent necessity is to link the struggle at Barrow with other shipyard workers throughout the country, both in private yards and in what remains of the state-owned yards. They must demand that the CSEU leadership call an all-out national strike to defeat Tory plans to reduce shipbuilding to a handful of private yards with high levels of labour exploitation, and fight for a shipbuilding industry which is fully nationalised, and under workers' control.

Nurses' anger at regrading

By Susan Keepence

THE RETURN of industrial action to the hospitals has come after nurses have realised that Tory promises on pay made in April are a fraud.

In their attempt to isolate the nurses' pay question from that of ancillary workers and from the overall struggle to defend the Health Service, the Tories have been ably assisted by the Labour Party and TUC leaders, and left-talking revisionist groups such as the SWP and the RCP.

The growing opposition to Tory plans to smash the NHS erupted in February in a series of demonstrations and walk-outs throughout the country which culminated in nurses taking strike action and in a huge TUC-organised demonstration through London on March 5.

The Tories reacted rapidly to head off this movement by making an apparent concession on nurses' pay. They offered to fund a regrading exercise designed to provide an average 15.3 per cent increase in nurses' pay. This was a signal for the TUC and Labour Party leaders to drop even the half-hearted campaign they had organised - exactly as the Tories had intended.

The total cost of the package was calculated at £803 million by the nursing profession's pay review body, but this has subsequently proved to be inadequate because the original figure was arrived at using out-of-date statistics supplied by the DHSS.

Only 4.2 per cent of the pay award is to be received by all nurses; the balance is to be distributed to sisters and those with specialist skills. The intention is to reward the most senior grades of nurses at the expense of the mass of their colleagues.

This much was already evident when the award was first announced in April.

THE chairman of the Training Commission, Brian Wolfson, has confirmed that the government is considering introducing compulsory work for the unemployed along the lines of the 'Workfare' schemes in the United States.

Only the treachery of the leaders of the nursing unions, COHSE and NUPE, and of Trevor Clay, the right-wing leader of the Royal College of Nursing, enabled the deal to go ahead.

Growing suspicions amongst nurses that funding was insufficient to meet the government's stated intention of paying staff according to the tasks they are responsible for, rather than their job title, were confirmed when the DHSS issued instructions to Health Authorities restricting the number of ward sisters who could qualify for the appropriate grade to one sister per ward. In practice, this means that the overwhelming majority of qualified nursing sisters, estimated at 77,000, would not be paid according to their responsibilities. In effect, they will be downgraded with, as a consequence, downgrading for all nurses beneath the rank of sister.

The Tories have been rendered valuable assistance by leaders of the trade unions, the Labour Party and the RCN. While they collaborated to crush the strike-wave early this year, the revisionists of the SWP, RCP and 'Militant' complemented their treachery by limiting rank-and-file strike action to 'nurse only' protests.

What is required to defeat Tory attacks on the NHS is a programme to mobilise all Health Service workers in a united campaign to defend jobs and services. Such a campaign must wage an implacable struggle against the TUC bureaucracy and replace them with leaders pledged to socialist policies. This is a task that the revisionists of the SWP and RCP are organically incapable of carrying through.

Collapse of Tory 'boom' in sight

By David Lewis

IN JULY, Britain ran up its worst-ever monthly trade deficit of £2.15 billion, bringing the figure for the year so far to almost £8 billion - twice as much as Chancellor Nigel Lawson forecast for the whole of 1988.

The announcement on August 25 sent the Stock Exchange 100 index plummeting by 50 points, wiping £8 billion off the paper value of shares. Lawson, clearly taken by surprise, im-

mediately raised interest rates by one per cent in an attempt to curb spending and prop up the pound, but nevertheless insisted that 'the British economy is doing very well and will continue to do well'.

The inexorable rise of the trade deficit - the difference between the money earned from exports and the money spent on imports - is the most graphic evidence of the long-term decline of Britain's industrial base. In the second quarter of 1988, exports rose by only 3.5 per cent whilst imports soared by 12 per cent fuelled by the credit boom. A large part of the July trade deficit was

due to the demand for cars which the restricted capacity of British plants - cut back over recent years - was unable to meet.

In the latest report of the major capitalist countries' own international body, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the boom in credit and the worsening trade deficit are identified as the main factors which threaten the stability of the British economy.

In the year to June 1988, Britain's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose by 5.2 per cent. But this growth was mainly in services and not in manufacturing in-

dustry which is the key to competing successfully on the world market. At the centre of the expansion was an enormous increase in lending and a matching increase in the exploitation of a large section of the working class.

In July, bank and building society lending increased by £9 billion, beating the previous record of £8.8 billion in June. Overall money supply rose by 17.4 per cent in the year to July. In the same period, real wage costs rose by only 1.4 per cent.

Real wage costs are being held down by driving up productivity - that is, by making workers work harder and faster. The central role in making this possible is played by the trade union leaders.

The OECD report devotes a special section to describing the various changes it considers responsible for the 'improvement' in the economy. It is an indictment of the TUC and Labour Party leaderships. The most important changes it identifies are 'trade union reform, privatisation and financial discipline in nationalised industries, deregulation and the promotion of competition, tax reforms and changes in education and training'.

Britain's trade deficit in manufactured goods, so-called visibles, has in the past been off-set by taking into account invisible trade - earnings from tourism, insurance, banking, profits on overseas investments, etc.

However, Britain's share of world invisible trade is also dropping very rapidly and has fallen back to the level it was at in the early 1970s, according to a report issued by the British Invisible Exports Council in early August.

These signs of the underlying crisis of British capitalism are dismissed by the Tories as irrelevant. In reality, they show its continuing decline and the temporary and partial character of the present so-called 'boom'.

Such expansion as there has been under Thatcher since the early eighties has depended above all else on the complicity of the trade union and Labour Party leaders who have collaborated with MSC/Training Commission cheap-labour schemes and capitulated to union-busting.

Rising inflation and growing international competition threaten to undermine the speculative 'boom', which has already shown its extreme instability in last year's share crash, and unleash intensified class conflict. The gathering economic storm clouds pose more acutely than ever the task of building revolutionary leadership in the working class.

NO TO INTERNMENT!



About 2,000 people supported a demonstration in north London on August 6 called by the Irish Freedom Movement on the 17th anniversary of the introduction of internment in the north of Ireland.

How the profit drive kills workers

THE EXPLOSION on the Piper Alpha oil rig in July, which claimed the lives of 167 workers, is the latest in a chain of disasters which have a common source in the ruthless pursuit of profit at the expense of safe working conditions.

As in the case of the infernos at King's Cross Station and Bradford Football Club and the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise, all the resources of the capitalist media were mobilised to unite the 'nation' in the face of a 'tragic accident'. Members of the royal family were sent to Aberdeen to commiserate with the victims, and a charitable trust set up for the victims' families. The aim of portraying the 'nation' united in mourning is to divert attention away from the class questions posed.

The explosion on Piper Alpha was no 'act of god'. It

was preceded by nine major accidents and dozens of smaller ones on North Sea rigs in the past decade. Many workers have testified that reports of safety hazards are systematically ignored by the employers, and that those who persistently raise questions of safety are blacklisted.

Since starting production in 1977, Piper Alpha, which was operated by the Occidental Oil Company, has had a history of structural faults. As early as 1978, representatives of the engineering union had demanded that the company repair corrosion in the legs of the rig. Even the head of Occidental, Armand Hammer, has admitted that the positioning of living quarters immediately over a gas compression module increased the number of deaths. The transfer by the Thatcher government in 1980 of responsibility for rig safety

inspection from the Health and Safety Inspectorate to the Department of Energy was condemned as potentially dangerous by unions at the time.

The King's Cross fire in October 1987 was prepared by years of neglect and government spending cuts. In the course of 1987 there were over 1,200 fires on the London Underground. These were largely the result of successive reductions in staffing levels. At King's Cross, full-time cleaners had been abolished, and replaced by contract cleaners doing a fraction of the work necessary. Fire fighting systems were antiquated, and some of the areas beneath escalators had not been cleaned for two years.

The Herald of Free Enterprise's operators, P&O, showed their utter contempt for safety standards when they sacked their Dover work-

force and reduced manning levels.

Air traffic controllers and their union have consistently warned that the combination of archaic flight monitoring equipment, understaffing and increased pressure on air space will make a mid-air collision a near certainty.

Competition between capitalists for market control is intensifying - their drive to extract the last drop of surplus value from the working class will increase the likelihood of disasters on the scale of Piper Alpha and Zeebrugge. Safe working conditions can only be secured through the struggle for socialism.

Trade unionists must immediately mount their own inquiry into the dangerous conditions in the North Sea, and link this with the demand for the nationalisation of the entire oil industry under workers' control.

FUNDS

Our £10,000 Building Fund has started to pick up. Thank you for your support and donations which have brought it up to £952.37. Let's take it over the £1,000 mark immediately. We also appeal to our readers and supporters to give generously to the Workers News £300 Monthly Fund which is vital to cover our regular running costs. Post your donations to:-

Workers News
1/17 Meredith Street
London EC1R 0AE

BURMA ERUPTS

Shoot to kill

THE MILITARY government of Burma has been rocked by waves of mass demonstrations of students and workers. Showing enormous courage, the demonstrators have confronted the brutal actions of the army and the riot police, and forced the resignation of both General Ne Win and his short-lived successor Sein Lwin.

Burma is the latest in a chain of revolutionary upheavals sweeping South-East Asia. Following the events in the Philippines and South Korea, the regimes in Malaysia and Singapore have escalated repression against the working class, while in neighbouring Thailand, General Prem has resigned in the face of mounting discontent.

Underlying the emergence of a situation bordering on civil war is the steep decline of the Burmese economy to the point where it now has the seventh lowest per capita income in the world. Formerly an oil-exporting nation, it is now a net importer. Acute food shortages, said to be the result of systematic hoarding, have been accompanied by drastic inflation - rice rose by 400 per cent in the first six months of this year alone.

Large-scale demonstrations demanding democratic rights began in March this year in the capital Rangoon, with students in the forefront. They were savagely put down under the supervision of Sein Lwin, then second-in-command to Ne Win. One report puts the

death toll in March as high as 283.

In mid-June, protests erupted once more when students demanded the release of comrades jailed in March. The government's response was to order the closure of several universities, shortly after they had reopened following the March events.

For a week following July 16, demonstrations and confrontations with the state forces spread throughout the country demanding elections and the end of Ne Win's regime. The situation was sharpened by reports of the failure of a government attempt to divert the movement by promoting inter-communal clashes between Buddhists and Moslems, Ne Win resigned on July 23, to be replaced by Sein Lwin three days later.

Sein Lwin made vague promises of economic 'reform' - the dismantling of part of the substantial state sector - and respect for the 'rule of law'. Eight days after he came to power, he declared martial law, a measure met immediately with mass resistance.

Between August 8 and 13, Burmese workers and youth took to the streets in their hundreds of thousands. Students successfully called for a general strike on August 8, and massive mobilisations took place in 26 cities, the largest being a march of 100,000 in Rangoon. Biding its time until midnight, the army unleashed a blood-bath, and in the course of

By Martin Sullivan

the next four days, killed more than 3,000 people. But from the city of Pegu came accounts of soldiers deserting, and of clashes between military units. Sein Lwin resigned on August 12, after just 17 days in power.

In an effort to placate the masses, the military rulers then nominated the only civilian in the top echelons of the Burma Socialist Programme Party, the attorney-

general Dr Maung Maung, as new party chairman and president of the country. He is the only non-military figure ever to hold this post since the BSPP became Burma's only legal party in 1963.

