

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1992 VOL 1. NO.5

FIGHT THREAT OF WAR

The crisis of the Major government only months after its election victory is dramatic proof of the impact of the world capitalist slump on Britain.

Throughout the world, economies have plunged into uncontrollable turmoil.

Unemployment in the major industrialised nations is predicted to rise to a total of 40 million by next year.

In Britain, all talk of "recovery" is abandoned as production slumps, all sectors lay off thousands more each day and the government's budget deficit soars.

by Paul Feldman

The far-right nationalist Lord Ridley, former Cabinet minister under Thatcher, warns of a 1929-style financial crash.

He has good reason to do so. The desperate calls for help from Abbey National, Barclays and NatWest indicate that they know their assets are insufficient to cover bad debts in the housing and property market.

The major banks, for example, have loans outstanding to the property and construction sectors of £40 billion, but have only set aside £2 billion against their likely non-repayment.

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People queue for bread rations in Sarajevo

It is believed that a further 20 per cent fall in house prices would bring down the major building societies.

Interest rates are held at over 10 per cent to protect an overvalued pound, fuelling the crisis, and the trade deficit continues to grow.

All the features of the slump of the 1930s are present in the crisis in Britain and internationally.

Just as 60 years ago the slump created conditions for fascism and war, so today the same menace faces workers everywhere.

Plans for military intervention in Yugoslavia are but the first steps down the road to imperialist war for the conquest and re-division of the world along the lines decided by the major powers.

The rulers of Britain and America do not give a fig for the plight of ordinary people. Their servile media weep crocodile tears about the suffering of the Croatian and Bosnian people after having flattered the nationalists and then encouraged the militarisation of the entire region.

Britain and Germany encouraged anti-communist mercenaries to fight in Yugoslavia and the international arms dealers are having a bonanza. German capitalism, in particular, forced through the recognition of

Croatia to break up Yugoslavia.

Anyone with a knowledge of history knew that the recognition of Croatia would terrify and stampede the Serbs who only one generation ago lost more than 500,000 people to the combined forces of the German Nazis and the Croatian Ustasha.

What is behind these moves is the desire to expand into the Balkans, and once more make Croatia a puppet state of the German ruling class.

This expansionism runs contrary to the interests of British capitalism, and that is why Major has declared economic war on Germany.

His insistence that Sterling must replace the mighty Deutschmark as Europe's chief currency is more than a fanciful hope to return to a period of history that last existed over 100 years ago.

It reveals the growing tensions between Europe's two historical enemies and is accompanied by moves to send German troops to the Balkans in breach of the country's constitution.

Every economist knows that for Major's dream to come true would require the destruction of the German economy.

That could only be achieved

through military means, and be accompanied by the reduction of British workers to slave-like conditions and full-scale police-military dictatorship.

Major is being driven down that road by the irresistible slide of the British economy into ever-deeper slump. The divisions inside Tory ranks, expressed in bitter recriminations in the press, confirm the desperation of the government.

Thatcher and her cronies, including those in the secret state around MI5, remain poised to act later in the year when the disintegration reaches crisis point.

The Tories are preparing for a winter of confrontation. State benefits will be cut and for single people stopped completely, forcing the most vulnerable into total poverty.

Wages will be cut for those in work, while public and local services will be broken up and privatized if the Tories have their way.

While the Tories plan and scheme, the Labour and trade union leaders throw up their hands in horror and say nothing can be done until the next general election!

How ridiculous! The working class cannot afford to wait for the right-wing led Labour Party to lose yet another election or join an anti-working class coalition.

Union leaders fear the independent movement of the working class and openly collaborate with the employers and the Tory anti-union laws. The TUC leaders place holding on to their assets above fighting the government.

The working class will have no choice but to resist in every possible way Tory attempts to destroy their basic right to a future and drag them into an imperialist war.

These struggles must centre on the urgent need to overthrow a capitalist system that is preparing once again to drag the whole of humanity to world war and ultimate destruction. ●

From health to construction:

Workers call for leadership



Staff of Westminster Hospital picket against redundancies

Riverside Health Authority workers in London struck and demonstrated recently against redundancies, attacks on working conditions and closures. Socialist Future spoke to Peter, a NUPE shop steward, about their aims:

“There is going to be an explosion all across the National Health Service. People have had enough, and what we are looking for is a complete U-turn by the government on health. If they can bail out Canary Wharf and pay themselves more, they can help the NHS. Everyone knows the Tories have always opposed the NHS.

In every section of the workforce there are different issues to fight - introduction of private agency staff in some areas, redundancies, cuts in overtime. What we need is collective action. As far as the union is concerned, they don't try to get us united. If this doesn't change I can see the members and shop stewards

disowning the union. After the action in 1988, which ended with a huge rally in defence of the NHS the union leaders killed it all off. And I think they are hoping that this London-wide action on August 21st will do the same thing, and that things will die down after that. What happened to the miners and others has made them cautious. But the shop stewards here are different. We are younger and we want to go out and fight.

Workers here should have some say in what happens, in how the money is spent. I would love to see the books.

One of the problems in the past has been the failure to link our fight with the local community who use the service. What we want is a nationwide organisation of health workers knocking on Virginia Bottomley's door saying: 'What about our jobs, what about patient care'.”

Lou Lewis is a full-time organiser with the construction union UCATT. Socialist Future spoke to him about the situation facing the unions as they prepare for the Annual Conference of the TUC in Blackpool:

“The trade unions have not faced up to another five years of Tory government and the fact that employers are using the recession to destroy wages and conditions. The workforce is becoming fragmented and de-unionised, with a growing pool of unemployed.