Opponents of the regime immediately rejected the British-trained lawyer and long-time sycophantic supporter of General Ne Win as totally unacceptable, and mass protests continued with a nationwide general strike on August 22. On the following day, well over a

million people marched in Rangoon, Mandalay and Tavoy, demanding the end of one-party rule, and the release of political prisoners.

The Burmese military faces taking one of two roads: either advance a more 'liberal' front-man to throw the workers' and students' movement off guard, or proceed directly to even greater repression. Whichever is the case, the Burmese masses must assimilate the lessons of the Philippines and South Korea; no confidence in any section of the ruling class!



Supporters of the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK) held a week-long hunger strike in early August in Hackney, east London. They were protesting at the arrest of 15 members and supporters of the ERNK in West Germany. The Kurdish people are fighting a national liberation struggle to gain control of their historic homelands, which cover areas administered by Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq.

DETAILS have steadily emerged of a shoot-to-kill policy operated by an elite killer squad funded by the Spanish Interior Ministry, which murdered 23 members of the Basque separatist movement ETA between 1983 and 1987.

Jose Amedo, a deputy commissioner of police intelligence in the Basque country recruited a team of French and Portuguese mercenaries known as GAL to carry out cross-border raids into the French Pyrenees, including the planting of bombs in two cafes. They were armed with cars and fake passports, and supplied with pistols by one Dominique Thomas, 31, the proprietor of a fur shop in the Pyrenees visited regularly by Amedo. Members of the gang were given a telephone number at the Interior Ministry to contact in the event of emergencies.

The GAL group was financed by a substantial slush fund. Amedo and an inspector managed to run up gambling debts of £75,000 at the resort of San Sebastian - equivalent to eight years' pay.

Jose Barrionuevo, Interior Minister in the 'socialist' government of Felipe Gonzalez, has refused to reveal to an investigating magistrate how police 'reserve funds' were dispersed, and has done everything to obstruct investigations, leading to speculation that GAL's operations were authorised at the highest levels.

THERE HAS been a sharp increase in membership of extreme right-wing political organisations in West Germany. Their combined membership has risen by 14 per cent, from 22,100 to 25,200.

Trotskyism and the Palestinian revolution

COMMENT

IN MID-MAY, Workers News stood virtually alone in the workers' movement in Britain when it warned of the dangers flowing from the then recently concluded agreement between the PLO and the regime of Syrian Ba'athist leader, Hafez al-Assad.

Within days of the conclusion of the Syrian-PLO accord, Palestinian camps in Beirut were attacked by the pro-Ba'athist forces of Abu Musa's so-called Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), operating in conjunction with Syrian troops. In six weeks of sporadic, but increasingly heavy, fighting, large parts of the Shatila and Bourj al-Barajneh camps were reduced to rubble, with hundreds killed or wounded, and they were overrun by the DFLP on June 27 and July 7 respectively. Even after the evacuation of Palestinian fighters, there was Syrian backing for further attacks in the Sidon area.

Under cover of an agreement with the PLO leadership, the Ba'athist regime has succeeded in destroying what remained of the Palestinian military presence in west Beirut, thereby establishing itself as the main broker in the Lebanon, both for imperialist interests, and on behalf of its close allies in the Soviet bureaucracy.

Alongside his treacherous moves against the Palestinian camps, Assad sent an army of 7,500 troops into south Beirut, with the aim of subduing the militant nationalists of the Hezbollah movement. Meanwhile, Israeli forces seized the opportunity to mount two major incursions into southern Lebanon in the course of May.

The fate of the Palestinians in the Lebanon, betrayed time and again by various bourgeois nationalist factions, is inseparably bound up with that of the Lebanese working class and poor peasantry. Yet, throughout the workers' movement in Britain, these developments have passed almost without comment.

Cliff Slaughter's dwindling 'Workers Press' group, with a pro-Zionist faction in its midst which recognises the legitimacy of the state of Israel, avoided commenting on the Assad-Arafat agreement, or on the desperate position facing the refugee camps. Gerry Healy's vile Marxist Party, operating in Britain on behalf of Gorbachev and the Stalinist bureaucracy, has put forward the bizarre and grotesque theory that the heroic Palestinian uprising on the West Bank is the manifestation of the property relations of the USSR, and that the Palestinians have the full backing of the Soviet Union. For reasons best known to itself, the paper of the International Communist Party, 'International Worker', chose to ignore the Syrian-PLO accord in its May 7 edition, whilst assuring the PLO in a letter that 'the ICFI will fight to forge the revolutionary unity of Arab and Jewish workers to overthrow imperialism and its Zionist and national bourgeois allies in the Middle East and internationally'.

If, however, awards were given for vulgar adaptation to bourgeois nationalism, then first prize would undoubtedly go to Sheila Torrance's 'News Line', which functions as a daily mouthpiece for the PLO leadership. Having hailed the Syrian-PLO agreement as 'an anti-Shultz alliance', its edition of April 29 quoted without comment a Palestinian source who said that 'I did not feel that I was sitting with the Syrian president. I actually felt I was sitting with a great leader of Pan-Arabism'.

Anxious to promote the PLO line that what were at stake were only 'small matters' of disagreement with Assad ('News Line', June 7), Torrance's rag sidelined the plight of the camps, and studiously avoided any criticism of the Ba'athists until it was absolutely unavoidable. Finally prodded into writing an editorial on July 11, the faceless 'News Line' team denounced what it described as a 'US-Zionist-Syrian conspiracy' against Palestinians in the Lebanon. In fact, this editorial is notable only for its diplomatic omission of any reference to the Soviet bureaucracy, or its relations with the Syrians. The reason? So as not to upset its allies in the PLO



Palestinian children in the ruins of the heavily bombed Shatila camp in Beirut

leadership who want to keep their lines to Moscow open.

On August 6, the 'News Line' finally endorsed the 'two-state' solution to the Palestinian question being put forward by leading PLO officials, calling on the PLO to 'declare itself the Government of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip'. This latest concession to Zionism and imperialism on the part of the PLO leadership has prompted the announcement by the wily King Hussein of Jordan that he has relinquished his claim to sovereignty over the West Bank.

By conceding all down the line to bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism, the Torrance group has once again publicly relinquished its claims to Trotskyism.

Iran agrees to end war as economy crumbles

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of Iran's acceptance of the terms for a cease-fire in the eight-year war with Iraq, made by Ayatollah Khomeini, came after Iran had sustained a series of military defeats and lost six vessels in a naval gun battle with US ships in the Persian Gulf, and after the much-heralded seventh winter offensive against Iraq failed to emerge.

In February this year, Iraq launched the so-called 'War of the Cities', terrorising Iranian towns with hundreds of Soviet-made missiles. Between April and July, Iraq's reorganised army, trained by Egyptian officers, inflicted defeats on Iran on all the main battlefronts: the Faw Peninsula, Basra, Majnoon Islands and the Howeizah marshes, and the northern front of the Kurdish homelands.

Iraq's military superiority was not, however, the decisive factor which forced the Iranian government to accept cease-fire terms, but the destruction of the Iranian economy, isolated from world trade and drained by the war.

By Ian Harrison

By 1987, shortages of raw materials, machinery, spare parts and trained personnel had forced the closure of two-thirds of Iran's industry. Fifty per cent of the national budget was allocated for the war effort; factories remaining open did so on reduced capacity, where they had not been commandeered for military production; 1,000 workers were being made redundant as a daily average.

The war had destroyed 70 Iranian towns and 3,950 villages. Three million people had been made homeless, while 500,000 men had been killed at the front and a further one million severely injured.

The Abadan oil refinery and Kharg oil terminal were destroyed, together with steelworks and petro-chemical plants. While government and employers cut the wages of workers and increased the working day, workers in a number of plants successfully organised to drive out the Islamic Shoras (factory committees), defeated attempts to draft them to war fronts, and resisted the 'Financial Jihad' - the tax imposed by the clergy for the war effort.

The war consumed \$700 billion from Iran and Iraq's

economies, equivalent to the total income from oil exports for the two countries between 1919 and 1985, according to the Iran Economic Review and the Third World Review.

The Iranian bourgeoisie, however, amassed immense wealth. Official government sources reveal that the 'private sector' had accumulated 13,000 billion rials by 1987, equivalent to \$194 billion.

Since May 1987, spokesmen for the Iranian bourgeoisie, including leading clerics and army officers, have opposed the strategy and tactics pursued by the Khomeini regime. Meanwhile, the United States government has taken every opportunity to seek out sympathetic representatives within the Islamic leadership.

Japanese, South Korean and British business representatives have declared their willingness to assist Iran and Iraq with the restoration of their economies once a cease-fire was effected.

The fundamental laws of capitalist economy have undermined the Khomeini regime and exposed deep divisions within the ruling clergy, threatening to plunge the country into civil war. That is the meaning of Khomeini's statement in July accepting the UN resolution for a cease-fire which he declared was 'worse than drinking poison'. Refusing to elaborate on his decision to finally accept the advice of political and military leaders that the war against Iraq could not be won, Khomeini warned against the development of factional struggles within the ruling Islamic clergy. In the wake of the cease-fire, the class struggle in Iran will reassert itself with new vigour, together with the unresolved question of Kurdish independence.



Funeral procession in Teheran of soldiers killed at the war front

Brazil resumes debt repayments

BRAZIL has ended its moratorium on debt repayment to foreign banks with the signing of an agreement rescheduling payments on \$5 billion. The agreement reached with representatives of US, European and Japanese banks on July 30, spreads repayment of a part of Brazil's \$121 billion foreign debt over a ten-year period, with interest due on loans significantly reduced.

Brazil is the largest debtor among the semi-colonial countries, and has a combined external and internal debt of \$151 billion. Since the moratorium began in 1987, workers throughout the public sector and heavy industry have undertaken powerful strikes against government-imposed wage freezes. The agreement to resume debt repayments has brought immediate credits

from the International Monetary Fund, and fresh loans from Japanese financial institutions.

Meanwhile, the final round of debates in the Constitutional Assembly is taking place on the new 321-article draft constitution. It is designed to be the framework for the transition to a civilian government after 21 years of military rule. The most stringent anti-working class decrees passed by the military have for the most part been abolished. However, the draft constitution still enshrines the 'right' of the military to overthrow civilian rule if it sees fit. The main issues in contention are the clauses which legislate for the right to strike, a six-hour working day, employment protection, pension and welfare programmes, and the reduction of the voting age from 18 to 16.

A modest land reform programme has already been thrown out, with opposition led by wealthy landowners, thus blocking any relief for Brazil's seven million landless peasants. The landowners simultaneously unleashed vigilante squads

against peasants squatting disused farms and vacant lots, murdering leaders of their organisations. Off-duty policemen and soldiers have been recruited into death squads who mount weekend raids, some of which have left as many as 40 workers dead.

President Jose Sarney, backed by the military, the industrialists and the bankers, appealed on television against the reforms proposed in the draft constitution, claiming that they would bankrupt the country. The draft constitution, however, completed its first stage. During its final passage through the Constitutional Assembly, no new articles can be proposed, but existing ones stand to be removed as corrupt bourgeois politicians haggle behind the scenes.

The final version of the constitution is expected to be passed this month. The Brazilian military wait in the wings, prepared to step in and defend the capitalists and landowners from an increasingly militant working class which has grown substantially both in numbers and self-confidence.

Strikes hit China

THE ALL-CHINA Federation of Trade Unions received official reports of 49 strikes across the country during the first six months of this year, but admitted that there were probably many more.