The TUC has not recognised any of this. They are tied to the same economics as the government - they think it is a question of economic cycles. But the last boom cycle did not end unemployment. Soon we will have a pool of mobile unemployed in Europe, and many British firms are moving their centres to other European countries. The de-industrialisation of Britain will worsen with the single market, and if the international GATT agreement is implemented, workers all over Europe will suffer.

There are positive and negative aspects to the present situation in my industry. The negative is the reduction in wages and the loss of jobs. The positive is that there is a new attempt to organise rank and file members.

But people will not be able to fight unless they get some leadership. Or, as with some of the youth now, you get actions which are violent and unfocussed. And there is no prospect of the TUC giving it. The Communist Party used to take a lead in some of these struggles, but now that is gone, I am not sure where leadership can come from.

Mergers into larger unions have taken place from a negative stance, from the fear of declining resources. They are not designed to fight the employers more strongly. In UCATT we should not be interested in the numbers game; we should set about building a strong union to represent the interests of construction workers.”

Trade unions under illegality: betrayed but not defeated

Trade unionists recently commemorated the 20th anniversary of the jailing of the five London dockers in 1972, the Pentonville Five. The jailing took place during the heyday of trade union militancy in Britain. As jailed docker Vic Turner recently said: "The events of 1972 were the culmination of a struggle that had been going on for a number of years, officially and unofficially."

Under the rule of the Heath Tory government, the ruling class and its state were unable to keep the five men in jail for more than five days, nor were they able to make them "purge their contempt" - make them recognise the right of the state to judge them.

The militancy of the early 1970s culminated in the defeat of the Heath government during the miners' strike of 1973-1974. It was the first time a government had resigned in the middle of a strike.

The combativity of the working class in Britain reached an even higher level during the great miners' strike of 1984-1985. Due to strike-breaking by the state-organised scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers and long-term pre-planning, the employers and the government were able to keep industry running despite the reduction in coal supplies.

Despite widespread financial support, there was no serious industrial action by the rest of the trade union movement to back the miners. The strike ended with the miners returning to work in April

and is still the case, is that to win any kind of struggle requires a plan and a leadership to organise the defeat of the state itself.

The miners were betrayed but not defeated. Now it is time to draw

some serious conclusions about what has happened to the British trade unions since 1985.

A major offensive by the employers and the state erupted against print workers in London at the end of 1985. Media tycoon Rupert Murdoch had built a new plant for "The Times" and "The Sunday Times" at Wapping in order to smash the closed shop organisation of the NGA and the other print union SOGAT. This he did.

Giving recognition to the EETPU electricians union, he set one section of trade unionists

against the other. With the assistance of journalists he succeeded in producing his newspapers and even reached the newstands earlier than his rivals, by using the scab distributors TNT.

The Wapping conflict was a defeat for the print trade unions, although it was not the end of trade unionism. It was however, final proof that the reformist union leaders such as Brenda Dean of SOGAT and many others, could not and would not take on the Tory anti-union laws.

What was possible for the



The jailing of the Pentonville five - a turning point in trade union struggle

1985. They had not won their main demand that their pits should be kept open. The government remained in power, but hundreds of miners were brutally beaten by the police, many were jailed and tens of thousands later lost their jobs.

The miners in 1984-5 could not repeat the experience of 1974 when they brought down the Heath government. The ruling class had learned the lessons of a decade earlier. Thatcher brought the power of the capitalist state into the middle of the fight. What was posed then,

Pentonville Five in 1972 was not possible in 1986. As Vic Turner says: "The second time around, they [the Tories] had created conditions of mass unemployment and passed another five sets of anti-union laws...and there is only one avenue within the law and that leads to defeat. That is how the law has been framed."

MEMBERSHIP DROP

It is wrong to pretend that these new conditions are of little or no consequence. Whilst Arthur Scargill is right to insist on the undiminished potential power of his members, neither he or any other trade unionist can ignore the drop in trade union membership. In the NUM it has been from 250,000 in 1982 to 44,000 members today. In the TUC as a whole membership has dropped by 5 million from nearly 13 million in the early 1980s to 7.25 million.

The working class as a whole remains undefeated, but some important battles have been lost. Hospitals have been closed, and more are on the way. The health union leadership has accepted privatisation and closures. Local government services have been run down and closed.

And what about the five million workers and their families who are no longer in trade unions? Didn't they pay their union subs for many years? Don't the trade unions have any obligation to those without work as well as the youth leaving school and left without jobs or training?

Turner is right to say that while workers saw the erosion of their work "everyone hoped they would be a survivor, but the system did not allow that". The question is how to fight this individualist attitude which has allowed the Tories to push unemployment up to its highest levels since the 1930s.

Trade unionism is illegal. Whilst workers are said to have the right to join a trade union, any real trade union action is immediately outside the law. Every struggle today therefore, large or small, immediately means a confrontation



The Wapping dispute confirmed the miners' experience - trade union struggle is illegal in Britain

with the forces of the state

The TUC and Labour Party leaderships actively collaborate with the Tory government to keep the anti-trade union laws on the statute books. Their acceptance of the Thatcher and Major governments can only be compared to the way German labour leaders allowed Hitler's rise to power.

Trade unionism pure and simple, confined to General Strike calls and other demands, cannot answer the pressing problems facing the working class. These are first and foremost a question of political and state power. A perspective of building a workers' state must be top of the agenda for those fighting to save jobs and services.

Arthur Scargill says "there is a distinct possibility of a new party emerging based on the trade union

movement" ["Guardian" August 1, 1992). He does not say what kind of party.

The routing of the left in the Parliamentary Labour Party proves more clearly than ever that left reformism has paved the way for a complete take-over by the right wing. Labour is now led by anti-socialist, pro-coalition elements and has completely betrayed its supporters.