In the biggest of these strikes, outside Hangzhou City in the east, 700 mainly women textile workers walked out for 12 days. In Shenzhen, near Hong Kong, where the Chinese

Stalinist bureaucracy is offering 'special incentives' for foreign investors, workers have smashed machinery during strikes.

Most of the stoppages are taking place in foreign-funded enterprises and state-owned factories which have been leased to their directors and where capitalist management methods are being enforced.

Ceausescu sends in the bulldozers

By Daniel Evans

ROMANIA'S Stalinist regime, headed by President Nicolae Ceausescu, plans to step-up its policy of 'urbanisation' in the next few weeks by bulldozing a further 2,000 villages. About 13,000 are earmarked for eventual destruction.

Tied to Ceausescu's stated aim of completely repaying Romania's foreign debt within the next two or three years, 'urbanisation' means driving hundreds of thousands of peasants off the land and into the towns in order to create a more 'efficient' agriculture.

The process has already begun, with Romania's ethnic Hungarian and German populations being

singled out for particularly brutal treatment.

Having run up an \$11 billion debt to Western banks during the 1970s and earned itself the dubious distinction of being the United States' 'most favoured trading nation' amongst Eastern European Stalinist states, 1980 saw a sharp u-turn in the Ceausescu regime's policy. A fall in world commodity prices in that year hit Romania particularly hard as most of its industry, constructed on the loans from abroad, was geared to the export market in order to pay the interest on those same loans. Ceausescu instituted a crash programme to repay the debt and Romania took on an isolationist stance.

Imports were restricted

and investment in all but the most profitable exporting industries virtually dried up. A decline in oil prices after 1984 intensified the problems. In that year Romania earned \$3.1 billion from its foreign trade surplus, in 1985 only \$2.5 billion and in 1987 \$2 billion. Last year the foreign debt was down to \$5.8 billion but at enormous cost to the working class and peasantry.

Last winter saw food strikes breaking out in most of the major towns and cities. There was no bread or meat and milk was rationed. Urban workers were forced on to a diet consisting mainly of potatoes, onions, apples and even stinging nettles. And with temperatures as low as -40 degrees centigrade, elec-

tricity supplies were shut down for half the day.

With very few commodities available in the towns, there is very little incentive for peasants to bring their produce to the market. In addition, a severe shortage of tractors combined with bad management meant that 25 per cent of last summer's grain harvest rotted in the fields.

Even if the regime manages to carry out its 'urbanisation' policy, it will be unable to run agriculture more efficiently as it cannot provide the necessary machinery for farming the land on such a scale. With the towns swollen with dispossessed peasants, agriculture will then fall even further behind the needs of the population.

JOIN

THE WORKERS INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE

I would like details/to join the W.I.L.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

TRADE UNION.....

Post to:-

Workers International League
1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE

70th anniversary of the Russian Civil War

IN MAY 1918, the most critical phase of the Russian Civil War opened, with the revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion. By the summer, the Soviet Republic faced an acute crisis. Kazan fell to counter-revolutionary forces, threatening to open the road to Moscow. Below we print Larissa Reisner's account of the battle of Svyazhsk from her classic book 'The Front'.

ON AUGUST 6, 1918, numerous hastily organised regiments fled from Kazan; and the best among them, the class-conscious section, clung to Svyazhsk, halted there and decided to make a stand and fight. By the time the mobs of deserters fleeing from Kazan had almost reached Nizhny Novgorod, the dam erected at Svyazhsk had already halted the Czechoslovaks; and their general who tried to take the railroad bridge across the Volga by storm was killed during the night attack.

Thus in the very first clash between the Whites who had just taken Kazan and consequently were stronger in morale and equipment, and the core of the Red Army seeking to defend the bridge-head across the Volga, the head of the Czechoslovak offensive was lopped off. They lost their most popular and gifted leader in General Blagotich. Neither the Whites, flushed by their recent victory, nor the Reds rallying round Svyazhsk had any inkling of the historical importance that their initial trial would have.

It is extremely difficult to convey the military importance of Svyazhsk without having the necessary materials at hand, without a map, and without the testimony of those comrades who were in the ranks of the Fifth Army at the time.

Much has already been forgotten by me; faces and names flicked by as in a fog. But there is something that no-one will ever forget and that is: the feeling of supreme responsibility for holding Svyazhsk. This was the bond between all its defenders from a member of the Revolutionary Military Council to the last Red rank-and-filer in desperate search for his somewhere extant, retreating regiment who suddenly turned back and faced Kazan in order to fight to the last, with worn-out rifle in hand and fanatic determination in his heart. The situation was understood by everyone as follows: another step backward would open the Volga to the enemy down to Nizhny and thus the road to Moscow. Further retreat meant the beginning of the end; the death sentence on the Republic of the Soviets. How correct this is from a strategic point of view, I know not. Perhaps the Army if rolled back even further might have gathered into a similar fist on one of the innumerable black dots which speckle the map and thenceforth carried its banners to victory. But indubitably it was correct from the standpoint of morale. And in so far as a retreat from the Volga meant a complete collapse at that time, to that extent the possibility of holding out, with back against the bridge, imbued us with real hope. The ethics of the revolution formulated the complex situation succinctly as follows: to retreat is to have the Czechs in Nizhny and in Moscow. No surrender of Svyazhsk and the bridge means the reconquest of Kazan by the Red Army.

It was, I believe, either on the third or fourth day after the fall of Kazan that Trotsky arrived at Svyazhsk. His train came to a determined stop at the little station; his locomotive panted a little, was uncoupled, and departed

to drink water but did not return. The cars remained standing in a row as immobile as the dirty straw-thatched peasant huts and the barracks occupied by the Fifth Army's staff. This immobility silently underscored that there was no place to go from here, and that it was impermissible to leave.

Little by little the fanatical faith that this little station would become the starting point for a counter-offensive against Kazan began to take on the shape of reality.

Every new day that this God-forsaken, poor railway siding held out against the far stronger enemy added to its strength and raised its mood of confidence. From somewhere in the rear, from far off villages in the hinterland, came at first soldiers one by one, then tiny detachments, and finally military formations in a far better state of preservation...

The rainy August days thus passed one by one. The thin, poorly equipped lines did not fall back; the bridge remained in our hands and from the rear, from somewhere far away, reinforcements began to arrive.

Real telephone and telegraph wires began to attach themselves to autumn spider-webs flying in the winds and some kind of enormous, cumbersome, lame apparatus began to operate on the God-forsaken railway station - Svyazhsk, this tiny, hardly discernible black dot on the map of Russia, at which in a moment of flight and despair, the revolution had clutched.

Here all of Trotsky's organisational genius was revealed. He managed to restore the supply lines, got new artillery and a few regiments through to Svyazhsk on railways that were being openly sabotaged; everything needed for the coming offensive was obtained.

In addition, it ought to be borne in mind that this work had to be done in the year 1918, when demobilisation was still raging, when the appearance on the Moscow streets of a single well-dressed detachment of the Red Army would create a real sensation. After all, it meant to swim against the stream, against the exhaustion of four years of war, against the spring floods of the revolution which swept through the whole country the debris of Tsarist discipline and wild hatred of anything resembling the bark of old officers' commands, the barracks, or of old army life.

Despite all this, supplies appeared before our very eyes. Newspapers arrived, boots and overcoats came. And wherever they actually hand out boots, and for keeps, there you will find a really solid army staff; there things are stable; there the army stands firmly entrenched and has no thought of fleeing. That's no joking matter, boots!

In Svyazhsk, Trotsky, who was able to give the new-born Army a backbone of steel, who himself sank roots into the soil refusing to yield an inch of ground no matter what happened, who was able to show this handful of defenders a calmness icier than theirs - in Svyazhsk, Trotsky was not alone.

Gathered there were old Party workers, future members of the Revolutionary Military Councils of the Republic, and of the Military Councils of the several Armies to whom the future historian of the Civil War will refer as the Marshals of the Great Revolution. Rosengoltz and Gushev, Ivan Nikitch Smirnov, Kobozev, Mezhlauk, the other Smirnov, and many other comrades whose names I no longer recall. From among the sailors, I remember Raskolnikov and the late Markin...

Meanwhile the Whites began to sense that with its strengthened resistance, Svyazhsk was growing into something great and dangerous. Intermittent skirmishes and attacks came to an end; a regular siege, with large organised forces on all sides was started. But they had let slip the propitious moment.

Old Slavin, Commander of the Fifth Army, not a very gifted colonel, but one who new his business exactly and thoroughly, fixed on a key point of defence, worked out a definite plan and carried it through with truly Latvian stubbornness.

Svyazhsk stood firm, its feet planted in the ground like a bull, its broad forehead lowered towards Kazan, standing immovable on the spot and impatiently shaking its horns, sharp as bayonets.



LARISSA REISNER

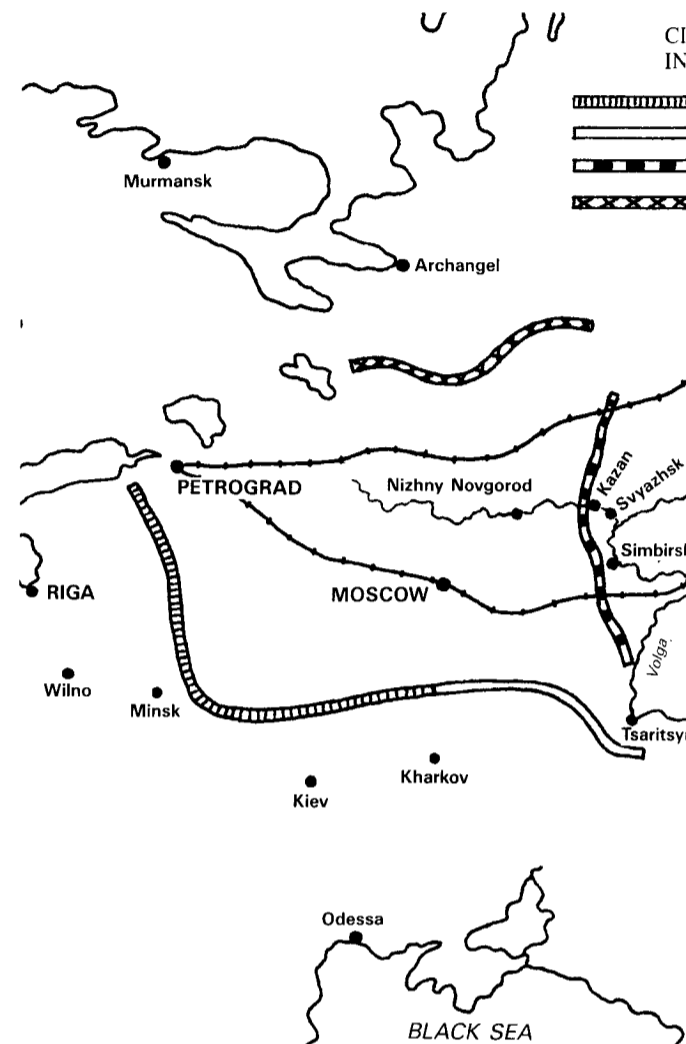
One sunny autumn morning came narrow, agile and swift torpedo-boats from the Baltic fleet to Svyazhsk. Their appearance created a sensation. The army now felt the river side protected. A series of artillery duels began on the Volga, occurring three or four times daily. Covered by the fire of our batteries concealed along the shore, our flotilla now ventured far forward.