The Communist League calls on trade unionists to join us in building a new revolutionary leadership in the working class. The dangerous vacuum of leadership must be filled by organising independent action by the trade unions, workers and young people to overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers' state. ●

UCATT BRANCH CONDEMNS "TRIAL" OF COMMUNIST PARTY

The following resolution was agreed by UCATT Tooting 3rd branch

This branch calls on the executive of UCATT to condemn the trial of the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union, prompted by the pro-capitalist government of President Yeltsin. Yeltsin and his supporters deliberately equate socialism with Stalinism. The trial is to maintain that lie. An analysis of the last 70 years is essential for the working class to maintain its power in the former Soviet Union. Leaders like Yeltsin who threaten that power must be removed.

Since the re-election of the Conservative government, the leaders of the working class in Scotland have reached for the nationalist cloak to cover their naked failure to save a single job in Scottish industry.

They offer Scottish workers the mirage of "independence in Europe" as an answer to mass unemployment, and what a Glasgow community worker recently described as "poverty on a scale I never thought possible in an advanced nation". They fail to add that this is Europe in the grip of the worst slump since the war, with the EC in crisis after the failure of the Maastricht Treaty.

DEMONSTRATION

The Tory election victory was greeted in Scotland with horror. In answer to a call from a group calling itself "Scotland United", thousands of people of all ages and classes poured into Glasgow's George Square two days after the election in a spontaneous demonstration against the result.

As the demonstration was taking place, a meeting of the Scottish Labour MPs overturned their previous decision and agreed to back the main demand of Scotland United - for a referendum on the constitution, where the Scottish

Scots reformists take nationalist road

by Penny Cole



Militancy has failed to protect jobs in Scottish steel, and other industries

people could decide for the Union, for devolution, or for home rule.

What the Labour MPs must explain is why they demand this now, when the Conservatives won more seats in Scotland than in 1987. If it is, as they claim, that the Tories lack a mandate to rule in Scotland, why did they not do it in 1987, when the Tory mandate

was even weaker?

The answer is clear enough. They know that there can be no more reformist Labour governments in Britain. The Labour Party nationally wants to ditch its historic foundation - the British working class organised in its trade unions. They plan to abandon their commitment to universal benefits, like the old age pension and student grants.

MILITANCY

Labour MPs in Scotland have always tail-ended the militant actions of the working class. Now that militancy alone has proved unable to save jobs or defend working conditions, they have turned to nationalism, and they have been supported in this by the Stalinist and reformist leaders of the Scottish trade union movement. This attempt to tie the historic militancy of Scottish workers to a nationalist platform is their greatest betrayal yet.

The Conservative government is paying little attention to the

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I am interested in joining the Communist League

Name _____

Address _____

Age _____ Trade Union _____

Send to: Communist League, Box 942, London SW1V 2AR

referendum demand. They are quite happy for the anger of Scottish workers to blow itself out on the issue; they have seen these coalitions which "transcend class questions" in action in Scotland before.

When the closure of Upper Clyde Shipyards was announced by the Heath government in 1971, the reformist and Stalinist leaders of the unions forged a "Holy Alliance" with ministers of the Kirk, duchesses, professors and nationalist, and even some Tory, MPs well to the fore. In the meantime they rejected the demand for a general strike to defend jobs, and an occupation of the yards. The issue transcended class, they said. But the yards closed all the same.

Never ones to learn a lesson, the announcement of the closure of the Ravenscraig steelworks, first made in 1990, brought the same response. The old alliance of reformists, liberals, churchmen and popular musicians was brought together once again to fight for the 3,500 jobs – but this time on nationalist lines. The issue was not only one which transcended class, it was a Scottish issue, they said. Now Ravenscraig is closed.

CLASS ISSUES

How different these leaders are from the shop stewards' movements on Clydeside during the First World War, which joined with others in Coventry and Sheffield to lead a fight against the imposition of slave labour conditions to increase arms' production for the imperialist war. They demonstrated contempt for the ruling class appeal to nationalism and patriotism.

The Scottish working class has a proud history of playing a major role in the struggles of the British working class. Now the challenge is to transcend trade union militancy and fight for revolutionary action to defeat capitalism.

Scottish people have the right to demand devolution, or independence, if they so choose. But the Labour MPs and trade union

leaders are embracing it as an alternative to a struggle against the state and monopoly capitalism.

The working class in Britain is facing a desperate and disunited slump government, with extreme right-wing policies. The overthrow of this Bonapartist dictatorship is the issue facing workers. The undefeated strength and unity of the working class will be decisive in the struggles ahead.

DECISIVE BREAK

There is a Scottish dimension to the class struggle in Britain. There are 800,000 workers organised in trade unions in Scotland; as a dynamic part of the 7 million organised working class, they can take a lead with their powerful traditions. To achieve this will require a decisive break with reformism and Stalinism and the building of a revolutionary leadership. The working class in

Scotland can win large sections of the middle class and intelligentsia over to revolution; they must not instead be dragged in behind a policy of petit bourgeois nationalism.

There is no future for the Scottish working class divided by nationalism from the working class in England and Wales. Historically, the Scottish labour movement has always looked outwards and for international allies.

It is no accident that the first meetings of the Communist International set up after the Russian Revolution were attended by leaders like Willie Gallacher and John Maclean.

Nationalism cannot answer the problems of unemployment, training, education, the environment, democratic rights, or any social issue. It is a dead end, and revolutionaries must conduct an uncompromising struggle with it in Scotland, England and every country. ●

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

A couple of weeks ago an otherwise fairly good documentary on television about the late General Franco, was spoiled by the presenter saying:

"...February 16th (1936) the 'Left' scrape through"

Nothing could be further from the truth. It is a historical fact that the Popular Front (the "Left") won a very decisive victory over the "Right", as the following figures for the seats won in the Cortes (the Spanish parliament) shows:

The left parties obtained 272 seats in the Cortes. They had 121 seats in the 1933 Elections, so they gained 151 seats in 1936. The right wing parties obtained 196 seats. In the 1933 elections they had 352 seats, so in 1936 they lost 156 seats. In

short, from 121 seats the left parties jumped to 272 seats, and the right wing parties from 352 seats dropped to 196 seats.

LEFT VICTORY

The local elections at the same time showed an avalanche victory to the left parties, and no doubt must also be on record. The fatal mistake that the republic made was to elect Manuel Azana as president. He was as he himself stated a "man of peace". But the Spanish people needed "tigers" to defend the republic.

I know it because I was there, and believe that it is important to tell it as it was.

Fraternal Greetings

CC

South London

Russian communists

The Russian Party of Communists (RPC) is one of a number of organisations that has emerged in the workers' movement since the outlawing last year of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union by the Yeltsin government in Moscow. One of the leaders of the RPC, Boris Slavin, who is also co-ordinator of the left-wing parties in Russia, spoke to **Socialist Future** about the struggle for socialism in his own country and internationally.

What is your assessment of the current situation in Russia?

Today the politics of "reforms" undertaken by the government has no credibility, and it is easy to see why. Prices have increased six-fold, and the standard of living has collapsed to a very low level. The great social gains made in our country are being destroyed – soon medical care and education will no longer be free. The pension is being progressively lowered, and people no longer have access to cheap subsidised housing. Soon the factories will start to close and unemployment will grow. Already many major factories, for example in Kirov and Leningrad, have sent their workers on unpaid leave. The government has been unable to stabilise the money system and many workers have not been paid for several months. This situation cannot last for ever.

Politically, the country is becoming less, not more, democratic. The mass media express only the government's opinions. The opposition newspapers are either closed or there are restrictions on printing or selling them. We only see the loyal opposition on TV. The television peddles the American style of life. The things we were used to are no longer shown on TV. All the good things we have achieved are now thrown out of history,

especially our history after 1917.

And yet all this has failed to quell the indignation of the people, and the number of protests by the masses against the government has grown since January of this year. The social anger inside society is shown by the struggle of the new parties against the government. We can see it most clearly in the events outside the television station, Ostankino, where the protesters demanded one hour on television each day to air the opinions of the opposition. Up to now they have not succeeded, but the struggle is not finished

The government showed its power by sending special riot police - units of OMON - in against the workers of Moscow outside the TV Centre. Many people were beaten with batons and they used tear gas. It is thought that a number of people were killed, though it has not been proved yet. A lot of people have disappeared and have not been seen since the demonstration. – it is possible they are not alive.

But the social protest we can see here has not yet gripped the whole of the masses, and especially the workers. Some of the most powerful groups of workers now have been bribed with very high wages. For example teachers' wages now are about 1,500 roubles a month whereas miners earn about 13-15,000 roubles. This has drawn one

group of workers into the opposition, but also sets one group of workers against another. Other workers are bribed with cheap sugar or meat, given to only one section of workers and not others. This can lead to divisions in the working class.

The government is also trying to set one nationality against one another; it is encouraging fascism and chauvinism. Nationalist provocateurs are coming into the working class movement and they often shout anti-Semitic slogans - we saw examples of this during the demonstrations outside the television station.

The government is trying to prove that Communists are anti-Semitic, but this is not so. The government is trying to use the constitutional court to shut down the communist movement. Yeltsin has asked the constitutional commission to say that the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) is illegal.

The measures which the government has taken against the communists and the working class, are proof of its weakness.

They are proof that the government does not know how to get out of crisis by peaceful means, and from here we see the road open to totalitarian methods of rule.

By autumn the political situation will have become far worse and political tension will increase. The government wants to introduce capitalism, ignoring the true political and economic situation in our country. They are ignoring the high level of social equality, the social gains of the working class and its standard of living.

Many people in Britain don't know what kind of government the Yeltsin government is. How would you describe it?

It is a government of comprador

fight for the future



Boris Slavin, a leader of the Russian Party of Communists, in his "Pravda" office

bourgeoisie*, formed out of the former bureaucracy. It is dragging the people down, and represents the interests of mafia and speculator groups in our society. It will not hold on to power for long. It is incompetent, and does not understand the country or the people. Mainly, it is made up of ex-communists offering a new utopia. Ignoring the low level of productivity, they are eager to build modern capitalism in five days. They are utopians who have no scientific understanding.

What have they achieved? They have destroyed the Union; they will destroy Russia; and they are stealing from the nation. They are leading society towards civil war.

What can socialists learn from the history of the Soviet Union?

The first attempt to build socialism was in the country which was furthest behind in Europe in industrial development, and that is why it naturally failed. The experience showed us that socialism cannot be built in one single country. Socialism is an international movement and now we know this from our own experience, not only from the theoretical works of Lenin and Trotsky.

The movement for socialism continues to grow and we see this today in the developed countries of the world. Our own century has been proof of the demand for socialism.

We had an early socialist revolution in our country. October was the first socialist revolution; there were new formations that were built suddenly. The development of revolution was mixed up with reconstruction. Socialism or communism must be built out of necessity. It is a new formation which will be driven on by a new wave of revolutionary events.

The idea of building capitalism in our country is a temporary event. We will not have the full construction of capitalism; this would go against the laws of history. The government already realises that they can't just privatise socialised property; it is not very easy. And the workers will soon realise it soon. Our workers did not like "barracks" socialism, and that is why they have not yet opposed capitalist policies. But when they see the capitalist reality they will rise against it.