These forays were crowned by such extremely audacious ones as that undertaken on the morning of September 9 by Sailor

Markin, one of the founders and outstanding heroes of the Red Fleet. On an unwieldy, armoured tug-boat he ventured far out to the very piers of Kazan, landed, drove off the crews of enemy batteries by machine-gun fire and removed the locks from several guns.

Another time, late at night on August 30, our ships came flush up to Kazan, shelled the city, set fire to several barges loaded with munitions and food supplies, and withdrew without losing a single ship. Among others Trotsky, together with the Commander, was aboard the torpedo-boat 'Prochny' which had to fix its steering gear while drifting alongside an enemy barge and under the muzzles of the White Guard artillery.

Vatzetis, commander-in-chief of the eastern front, arrived at a moment when the offensive against Kazan was already in full swing. Most of us, myself among them, had little exact information concerning the outcome of the conference; only one thing quickly became a matter of general knowledge and was greeted with deep satisfaction on all sides. Our old man (that is what we called our commander among ourselves) declared himself opposed to Vatzetis's views. Vatzetis wanted to undertake an attack against Kazan from the left river bank, while our commander decided to



erable force, undertook a desperate raid against a railroad station adjoining Svyazhsk, in order in this way to capture Svyazhsk itself and the Volga bridge. The raid was brilliantly executed; after making a long detour, the Whites suddenly swooped down on Shikhrana station, shot it to pieces, seized the station buildings, cut the connections with the rest of the railway line and burned a munition train stationed there.

The small defending force at Shikhrana was slaughtered to the last man. Nor is this all; they literally hunted down and extirpated every living thing in this little station. I had the opportunity to see Shikhrana a few hours after the raid. It bore the stigma of the completely irrational pogrom violence that stamped all the victories of these gentlemen, who never felt themselves the masters and future inhabitants of the soil accidentally and temporarily conquered.

In a courtyard, a cow lay bestially murdered (I say murdered advisedly, not slaughtered); the chicken coop was filled senselessly with chickens riddled in all too human a fashion. The well, the little vegetable garden, the water tower and the houses were treated as if they had been captured human beings and, moreover, Bolsheviks and 'sheenies'. The intestines had been ripped out of everything. Animals and inanimate objects sprawled everywhere, decimated, violated, ugly - dead. Alongside this horrible shambles of everything that once had been a human habitation, the indescribable, unutterable death of a few railway employees and Red Army men caught by surprise appeared quite in the nature of things.

Only in Goya's illustrations of the Spanish campaign and guerilla war can a similar harmony be found of wind-swept trees bending low beneath the weight of hanged men, of dust on roadways, of blood and stones. From Shikhrana station, the Savinkov detachment turned towards Svyazhsk, moving along the railroad. We sent our armoured train 'Free Russia' to meet them. So far as I am able to recall, it was armed with long-range naval guns. Its commander, however, did not rise to the level of his task. Being surrounded on two sides (so it appeared to him), he left his train and rushed back to the Revolutionary Military Council in order 'to report'.

In his absence 'Free Russia' was shot to pieces and burned. Its black, burning hulk lay derailed for a long time beside the roadbed very close to Svyazhsk.

After the destruction of the armoured train the road to the Volga seemed completely open. The Whites stood directly beneath Svyazhsk, some one-and-a-half to two versts away from the Fifth Army's headquarters. Panic ensued. Part of the Political Department, if not all of it, rushed to the piers and aboard the steam-boats.

The regiment, fighting virtually on the Volga's banks but higher upstream, wavered and then fled with its commanders and commissars. Towards morning, its maddened detachments were found aboard the staff ships of the Volga war fleet.

In Svyazhsk only the Fifth Army staff with its officers and the train of Trotsky remained.

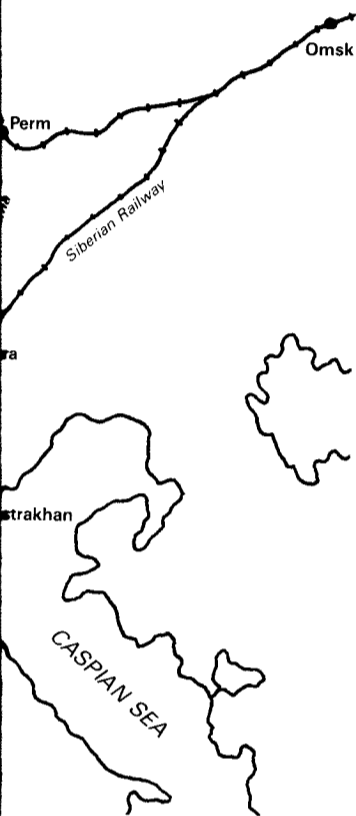
Lev Davidovich mobilised the entire personnel of the train, all the clerks, wireless operators, hospital workers, and the guard

n Civil War

zhsk

WAR FRONTS
SUMMER 1918

- German Army
- Whites under Krasnov
- Czechoslovak Legion and Whites
- Entente and White forces



commanded by the Chief of Staff of the fleet, Comrade Lepetenko (by the way, one of the most courageous and self-sacrificing soldiers of the revolution whose biography could very well provide this book with its most brilliant chapter) - in a word everyone able to bare a rifle.

The staff offices stood deserted; there was no 'rear' any longer. Everything was thrown against the Whites who had rolled almost flush to the station. From Shikhrana to the first houses of Svyazhsk the entire road was churned up by shells, covered with dead horses, abandoned weapons and empty cartridges. The closer to Svyazhsk, all the greater the havoc.

The advance of the Whites was halted only after they had leapt over the gigantic charred skeleton of the armoured train, still smoking and smelling of molten metal. The advance surges to the very threshold, then rolls back boiling like a receding wave only to fling itself once more against the hastily mobilised reserves of Svyazhsk. Here both sides stand facing each other for several hours, here are many dead.

The Whites then decided that they had before them a fresh and well-organised division of whose existence even their intelligence service had remained unaware. Exhausted from their 48-hour raid, the soldiers tended to over-estimate the strength of the enemy and did not even suspect that opposing them was only a hastily thrown together handful of fighters with no-one behind them except Trotsky and Slavin, sitting beside a map in a smoke-filled sleepless room of the deserted headquarters in the centre of the depopulated Svyazhsk where bullets were

whistling through the streets.

Throughout this night, like all the previous ones, Lev Davidovich's train remained standing there as always without its engine. Not a single section of the Fifth Army advancing on Kazan and about to storm it was bothered that night or diverted from the front to cover a virtually defenceless Svyazhsk. The army and the fleet learned about the night attack only after it was all over, after the Whites were already in retreat firmly convinced that almost a whole division was confronting them.

The next day 27 deserters who had fled to the ships in the most critical moment were tried and shot. Among them were several communists. Much was later said about the shooting of these 27, especially in the hinterland, of course, where they did not know by how thin a thread hung the Moscow road and our entire offensive against Kazan, undertaken with our last means and forces.

To begin with, the whole army was agog with talk about communists having turned cowards; and that laws were not written for them; that they could desert with impunity, while an ordinary rank-and-filer was shot down like a dog.

If not for the exceptional courage of Trotsky, the army commander and other members of the Revolutionary Military Council, the prestige of the communists working in the Army would have been impaired for a long time to come.

No fine speeches can make it sound plausible to any army suffering every possible privation in the course of six weeks, fighting practically with bare hands, without even bandages, that cowardice is not cowardice and that for guilt there may be 'extenuating circumstances'.

It is said that among those shot were many good comrades, some even whose guilt was redeemed by their previous services, by years in prison and exile. Perfectly true. No-one disputes that they perished in order to prop up those precepts of the old military code of 'setting an example' when amongst beating of drums 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' were exacted. Of course, Svyazhsk is a tragedy.

But everyone who has lived the life of the Red Army, who was born and grew strong with it in the battles of Kazan, will testify that the iron spirit of this army would have never crystallised, that the fusion between the Party and the soldier masses, between the rank and file and the summits of the commanding staff would have never been realised if, on the eve of storming Kazan where hundreds of soldiers were to lose their lives, the Party had failed to show clearly before the eyes of the whole army that it was prepared to offer the Revolution this great and bloody sacrifice, that for the Party, too, the severe laws of comradeship discipline are binding; that the Party, too, has the courage to apply ruthlessly the laws of the Soviet Republic to its own members as well.

Twenty-seven were shot and this filled in the breach which the famous raiders had succeeded in making in the self-confidence and unity of the Fifth Army. This salvo which exacted punishment from communists as well as commanders and simple soldiers for cowardice and dishonour in battle forced the least class-conscious section of the soldier mass and the one most inclined toward desertion (and of course there was such a section, too) to pull themselves together, and to align themselves with those who went



Trotsky in conversation with E.M. Sklyansky (his deputy at the People's Commissariat of War) and General S. Kamenev

consciously and without any compulsion into battle.

Precisely in these days was decided the fate of Kazan, and not that alone, but the fate of the entire White intervention. The Red Army found its self-confidence and became regenerated and strong during the long weeks of defence and offence.

In conditions of constant danger and with the greatest moral exertions it worked out its laws, its discipline, its new heroic statutes. For the first time panic in the face of the enemy's more modern technique became dissolved. Here one learned to make headway against an artillery; and involuntarily, from the elemental instinct of self-preservation, new methods of warfare were born, those specific battle methods which are already being studied in the highest military academies as the methods of the Civil War.

Of extreme importance is the fact that in those days in Svyazhsk there was precisely such a man as Trotsky . . .

. . . In military construction, as in so many other things, the Russian Revolution went its own way. Insurrection and war fused into one, the Army and the Party grew together, inseparably interwoven, and on the regimental banners were inscribed the unity of their mutual aims, all the sharpest formulae of the class struggle. In the days of Svyazhsk all this remained as yet unformed, only hanging in the air, seeking for expression.

The Workers' and Peasants' Army had to find expression somehow; it had to take on its outward shape, produce its own formulae, but how? This no-one clearly knew yet. At that time, of course, no precepts, no dogmatic programme were available in accordance with which this titanic organism could grow and develop.

In the Party and in the masses there lived only a foreboding, a creative premonition of this military revolutionary organisation which was never seen before and to which each day's battle whispered some new real characteristic.

Trotsky's great merit lies in this, that he caught up in flight the least gesture of the masses which already bore upon it the stamp of this sought-for and unique organisational formula.

He sifted out and then set going all the little practices whereby besieged Svyazhsk simplified, hastened or organised its work of battle. And this, not simply in the narrow technical sense. No. Every new successful combination of 'specialist and commissar', of him who commands and the one executing the command and bearing the responsibility for it - every successful combination, after it had met the test of experience and had been lucidly formulated, was immediately transformed into an order, a circular, a regulation. In this way the living revolutionary experience was not lost, nor forgotten, nor deformed.

The norm obligatory for all

was not mediocrity but, on the contrary, the best, the things of genius conceived by the masses themselves in the most fiery, most creative moments of the struggle.

In little things as well as big - whether in such complex matters as the division of labour among the members of the Revolutionary Military Council or the quick, snappy, friendly gesture exchanged in greeting between a Red Commander and a soldier each busy and hurrying somewhere - it all had to be drawn from life, assimilated and returned as a norm to the masses for universal use.

And wherever things weren't moving, or there was creaking, or bungling, one had to sense what was wrong, one had to help, one had to pull, as the midwife pulls out the new-born babe during a difficult birth.

One can be the most adept at articulating, one can give to a new army a rationally impeccable plastic form, and nonetheless render its spirit frigid, permit it to evaporate and remain incapable of keeping this spirit alive within the chicken-wire of juridical formulae. To prevent this, one must be a great revolutionist; one must possess the intuition of a creator and an internal radio transmitter of vast power without which there is no approaching the masses.