Can you say something about the new political parties which have emerged?

The old CPSU is destroyed and

" Socialism cannot be built in one single country. Socialism is an international movement and now we know this from our own experience, not only from the theoretical works of Lenin and Trotsky."

cannot be reconstructed. It was a bureaucratic structure. It contained different political opinions from anarchists to monarchists. Now new political parties, a new left movement, has arisen from these foundations. These new left parties suffer from the problems left over from the old Communist Party, and from an opportunist sickness. But they will live through it.

The real Marxist party is the Russian Party of Communists. There are other parties – of the Stalinist type, radical communist parties, and other socialist parties. They all represent different social classes in our society, from the educated masses of the working class connected with hard physical labour to the modern educated worker. The lesson of Stalinism has been learned by communists. The aims now are not connected with Stalinism or liberalism but with a new communist society. The new society will be built on a democratic communist base. This is the aim of the new communist movement.

The events in this country will have an influence on Britain and on the West. They will lead to increased exploitation of the working class in Britain and elsewhere. Our cheap labour will be in competition with workers in the West. In the struggle against these new forms of exploitation there will be built a new international union of the working class of all the world. I hope your magazine will help to bring this into being. ●

[* Comprador bourgeoisie - local agents of foreign capital.]

JOHN HEARTFIELD

The Barbican Art Gallery is showing 300 photomontages by John Heartfield until October 18. This is the first major exhibition of Heartfield's work in Britain since 1969, and is highly recommended. John Heartfield, the father of photomontage, was one of the most outstanding political artists of this century. He joined the newly-founded German Communist Party in 1918 together with George Grosz.



Heartfield himself and police president Zörgiebel feature in "Use photography as a weapon" (1929)

During the 1920s and early 1930s, he produced some of his most famous satirical attacks against fascism for the photojournal for workers, A-I-Z. He was forced into exile in 1933, but continued to communicate his anti-Nazi message. He fled to Britain and was interned by the British government in 1939. In 1950 he returned to East Germany where he died in 1968. ●



Principles of Political Economy, 1991 - by Karen Knorr

THE CUTTING EDGE

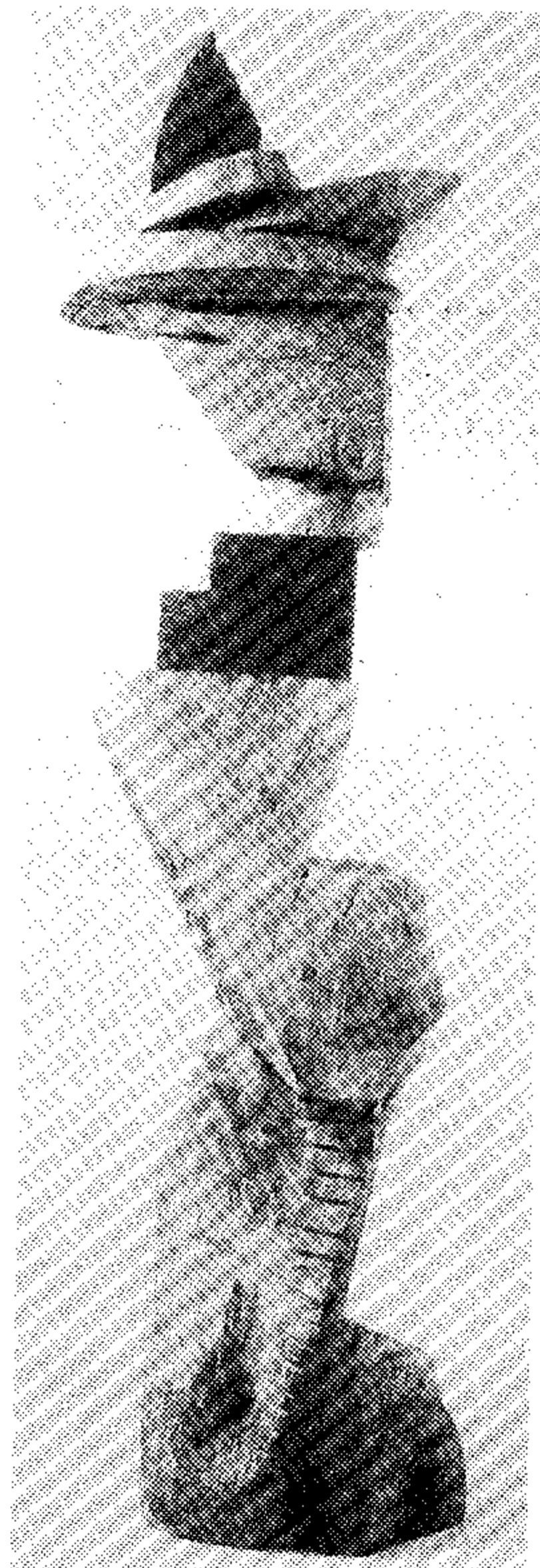
Also at the Barbican is an exhibition of ironic humour and satire by a small group of contemporary British artists. The show includes Spitting Image caricatures, cartoons by Steve Bell, Peter Brooks, Chris Riddell, Gerald Scarfe and Trog. Other artists include Stephen Dixon, Ralph Steadman, Peter Kennard, Mona Hatoum, Karen Knorr, Ingrid Pollard, Jacky Fleming, Bill Woodrow, Art and Language, as well as videos by David Anderson and Aardman Animation. ●

Admission to both
John Heartfield and
The Cutting Edge: £4.50,
Concessions £2.50.
Thurs 5p.m-6.45p.m.
£2.50.
Barbican Art Gallery,
London EC2Y 8BDS
Tel: 071 638 4141



Perhaps London's smallest exhibition space, the X-O Gallery in South Kensington, packs a lot of punch per square inch. Thanks to the slump in the property market, the gallery has been able to use a large space near Olympia, Hammersmith where it is showing its "Salon of New Abstraction in Britain".

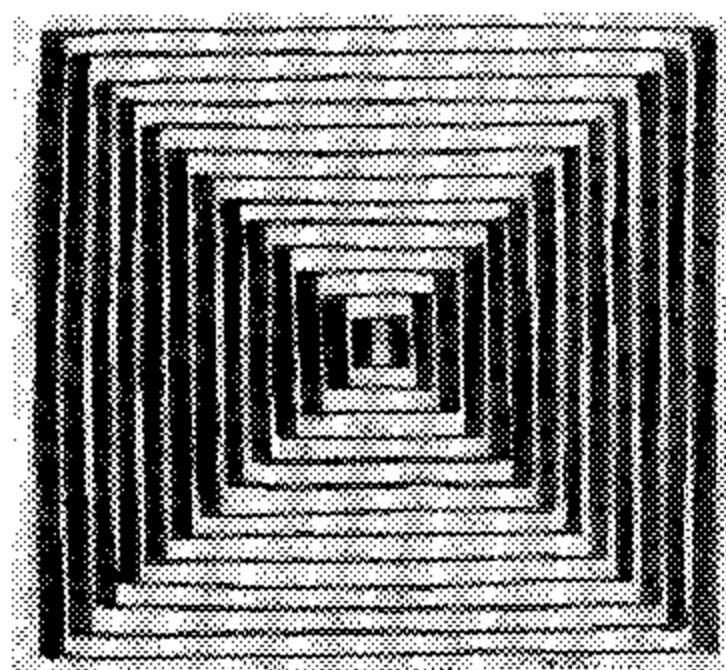
This "Salon" opened in July with an appearance by performance artist Mira Bernabeu.



Jacob's Ladder - wood sculpture by Sandra Bromley

The XO, run by Catherine Lillingston, specialises in abstract painting and sculpture, and installations. Its large "stable" of artists shows the rich and varied talent to be found in abstract work, to be found in Britain.

Some of the artists are from Britain, while German, Dutch, American others are from other countries, resident or working in London. Many of them have already had one-person exhibitions over the past few months. As so often in abstract art, the borderlines between painting, sculpture and architecture are explored.



Drawing 1966 - Peter Marsh

Within the realm of abstraction, styles vary. We find hard-edge geometric discipline in the work of Jules De Goede, Michael Daykin, Seki Naomi and Peter Marsh. Mike Rennie and Edward Rennie create complex rhythms marked by a precise judgement. Sandra

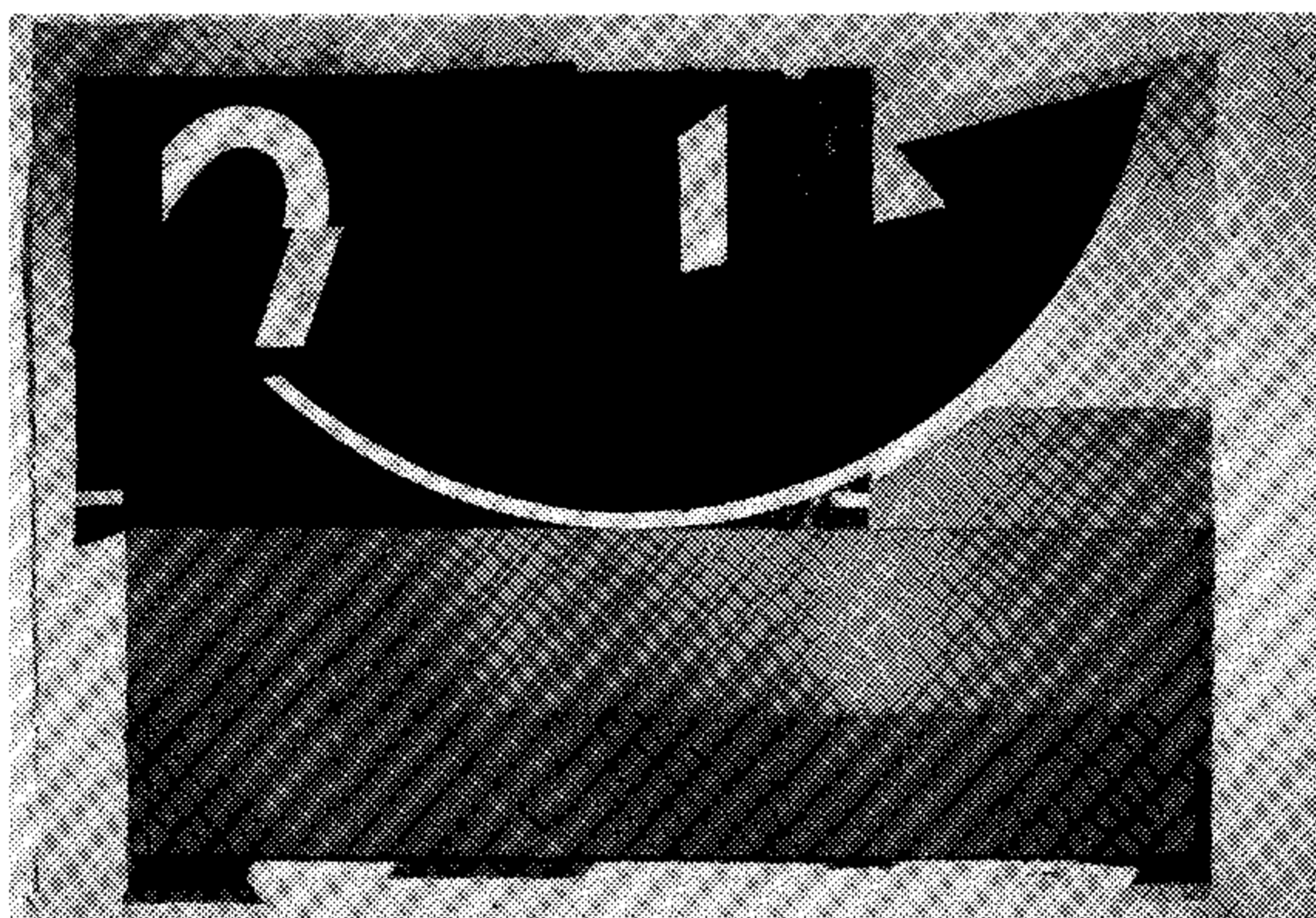
Bromley's large wooden sculptures have both power and wit.