In the last analysis it is precisely this revolutionary instinct which is the court of highest sanction; which exactly purges its new creative justice of all deeply hidden counter-revolu-

tionary back-slidings. It places its hand of violence upon the deceitful formal justice in the name of the highest proletarian justice which does not permit its elastic laws to ossify, to become divorced from life and burden the shoulders of Red Army soldiers with petty, aggravating, superfluous loads.

Trotsky possessed this intuitive sense.

In him the revolutionist was never elbowed aside by the soldier, the military leader, the commander. And when with his inhuman, terrible voice he confronted a deserter, we stood in fear of him as one of us, a great rebel who could crush and slay anyone for base cowardice, for treason not to the military but the world-proletarian revolutionary cause. It was impossible for Trotsky to have been a coward, for otherwise the contempt of this extraordinary army would have crushed him; and it could never have forgiven a weakling for the fraternal blood of the 27 which sprayed its first victory.

A few days before the occupation of Kazan by our troops Lev Davidovich had to leave Svyazhsk; the news of the attempt on Lenin's life called him to Moscow. But neither Savinkov's raid on Svyazhsk, organised with great mastery by the Social-Revolutionists, nor the attempt to assassinate Lenin, undertaken by the same party almost simultaneously with Savinkov's raid, could now halt the Red Army. The final wave of the offensive engulfed Kazan.

Maltese Labour leaders' record of treachery

THE VISIT by four British warships to Malta on June 25, which was met by mass action by trade unionists, underlined the strategic military importance which imperialism attaches to this small Mediterranean archipelago 93 kilometres south of Sicily. It also once again showed the thoroughly opportunist nature of the national-reformist Malta Labour Party and its allies in the leadership of the General Workers' Union.

From 1800 onwards, Malta formed part of the British Empire, and it was only on September 21, 1964, that Malta was granted a purely formal independence. Large parts of the Maltese islands remained under the control of the British government and NATO, and even the airport, broadcasting, and other important public utilities were not in Maltese hands. The independence agreement was negotiated by the Nationalist Party, which also forms the present government and which was then in power thanks to the intervention of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1962 elections. The intervention of the church was not so much pro-Nationalist as anti-Labour. A number of minor right-wing parties also gained by the church ban on voting Labour and secured parliamentary representation on the basis of support given to them by ex-Labourites who had obeyed the church's instructions, but at the same time detested the Nationalist Party. These minor parties gained a total of nine seats, the Nationalist Party 25 seats and the Malta Labour Party 16.

The success of these minor parties was, however, short-lived. By 1966 the polarisa-

From Kevin Aquilina

tion into two opposing blocs, which has almost always characterised Maltese political life, reasserted itself. In the 1966 election the minor right-wing parties failed to secure any parliamentary representation, and nearly all dissolved shortly afterwards, never to revive again. The Nationalist Party and the Malta Labour Party obtained 28 and 22 seats respectively. The MLP was slowly recovering from the effects of the church prohibition. For its part, the church hierarchy, plainly fearing the loss of its influence over the population, called off its ban in 1969 after the Labour leadership had made substantial concessions.

Once church backing was withdrawn, support for the Nationalist Party declined. A series of strikes, which included workers from the hub of the Maltese economy, the dockyards, took place in the run-up to the 1971 elections, reflecting the increasing mood of popular disenchantment with the Nationalist Party. The elections saw the Nationalist Party thrown out of office, and the MLP managed to obtain a narrow one-seat majority.

In the first few years after Labour came to power the working class drew back from organising strikes in accordance with instructions from the General Workers' Union, which became increasingly identified with the MLP government.

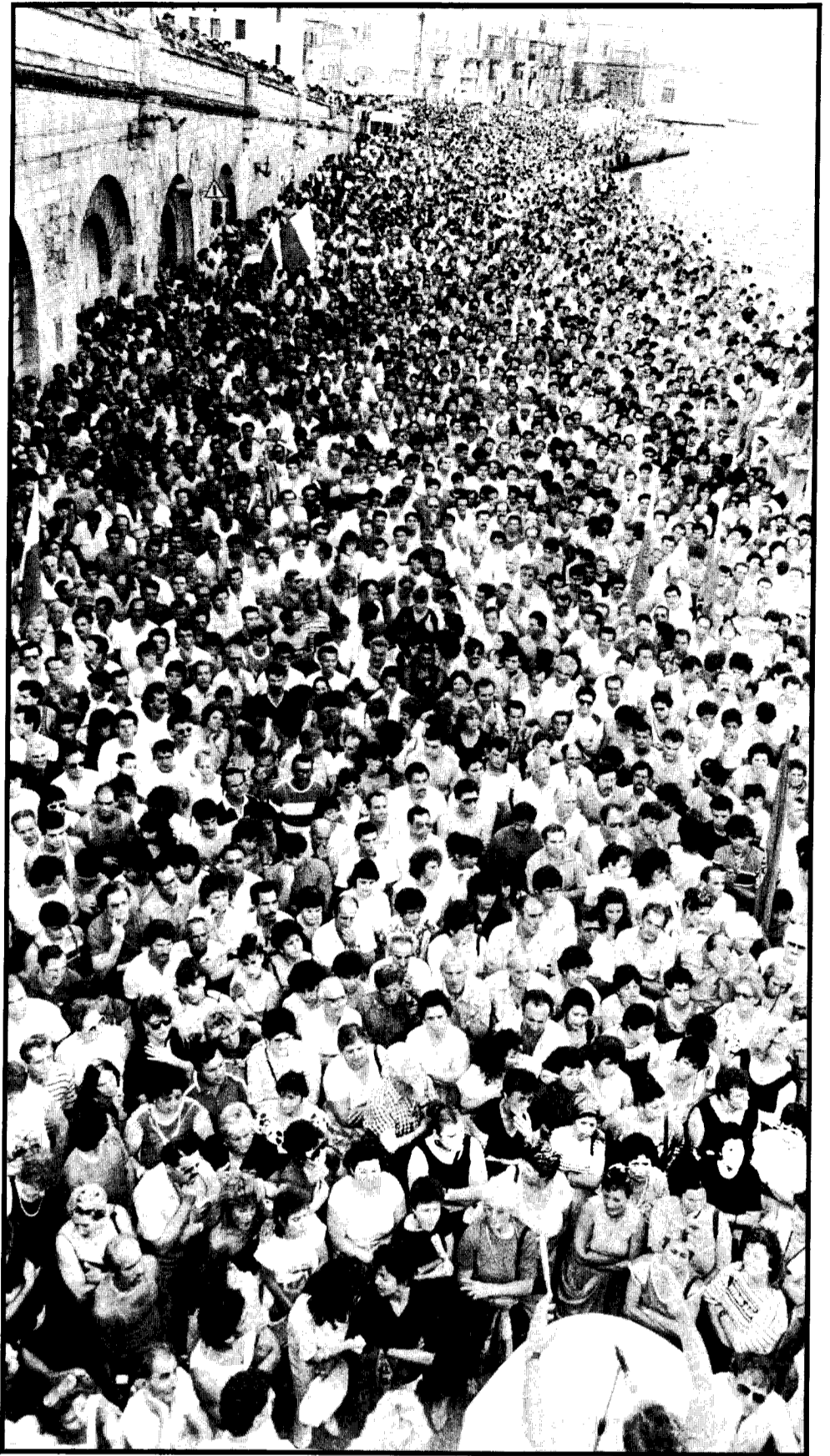
Initially, the Labour government did push through some very limited reforms such as nationalisation of the banks, broadcasting and some other key utilities and increased government intervention in the economy. It introduced new social services and extended existing ones, introduced civil marriage and decriminalised homosexuality and 'adul-

tery'. The ruling class was forced to accept these measures as the price of heading off the militancy of the working class.

However, soon after Labour was re-elected with a majority of three in 1976 it launched a series of open attacks on the working class. The Labour government reacted savagely to industrial action organised by trade unions outside the General Workers' Union confederation, locking out, suspending and disciplining workers who had obeyed legitimate trade union instructions. Far from drawing the necessary lessons from this experience, the GWU leaders applauded and actively supported the government in its repressive measures, and soon afterwards agreed to fuse the GWU with the MLP. In doing so they surrendered the trade union confederation's independence from the state.

The Labour Party leadership, for its part, launched a witch-hunt to 'cleanse' from its ranks the 'left'. These self-proclaimed 'Marxists' had mildly criticised the way the government had reacted to the strikes organised by non-GWU trade unions. The leaders of these latter unions provided no alternative, being frequently under the influence of the Nationalist Party and the church, or being 'non-political'. The reforms dried up and the only progressive measure during Labour's second administration was the departure of British troops on March 31, 1979, which Labour leaders dubbed 'Freedom Day', and is now known as Malta's 'National Day'. Labour increasingly employed political gangsterism against its opponents, not hesitating to use outright physical violence.

In the 1981 general election, Labour was again returned to power but this time purely on the basis of the unequal electoral districts which meant that it actually polled fewer votes than the Nationalist Party. Labour's main 'achievement' in its third term in office was to tighten selection procedures in state education to the extent that they became more rigorous than the system in private education. It had the effect of restricting entry into Malta's only university. In January 1987 the constitution was amended as a result of horse-trading between the two main parties. Electoral laws were amended to avoid a repetition of the 1981 election result, 'neutrality' and 'non-alignment' were enshrined in the constitution, together with clauses directed against 'foreign interference'.



A mass meeting of trade unionists and supporters of the Malta Labour Party on June 25, the day the harbour was blockaded to prevent the visit of the Ark Royal and three other British warships

The beneficiaries of the electoral 'reform' were the Nationalists, who narrowly won the 1987 general election, polling 50.91 per cent to the Labour Party's 48.87 per cent. The two minor parties, contesting an election for the first time, made a poor showing. The small right-wing Democratic Party, set up in 1985, obtained a mere 0.16 per cent of first preference votes; the pro-Moscow Stalinists of the Communist Party polled an insignificant 0.05 per cent.

More than a year has passed since the Nationalists were returned to government. Since then, the treacherous Labour leadership has continued to betray the working class under the cover of fine-sounding radical phrases. Although the Labour leaders organised the blockading of ports during the visit in June of the Ark Royal and three other British warships, together with the GWU leaders, they made it clear that their opposition to the visit was based solely upon the strong possibility that

these vessels were equipped with nuclear arms, rather than opposition to their presence in principle as representatives of British imperialism.

The GWU leadership sabotaged serious action by refusing to call a general strike. Instead, it issued instructions for industrial action in the ports and ancillary services and then hastily withdrew them when the visit had hardly begun. As a result of the blockade, the four warships had to enter St Paul's bay, and the MLP and GWU leaders were content to proclaim this as a great victory for the Labour movement.

The hypocritical nature of the Labour leaders' 'opposition' to nuclear weapons is revealed by the fact that in the last year of their administration they welcomed HMS Brazen, another British warship with a nuclear capability.

In the meantime, the Nationalist government has not remained idle, and it has filled the Special Mobile Unit of the Malta Police

with its own party diehards, transferring in the process Labour supporters to other sections of the force. The anti-working class function of this specialised riot squad became abundantly clear on July 14 when it used tear-gas and truncheons to defend scabs and disperse pickets who were observing a GWU instruction outside a branch of a Maltese bank.

GWU secretary general Anglu Farrugia responded to this provocation by meeting the deputy prime minister and, on the same day, withdrawing the GWU instructions, which, in any case, were entirely inadequate since they only applied to two branches of the bank.