Claudia Wegener shows dynamic charcoal drawings together with sculpture. She is interested in "polyphony — the multi-layering of things". Vibrant colour appears in collages by Antje Siebrecht. Miles Watson works in oils as well as relief sculptures combining a variety of techniques with a theatrical dimension.

Work by these and other gallery artists will be on display until the end of September at 99-101 Hammersmith Road, W.14 and at 165 Draycott Avenue, SW3. (Tel 584 2534). ●



"The Homecoming" - Miles Watson



"Study" - work on paper, Edward Rennie



PHOTOGRAPHY IN RUSSIA 1840-1940

The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in Oxford is showing an outstanding collection of work by Russian and Soviet photographers. Assembled by David Elliott in association with leading photo-archivists in the former USSR, it provides a unique chance to see not only photography but also early Russian cinema. A book by Thames and Hudson is being published to go with the exhibition. Until October 25 at MOMA, Oxford. Tel: 0865 72273 ●

Sukharevsky Boulevard, 1928 - Aleksandr Rodchenko

52ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASSASSINATION OF LEON TROTSKY

On August 20, 1940, Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the Russian Revolution and founder of the Red Army, was struck down by the assassin Ramon Mercader, alias Jacques Mornard, alias Frank Jacson, an agent of Stalin's secret police, the GPU. Mercader was one of a network of GPU agents who had infiltrated the Trotskyist movement. They had organised the murder of Trotsky's son in Paris and two of his secretaries. Determined to liquidate the leading opponent of Stalinism, the GPU had pursued Trotsky, who in 1938 founded the Fourth International to continue the fight for a world socialist revolution, to Mexico, where the fatal blow was struck.

Investigations over 30 years later by the International Committee of the Fourth International through access to US archives showed that some of the GPU agents and their accomplices had also worked with the American Federal Bureau of Investigation. What also emerged was

that Joseph Hansen, one of Trotsky's secretaries in Mexico, and George Novack, both leading members of the Socialist Workers Party of the USA, had shielded known GPU agents and covered up their crimes.

Today Stalinism lies shattered and the works of Trotsky are widely read and discussed in Russia and other republics where communists are struggling to understand the process of the degeneration of the October Revolution. The lies, slanders and fabrications of the Stalin period are treated with contempt. The task in front is to complete the political revolution elaborated by Trotsky in the struggle against the pro-capitalist Yeltsin regime.

To mark the 52nd anniversary of his murder, we are republishing an article that was first published shortly after Trotsky's death in *Workers' International News*, which was the paper of the Workers' International League, British section of the Fourth International

His work continues

On August 22 Leon Trotsky succumbed to wounds inflicted with an alpine axe by an agent of the GPU known as Frank Jackson, but who described himself to the police as Jacques Norton Van den Dreischd. Subsequently he made a confession in which he claims to be Jacques Mornard, the son of a Belgian diplomatist.

Comrade Trotsky was attacked in the afternoon of August 20th whilst the two were having tea together in Trotsky's home in Mexico City. The assailant was an intimate of the Trotsky household, having posed as a friend and a promulgator of the victim's political theories for some time.

The hired assassins of Stalin have at last successfully accomplished their most important and most monstrous assignment. This crudest of all conceivable methods; battering in the head of a political opponent with an axe, aptly typifies the Moscow director of the crime and the cruel unbridled tyranny of the



Trotsky in exile in Alma Ata

political regime which he personifies.

Trotsky was preparing an exposure before the Mexican court concerning the criminal activity of the GPU on the American continent which deeply compromised the GPU and members of the Mexican Communist Party, eight of whom are now held by the Mexican police as accomplices in the previous attempted assassination of Trotsky and in the murder of Robert Sheldon Harte. The Stalinists were making desperate attempts to block this

judicial investigation. The dastardly action of the GPU has stemmed the hand of Trotsky from penning these exposures.

The Bonapartist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, at the head of which stands Stalin, fears above all the policy of world proletarian revolution propagated by Lenin's closest collaborator of the October Revolution. In contrast to Stalin, Trotsky refused to abandon his principles in favour of the acquisition of bureaucratic

power and unlimited privileges which is the present lot of the Kremlin oligarchy.

From the time of Lenin's death, and even prior to that tragic event, it became evident that the revolutionary convulsions which shook the foundations of the European capitalist edifice at the conclusion of the first world war, were subsiding, or at least becoming limited to mere economic struggles on the part of the oppressed. The defeats sustained by the revolutionary workers of Germany,

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Hungary, Bulgaria; the canalisation of the successive revolutionary movements throughout the European continent into social-democratic channels by the Noskes, MacDonalds and their like, presaged a long period of arduous struggle and sacrifices on the part of the Russian masses and their leaders if the social conquests of October were to be consolidated in the only possible way: the extension of the revolution to the more industrially and culturally advanced countries of the West.