The history of recent decades has proved again and again that the Malta Labour Party is incapable of providing a socialist leadership. What is required is a genuine party of the working class based on the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky which will lead the struggle to overthrow capitalism.

Subscribe to Workers News

Inland: 6 issues £2.90, 12 issues £5.80

Europe, Ireland and Overseas (surface):
6 issues £3.30, 12 issues £6.60

North Africa, Middle East (air):
6 issues £4.00, 12 issues £8.00

Asia, Americas, Africa, Caribbean (air):
6 issues £4.50, 12 issues £9.00

Australia, Far East (air):
6 issues £4.70, 12 issues £9.40

NAME: _____ ENCL. £ _____
ADDRESS: _____

Send to: Workers News, 1/17 Meredith Street London EC1R 0AE

Divisions deepen in Indian ruling class

IN THE FACE of a range of regional and national conflicts, growing divisions within the Indian ruling class have been reflected in a series of challenges to the rule of Rajiv Gandhi's Congress (I) party.

Two states - the Punjab and Tamil Nadu - are under direct rule, and Gandhi has sacked the chief ministers of four other states in the past seven months, most recently in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra in June. A fifth chief minister, Ramakrishna Hegde of Karnataka, resigned on August 10 after allegations of illegal wire-tapping.

The removal of the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh followed a series of by-election reverses for Congress (I), in which opposition parties won a total of 10 out of 18 parliamentary and state assembly seats contested in June. Most significant was the victory in Uttar Pradesh of former defence minister V.P. Singh, who took a parliamentary seat in Gandhi's traditional heartland with a majority of over 100,000. Singh, who split from Congress (I) last year,



GANDHI

In late July, seven bourgeois opposition parties floated the idea of a 'National People's Front' to fight Gandhi. Following wide-

By Lizzy Ali

spread protests in Tamil Nadu against the Indian army's action in Sri Lanka, which were led by another breakaway from Congress (I), the Tmaizhaga Munnetra Munnani Party, direct rule over the state was extended for a second time. It was initially introduced on January 30, shortly after the death of chief minister and screen idol M.G. Ramachandran (known universally as MGR).

Although he had allowed the Tamil Tiger movement to train in Tamil Nadu, MGR supported the Indo-Sri Lankan accord which sanctioned brutal repression by the Indian army of Tamils in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

His regime combined populist public welfare measures with institutionalised corruption and reactionary laws gagging the press from criticising politicians. Following his death in December 1987, MGR's AIADMK Party - in reality more of a personal fan club - split, with one faction led by his wife Janika, and the other by his former leading lady, Jayalitha!

Among the national min-

ority questions permanently simmering are those in Kashmir and Assam, and Gurkha separatism in the Darjeeling area. In Andhra Pradesh last year, there was a revival of the Naxalite insurgency. The ending of the siege of the Golden Temple in Amritsar on May 18 and the arrest of leading Sikh separatists will not solve the Punjab crisis for Gandhi. Sikh separatism, the outlook of a section of the Sikh bourgeoisie, has gain-



V.P. Singh at a mass rally in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh

ed a substantial base by feeding off the continuous affronts to the region by the Gandhi government. The Indian working class must resolutely oppose the brutally repressive measures directed against the Punjab.

In May, a former Punjab High Court judge, Arjit Singh Bains, denounced 'gross violations by the Indian government', and called for the repeal of the 1985 Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act which permits

suspects to be tried in secret and requires them to prove their innocence. On June 10, sweeping new measures were introduced, allowing for the death penalty for the possession, use, or manufacture of weapons. A report recently published by Amnesty International claims that in one month alone 70 young Sikhs were shot in cold blood by the army.

This does not alter the utterly reactionary nature of communalist politics which serves to divide Sikh, Hindu and Moslem workers and peasants in the interests of the capitalist class, or the bankruptcy of separatist individual terrorism. Sikhism is not a nationality but a religion, and a separate Sikh state of Khalistan would only be achieved at the expense of the poorest sections of non-Sikh workers and peasants.

Throughout April and May, the campaign by groups such as the Council of Khalistan and the Khalistan Commando Force had as its main target Hindu migrant labourers in the Punjab and Haryana, dozens of whom were killed in attacks on railway and bus stations. In 1987, 1,230 people were killed in the Punjab; already this year over 1,500 have died.

We note in passing that former WRP General Secretary M. Banda has become the latest convert to communalism. His 'Communist Study Group' recently held a public meeting entitled 'The Case for Khalistan'. This follows his support for the racist JVP in Sri Lanka. Only four years ago Banda was calling on Punjab workers to 'reject religious communalism and bigotry and the blind alley of Khalistan'.

Only through the struggle for the revolutionary reunification of India in a federation of socialist states of the Indian subcontinent can the working class be united, and the land question be resolved. This means breaking with the CPI and CPI(M) Stalinists, who have consistently refused to mobilise the working class against Gandhi or mount a principled defence of the Tamil people, and building a Trotskyist party.

Stalinists bury differences to quell Armenian revolt

EARLY in August, the Communist Party general secretaries of Armenia and Azerbaijan met in Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, and agreed to work jointly to enforce the decision of the Supreme Soviet in Moscow to deny the disputed territory the right to become part of Armenia.

Only a few weeks before, these two Stalinist bureaucrats apparently held diametrically opposite views; by August 2 they had agreed that both their party organisations would now 'work in close co-operation, in the spirit of *perestroika*, in the basic interests of both peoples'.

The ruling of the July 18 Supreme Soviet Presidium was the cue for both the Armenian and Karabakh Communist Party leaderships to suppress the wave of mass demonstrations and strikes which had brought the whole area to a standstill for five months.

Nagorno-Karabakh, which is 75 per cent populated by Armenians, lies within the borders of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. In 1921, Stalin, then Commissar for Nationalities, ordered the enclave to be incorporated into Azerbaijan, against the recommendations of the local Bolshevik leadership, to placate counter-revolutionary elements. The subsequent degeneration of the workers' state under Stalin's leadership - the forced collectivisation of the land, the mass deportations to Siberian labour camps, the purges

By Terry McGinity

- was accompanied by the rise of Great Russian chauvinism. The minority nationalities were cruelly repressed and subordinated to the requirements of the central leadership, overturning the Bolshevik policy of protecting national aspirations.

The resurgence of national tensions in such a sharp form is the result of the failure of Stalinism to develop sufficiently the region's economic base. Such development as has taken place has been extremely uneven - post-war industrialisation was concentrated in Armenia, leaving Azerbaijan increasingly reliant on agriculture, which grew at a snail's pace. Whilst the masses of Armenia and Karabakh took Gorbachev's *glasnost* at face value and pressed their long-standing grievances, the violent response in Azerbaijan was conditioned by the republic's stagnant economy. The possibility of losing the fertile Karabakh region enraged the local Stalinist bureaucracy and the layer of managers and administrators who police Azerbaijan's inequalities. This fury was



GORBACHEV

turned on the Armenian population, the most vile expression of it being the pogrom in Sumgait.

The rejection of the demands for transfer show that the real content of *glasnost* is not a return to Soviet democracy but to prepare the bureaucracy politically for an onslaught on the living standards of the working class. Gorbachev's plan to rationalise industry and encourage the development of small-scale private enterprise is intended to reverse the decline of the Soviet economy and bolster the rule of the bureaucracy. It would be seriously endangered by extending any significant concession to the right of self-determination of national minorities or to working class democracy.

The scale of the uprising, triggered by an anti-pollution demonstration in October 1987 to which Gorbachev had extended his support, required cautious handling. In an attempt to maintain control, the Com-

munist Parties of Armenia and Karabakh declared their support for transfer. The Kremlin promised to 'review' the Karabakh question and offered economic aid. Pro-*glasnost* bureaucrats were flown in to replace the hated chiefs of both the Armenian and Azerbaijan Communist Parties as a sop to the masses and to coordinate the handling of the crisis between the local and central bureaucracies. Their job was to be 'flexible' in their approach, to know when to make concessions and when to crack the whip. In this way, they sought to undermine the real leadership of the movement by posing as the leadership themselves.

Armenian and Karabakh party leaders alternated promises of a 'positive response' from Moscow with a succession of crack-downs to destroy the influence of the strike committees. After each of the three Moscow meetings of the central leadership which deliberated the question, there followed a new wave of repression. The Karabakh Committee - the 'unofficial' leadership of the uprising - was outlawed on March 25, two days after the first meeting; troops were moved into the region in force following the special party congress at the end of June; and in the wake of the July 18 final ruling by the Soviet Union's highest constitution-

ality body, a leading Armenian nationalist, Paruyr Ayrikyan, was deported, Karabakh Committee members were arrested, tough measures introduced against strikers and a concerted media campaign launched against 'hooligans'.

The Gorbachev bureaucracy has managed to push back the tide of mass unrest in Armenia by a combination of brute force, 400 million roubles' worth of economic assistance, a special commission to consider granting Karabakh more freedom in running its own affairs, and by reproaching the movement's leadership as the 'enemies of *perestroika*'.

Caught between their support for Gorbachev's 'reform' of the economy and their nationalism (and with a little help from the threat of prison), the petty-bourgeois elements in the leadership of the uprising chose to advise the masses to put their faith in Gorbachev and call off the strikes.

But the speed with which the Armenian working class developed its own organs of struggle in the strike committees has sent a shudder of fear through the crisis-ridden Stalinist bureaucracy. This valuable experience will not be lost on the Soviet working class - what is lacking is a programme for the political revolution to sweep out the bureaucracy and reintroduce Soviet democracy.

IN DEFENCE OF THE THEORY OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION

PART EIGHT

By Richard Price

THE ADOPTION of the slogan 'All power to the soviets' by the Old Bolsheviks after Lenin's return to Russia did not end vacillating and conciliation among elements in the Bolshevik leadership.

As Trotsky writes: 'Despite the decisions of the April Conference in 1917, the opposition to the revolutionary course - sometimes hidden, sometimes open - pervaded the entire period of preparation.' ('Lessons of October', New Park, p.14).

From May to October, each abrupt change in the objective situation brought this opposition to the fore. Although it adapted itself to the slogan of the transfer of power to the soviets, the Bolshevik right wing continued to emphasise the outstanding 'democratic' tasks of the revolution. These it rigidly distinguished from the conquest of power by the working class, thereby rendering Lenin's slogan into an abstraction.

In so far as Lenin's opponents carried their thoughts through to a conclusion, they arrived at the position that the Soviets would bequeath power to a bourgeois parliament, or at least operate in tandem with one.

This 'resistance' among party leaders re-emerged in the midst of a strong tide of support towards the Bolsheviks. Lenin's proposal for a mass demonstration on June 10 was greeted sceptically by, among others, Tomsky, Stalin and Kalinin. Although the Bolsheviks submitted reluctantly to a decision of the Soviet Congress to call off the demonstration, Lenin's policy was vindicated eight days later.

Alarmed by the growth of support for the Bolsheviks, and needing to put some ground between themselves and the Kadets, the Mensheviks and SRs called for a demonstration on June 18. In the event, it was almost entirely dominated by workers' and soldiers' banners bearing the Bolshevik demands 'All power to the soviets' and 'Down with the ten minister-capitalists'.

In early July, the Bolsheviks moved to restrain a spontaneous mood of insurrection which centred on the Machine Gun Regiment's call for an armed demonstration. Lenin considered such an open challenge, which posed more directly and immediately the struggle for power than June 18, to be premature. The impetus of the masses however, was unstoppable, and the Bolsheviks were forced to place themselves at the head of the movement.

The Bolshevik right wing had no difficulty in agreeing to cool the boiling temperature of the July Days but, in the aftermath of violent repression against the Bolsheviks, raised within

the party that the decision to participate had been a mistake.

Lenin and Trotsky drew directly opposite conclusions from the events of July. Lenin analysed the swift polarisation in class relations as marking the end of the 'peaceful development' of the revolution between February and July: 'The counter-revolution has become organised and consolidated, and has actually taken state power into its hands... The leaders of the soviets and of the Social Revolutionaries and Menshevik parties, headed by Tsereteli and Chernov, have completely betrayed the cause of the revolution by putting it in the hands of counter-revolutionaries and

considered most 'scholarly', is the late Marcel Liebman. He awards marks as follows: 'As a theorist, too, Trotsky was Lenin's superior - he had the keen intelligence, the cultivation and the powerful imagination needed for broad elaborations of doctrine. True, he lacked the more pedestrian, but for all that more profound (!), virtues that made Lenin the founder of Soviet Russia.' (M. Liebman: 'The Russian Revolution', Jonathan Cape, p.246).

This serves only to detract from the intense internal

struggle against Kornilov.' ('Between the Two Revolutions', p.363).

So long as the struggle took a defensive form, party unity was sustained. But once more, the conciliatory elements on the Bolshevik right took the formation of joint committees of struggle against Kornilov to signify a closer relationship with the SRs and Mensheviks.

One group of Bolsheviks, headed by Lozovsky, who contributed to Gorky's non-party paper 'Novaia Zhizn' petitioned the Central Committee meeting on August

proletarians and poor peasants' (ibid, p.456). The outcome of the Kornilov revolt was a great surge of support for the Bolsheviks. From mid-September onwards, after the Bolsheviks had assumed the leadership of the Petrograd and Moscow soviets, Lenin writes insistently to the Central Committee urging the preparation of armed insurrection. On September 12, he writes: 'It would be naive to wait for a "formal" Bolshevik majority: no revolution waits for that... History will not forgive us if we do not take power now.' ('The Bolsheviks and the October Revolution', p.60). One day later, he writes again, warning against tendencies to bow to the 'Democratic Conference', and presses for the creation of a serious plan for insurrection.

When the Bolshevik faction in the Democratic Conference voted to participate in the Pre-Parliament, Lenin 'sounded the alarm': 'We must boycott the Pre-Parliament. We must go out into the soviets of workers, soldiers' and peasants' deputies, go out into the trade unions, go out in general to the masses. We must summon them to the struggle. We must give them a correct and clear slogan: To drive out the Bonapartist gang of Kerensky with its fake Pre-Parliament.' (Trotsky: 'History of the Russian

enlarged meeting of the CC six days later, the discussion showed that the decision for insurrection remained in many delegates' minds a decision made only 'in principle'. Miliutin, Shotman and Krylenko argued against any specific proposals.

Kamenev and Zinoviev's opposition to the boycott proved to be the bridge to outright opposition to insurrection. On October 11, they presented the CC with a statement dripping with pessimism, wildly overestimating the forces of the Provisional Government and arguing that 'we can and must confine ourselves now to a defensive position'. One week later they were to break ranks and publish a public statement against the taking of power in 'Novaia Zhizn'.

As soon as Lenin received the text of Kamenev and Zinoviev's public statement, he demanded their expulsion as 'strike-breakers'. Stalin, who played little or no role in the preparation of the insurrection, and spent the months of April to October trying to find a middle road between Lenin and Kamenev, opposed the demand for expulsion, and spoke in favour of 'party unity'. As editor of 'Rabochii Put', he inserted a note on October 20 which stated: 'The sharp tone of Comrade Lenin's article does not change the fact that, fundamentally, we are of one mind.' ('The Bolsheviks and the October Revolution', p.120)

This brief survey of conflicts within the Bolshevik Party from May to October 1917 shows that the opposition which re-emerged at every critical stage increasingly challenged the struggle for power itself.

Those Bolsheviks who wanted, under cover of 'unity', to get closer to the Mensheviks and SRs, and who tried to relegate the struggle for power to some future time after the convening of the Constituent Assembly, were playing the old Menshevik refrain: the working class could only play an oppositional role. The Kadets and the bourgeoisie were so weak in 1917 that the Mensheviks and SRs had to attempt to take over their role, and act as custodian of their interests.

For this reason, Lenin came down with such severity towards moods of conciliation towards the petty-bourgeois democrats: 'Ruthless expulsion of them from all revolutionary organisations!', he thundered. Russia in 1917 faced two paths: either a proletarian dictatorship, or a relapse to a semi-colonial existence, ruled by a military dictatorship. There could be no stable bourgeois democracy, as the theory of permanent revolution had correctly foreseen.

To be continued



Revolutionary soldiers on the march

by turning themselves, their parties and the soviets into mere fig leaves of the counter-revolution.' ('Between the Two Revolutions', Progress, pp.312-3).

Under conditions in which the leadership of the Soviets remained in the hands of the rightward moving petty-bourgeois democrats, Lenin proposed withdrawing the slogan 'All power to the soviets', in recognition of the fact that the future course of the revolution opened up only two possibilities: 'Either complete victory for the military dictatorship, or victory for the workers' armed uprising.' (ibid. p.313).

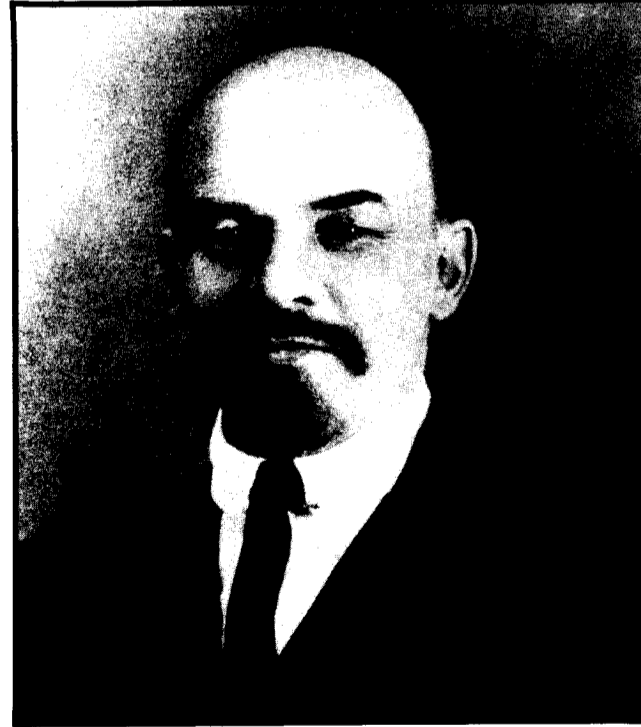
By confronting the party with the task of preparing armed insurrection against the Provisional Government, Lenin was once again dealing a blow at the opposition within the Bolshevik Party, which sought, behind the phrase 'All power to the soviets', an accommodation to their existing leaderships.

Trotsky's views on the new situation were in complete harmony with those of Lenin. (See 'What Next?', WIL Pamphlet, which concludes with the words: 'Permanent revolution against permanent slaughter! Such is the struggle in which the fate of mankind is at stake').

All kinds of historians - bourgeois, Stalinist and revisionist - have attempted to discern divisions between Lenin and Trotsky in 1917. One representative of the third school, whose work is

struggle waged by Lenin, in company with Trotsky, to rearm the revolutionary vanguard at every new point of departure prior to October. If there was no particular controversy surrounding the theory of permanent revolution during the year 1917, it was because the names of Lenin and Trotsky were inseparably connected in the minds of millions.

The SR-Menshevik coalition, formed in July, and headed by Kerensky, took on the trappings of Bonapartism but lacked any stable social base. In late August, Kerensky's counter-revolutionary conspiracy with Kornilov fell apart, as Kornilov prepared to march on Petrograd. Lenin formulated the Bolshevik's tactics at this point as follows: '... the all-important thing now has become the intensification of our campaign for some kind of "partial demands" to be presented to Kerensky; arrest Milyukov, arm the Petrograd workers, summon the Kronstadt, Vyborg and Helsingfors troops to Petrograd, dissolve the Duma, arrest Rodzyanko, legalise the transfer of the landed estates to the peasants, introduce workers' control over grain and factories, etc., etc. We must present these demands not only to Kerensky, and not so much to Kerensky as to the workers, soldiers and peasants who have been carried away by the course of the



LENIN

30 urging unification with Gorky's group, and referring to mutual differences as 'a passing and insubstantial episode'. ('The Bolsheviks and the October Revolution', Pluto, p.41).

Lenin was less charitable. In 'Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?', he refers to the 'Novaia Zhizn' group as 'hopelessly and pitifully muddled, as are all the petty-bourgeois democrats who now realise that the coalition is bankrupt, dare not defend it openly and, at the same time, protected by the bourgeoisie, fear the transfer of all power to the

Revolution', p.843).

Kamenev spoke for a broad band of opinion in the upper levels of the Bolshevik party when he described the course of boycott as 'very dangerous for the party'. This amounted to a major concession to bourgeois parliamentarianism in the flood tide of revolution.

Lenin was present at the Central Committee meeting of October 10 which voted for insurrection by 10 to two. He drew particular attention to the international situation, and in particular, the development of revolution in Germany. At an

BOOK REVIEW

Memoirs of a Left SR

Five Days Which Transformed Russia
Sergei Mstislavskii
Hutchinson £7.95

By Richard Price

THESE MEMOIRS of five decisive moments of the Russian revolution were written in 1918. The author, a veteran of the Social Revolutionary Party's military organisation in 1905, sketches, in a manner far removed from the turgid memoir literature churned out under Stalin, a frank and almost naively honest first-hand account.

Mstislavskii was an officer at the General Staff Academy, Petrograd, when the chain of mutinies broke out on February 27, 1917. 'The revolution found us [SR] party members . . . fast asleep,' he comments. During these chaotic and confused first days, Mstislavskii was at the heart of the military defence of the February revolution, going 78 hours without sleep, and directing a hastily improvised revolutionary staff headquarters. No soon-

er was the initial fighting over, than these junior officers found themselves rudely replaced by officers loyal to Rodzianko's Duma Committee, who occupied their offices, boasting that law and order was 'quickly being restored'.

The second of Mstislavskii's 'five days' is an acute observation of the intricate manoeuvres around the establishment of the Provisional Government between the capitalist parties on the one hand, and the 'moderate' SR and Menshevik 'socialists' on the other. He writes: ' . . . From two different positions both sides came to the same conclusion: that in order to survive they had to stick together, since neither had any grassroots support. And since it was equally impossible to admit this situation either to themselves or to the masses at large, both



A factory meeting, 1917

sides lied, to their own supporters and to each other. The two political groupings assured each other of their undying devotion - an obvious lie; they lied to their followers by presenting their fraternal embrace with "the enemy" as actually being a death grip.'

This 'dual power' is explored further when Mstislavskii is sent on March 9 to Tsarskoe Selo to arrest the Imperial Family on behalf of the Petrograd Soviet. His encounter with those guarding the Romanovs in the name of the Provisional Government has

the elements of both black comedy and high farce. He discovers that the 'guards', who refuse to hand the prisoners over, are observing all the formalities of the old regime within the walls of this palace turned prison, and are outraged at this lese-majesty. Finally a compromise was agreed whereby Mstislavskii was permitted to establish that the Tsar really was within the palace by having him process past ranks of officers standing to attention.

As a leader of the left wing of the SRs, Mstislavskii participated in the growing rift

with Chernov and the right wing, although the split was not formalised until after October. Despite his support for the October Revolution, he freely admits that during the month prior to the insurrection he was in 'unambiguous and absolute opposition to Lenin's doctrine of revolt' - an opposition based upon a curious old Narodnik distinction between class struggle, which he approved, and civil war which he thought would be disastrous. He comments naively: 'I do not know whether this was the correct analysis of the situation or not but at that

time, those were our views.'

The witty account of the Congress of Soviets held the day after the insurrection climaxes with Trotsky's remark: 'I don't believe that the sound of gunfire bothers anyone. On the contrary! It helps speed the work along.' The fifth and final 'day' is a vivid description of the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly.

Cited by Trotsky several times in his classic 'History of the Russian Revolution', these memoirs, here published in English for the first time, form a valuable eyewitness source.

FILM REVIEW

Robert Redford's American Dream

MASQUERADING as a film with a passionate concern for the plight of the oppressed comes Robert Redford's whimsical look at the impact of a major property development on a small farming community in New Mexico.

As is the case with most mainstream American movies with radical pretensions, *The Milagro Beanfield War* takes as its subject matter the conflict between the 'small man' and big business.

When construction work begins on the Miracle Valley recreation area, with its invitation to 'invest your tax dollars to work for a better America', the people of Milagro are faced with a stark choice. Either they must fight the company's plans for the region (which include turning their town into a golf course) or let rising property prices drive them out.

Frustrated by his failure even to get work as a labourer on the project, Joe Mondragon decides to irrigate his beanfield with water set aside for use by the corporation. His act of defiance becomes the focus of the town's resistance.

By Philip Marchant

For Redford, whose second directorial effort this is, the whole exercise seems to be a half-hearted attempt to bring the major corporations to book. However, by allowing 'fantasy to mingle with reality', he turns a serious subject into a protracted piece of wishful thinking. The eventual victory of the poor farmers over the combined forces of the real-estate company, the political establishment, the police and the FBI lacks any basis in reality. Colourful characters though they may be, the locals would stand no chance against such odds.

Redford's self-confessed 'even-handedness' prevents him from developing any analysis worthy of the name. 'Whether it's right or wrong depends on where you're standing and from which vantage point', he says about the film - and this can't help but be reflected artistically. Having unwisely embarked on a film about class conflict when he refuses to recognise that such a thing exists, Redford not surprisingly has trouble in sustaining dramatic tension. The film inevitably loses its hold on the audience as it becomes clear

that what's in store is a happy ending with the hero pardoned, the scheming capitalists rebuffed, the police sent packing and the townspeople rejoicing. What chance a good film about small farmers fighting for their rights against large corporations when the director has explicitly denied that such rights exist?

But Redford, in common with all middle class liberals, reserves a special place for attacking the role of theory in guiding action. The only link the people of Milagro have with previous political struggles is a soiled refugee from the sixties' anti-war movement (a portrait of John Nichols, on whose book the film is based); the only 'theoretician', a visiting student of sociology (a soft target and a very old joke). The former reluctantly joins the fight in the capacity of legal advisor, whilst the latter abandons even the limited insights of sociology and succumbs to the eccentric religious beliefs of the local population. If we didn't quite get the message, Redford rams it home by having a pig eat the student's thesis.

The final triumph is accomplished by a mixture of spontaneous revolt, middle class lobbying and the in-



Three of Milagro's elderly citizens intervene to prevent the hero's arrest by the police

tervention of supernatural forces. With this last factor, Redford gives a new twist to his favourite theme. A brief look over his career will confirm his preference for play-

ing the part of champion of those unable to fight on their own behalf. 'The Milagro Beanfield War' finds the enlightened Mr Redford behind the camera,

but still dispensing advice on 'fair play' in the manner of a god. Only his spirit appears on screen to give a helping hand to those in need.

OUT NOW!

**WHAT NEXT?
AND OTHER WRITINGS
FROM 1917
By Leon Trotsky**

A Workers International League pamphlet

Contains Trotsky's classic analysis of the class forces within the Russian Revolution plus four items available for the first time in English

60 pages plus introduction and notes
Price £2 plus 50p postage and packing

Name..... No. of copies..... Amount enclosed £.....

Address

Send to: Workers International League, 1/17 Meredith St, London EC1R OAE

Tories' football training ground

Attacks on education to step up

By Christine McDermott

WITH THE new football season under way, Tory Home Secretary Douglas Hurd is introducing far-reaching measures aimed at the working class under the cover of dealing with 'football hooliganism'.

The climate for introducing new guidelines for magistrates' courts on dealing with public disorder, and for a whole range of restrictions on football supporters, has been prepared by the Tories and the extreme right-wing press over a number of years.

Football is the sport with the largest mass appeal in Britain and has a predominantly working class following. There are no other regular gatherings of the working class, particularly working class youth, in such large numbers. This offers an invaluable opportunity for the police to gain experience in crowd control, infiltration, provocation and training in violent suppression.

If passions run high on the terraces, it is the capitalist state that is to blame. Unemployment, bad housing, low pay, and unrewarding work are the powder-keg which is ignited by the clubs themselves and by the police. But the discipline of a large working class crowd is usually hard to break without the help of a provocative element within the crowd itself.

This is provided by organised extreme right-wing groups who whip up racist sentiments against black players and fans, encourage sorties against the supporters of opposing teams, lead charges against the police and generally provoke situations in which the police can intervene.

These fascists are consciously directed to work at football matches, both to train their own followers to violently attack groups of workers and because football offers an ideal recruiting ground. They find their support amongst specific layers within the crowd - better-off workers who support Thatcher, small business types, spivs and petty criminals. It was this element which made life hell for Tottenham's two Argentinian players, Ricky Villa and Osvaldo Ardilles, during the Malvinas war and who, week in and week out, shout racist abuse at black and Irish players.

The fascist groups fulfil an essential role on behalf of the capitalist state. Acting as its unofficial arm, they create the conditions for division in the ranks of the working class and for the state to introduce draconian legislation curbing the basic democratic rights of all workers.

That they have close ties with, and sympathisers within, the Tory establishment, the armed forces and the police has been demonstrated on numerous occasions. The recent spate of 'football trials' resulted in cases against known fascists collapsing due to 'errors' in the presentation of police evidence, whilst many other youths got long prison terms. During the recent European Championships, British servicemen stationed in West Germany joined forces with fascist gangs rampaging through Frankfurt.

Sport has long been used by the ruling class as a means of ideological control over the masses. By encouraging fanatical loyalty towards their own football teams, club managers play their part in keeping the working class divided - both on regional lines and within large urban areas. Only when the national team is playing are the fans asked to temporarily bury their differences, and replace local team partisanship with strident nationalism. In this they have the support of the entire capitalist media, the Tories and the Labour Party and TUC leaders.

The blind patriotism fostered amongst young workers in the arena of sport is an important means of instilling the false theory that Britain is 'one nation'. The idea that capitalist Britain does not consist of two hostile classes, but merely of 'British people', is used as a weapon in the fight to hold down wages to maximise profits, to dragoon young workers into fighting for 'their' country and to discredit Marxism and therefore hold back the development of a revolutionary leadership. This, the outlook of the capitalist class, is faithfully echoed by every right-wing Labour Party and trade union leader, and most of the so-called 'lefts'.

As Leon Trotsky observed: '... the revolution will inevitably awaken in the British working class the deepest passions which have been so skilfully restrained and suppressed by social

By Daniel Evans & Alastair Wrightson

conventions, the church and the press, and diverted along artificial channels with the aid of boxing, football, racing and other forms of sport.' ('Writings on Britain', Vol.2, p.123).

The wealthy football moguls claim that 'hooliganism' is nothing to do with them. In fact, they have done much to ensure that fascist thugs have the ideal conditions to operate in. The more football has become dominated by commercial considerations - huge transfer fees, advertising, sponsorship - the more the clubs have required a distorted competitive spirit both on the field and on the terraces. Football is big business. Beating an opposing

team can now mean the difference between rags and riches.

Far from excluding the fascist groups from football grounds, the video surveillance equipment and membership card schemes which the Tories are planning to introduce in the 1989-90 season will serve only to debar ordinary workers and youth as small clubs go bankrupt or sell out to property speculators and the giants raise ticket prices to take advantage of less competition. Football is well on the way to being transformed into an elitist entertainment for those with large bank balances.

Class conscious workers and youth must take the responsibility for tackling every manifestation of

racism on the terraces and organise the defence of supporters against fascist provocations and police attacks. Demand that Labour councils refuse planning permission for football grounds to be turned into multi-million pound investments by property speculators, and that these grounds be turned over to the working class community where the stadiums and facilities can be made available for youth free of charge during the week.

Football must be taken out of the hands of the profiteers. Only socialism can develop sport both as an entertainment and in a way which emphasises its primary purpose - the development of physical and mental skills and athleticism.



The final leg of the 600-mile Freedom March for Nelson Mandela was joined by nearly 200,000 people as it marched through London on July 17 to celebrate the ANC leader's 70th birthday and demand his release after 26 years in prison in South Africa

Housing crisis grows for jobless Irish in London

By Lizzy Ali

MASS unemployment in the Irish Republic, which currently stands at 18.5 per cent, is forcing thousands of youths to come to Britain in search of work.

The Irish government estimates an emigration rate of 30,000 per annum to Britain, although the real figure is believed to be much higher. The vast majority are young people under the age of 25. The difficulty of finding accommodation, particularly in London, means that many Irish youths are exploited by the most unscrupulous private land-

lords, who charge at least £50 per week to share a dingy room, or are forced to sleep rough.

They also fall foul of recent changes in the social security system, since youths between the ages of 16 and 18 can no longer receive state benefits unless they are on a youth training scheme. The reduction in housing benefits and the impending Poll Tax will further pauperise young Irish people.

Census figures for the Republic for 1988 show that

- despite a high birth rate - there was a net fall in the population of 5,000 compared with the previous year.

With the housing crisis worsening, and Labour-led authorities such as Camden and Islington adopting racist repatriation policies, British workers must force Labour councils to reverse these reactionary measures and mount an immediate housing programme to combat homelessness, with special provisions to be made for homeless Irish youths.

THE EDUCATION Reform Bill became law on July 29 after a final scramble to obtain its Royal Assent before the closing of the parliamentary session. This clears the road for the major attacks on education within the Act to go ahead.

Tory Education Secretary Kenneth Baker's Bill has stimulated numbers of right-wing academics to offer the government helpful advice on how to make education even more 'commercially viable'. A group at the LSE has set itself up as one of the most important and aggressive pro-Tory 'think-tanks'. It is hosting a conference this month to promote the use of vouchers for funding universities.

Vouchers, otherwise known as 'education entitlements', would be issued to prospective students who would then buy their degree course at the university of their choice. This would effectively privatise education and further discriminate against youth from low-paid or unemployed families. The LSE team is also responsible for plans to phase out parental contributions and instead force students to pay back ten per cent of their grants through national insurance contributions when they are wage-earners. This is a huge blow to working class students who will also be obliged to repay ten per cent of their grants despite the fact that their parents would not have been required to pay contributions.

The LSE team hopes eventually to increase the loan proportion of the grant and make it jointly re-payable by the employer and employee. This would undoubtedly lead to employers insisting on tight contractual control which would force workers to stay in a job for a longer period of time.

LPYS loses seat

FROM next April, the 'Militant'-controlled Labour Party Young Socialists will lose its guaranteed seat on the Labour Party's national executive. In future, the youth representative will be elected by a joint conference of LPYS branches, the sparse youth sections of affiliated trade unions, and the National Organisation of Labour Students which is controlled by a pro-Kinnock leadership.