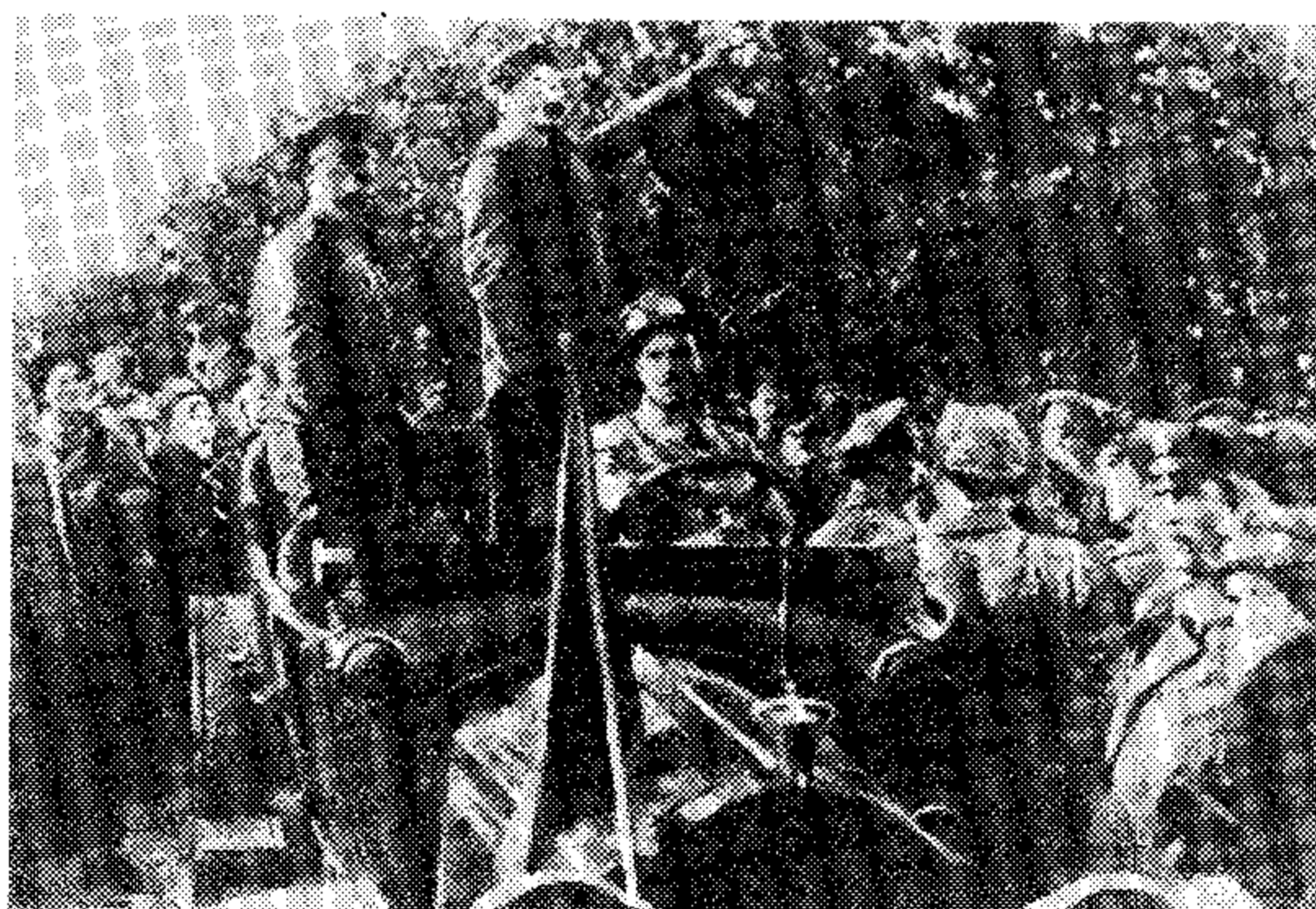
In January 1924, after a lingering illness, Lenin died. The lesser figures of the October Revolution were incapable of withstanding the receding tempo of the mass movement. Only Leon Trotsky was able to maintain aloft the scarlet standard, symbol of the magnificent proletarian victory of 1917. Trotsky whose achievements during and immediately after the revolution in the restoration of order from the chaos of the years of civil war was instrumental in safeguarding the workers' state from its capitalist enemies both within and outside its borders.

PERSECUTION

It was Trotsky, of whom Lenin said, in conversation with Maxim Gorky: "Show me another man who would be able in a year to organise a model army, yes, and win the esteem of the military specialists." Despite persecution and vilification from the usurping Thermidorian caste, despite the consolidation of reaction manifest in the increasing power of the Stalinist bureaucracy, Trotsky did not deviate one inch from his life's mission. He continued to counterpose the internationalist

programme of the world proletarian revolution to the counter-revolutionary nationalist, Stalinist theory of "Socialism in a single country" which was advanced by the epigones of Lenin as a screen for their actions, as a false cover for their abandonment of the principles of the revolution.

Trotsky, together with a number of other well known Bolsheviks formed an opposition bloc against the Stalinist ruling clique. He was expelled from the Russian Communist Party in October 1927, and in 1928 he was exiled to Alma-Ata. During his sojourn in Central



Trotsky addresses troops from one of the cars that travelled with him on his famous train

Asia Comrade Trotsky produced his historical criticism of the official programme adopted at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. This thesis, which counterposed proletarian internationalism to the nationalist programme submitted by Stalin-Bucharin became the platform around which the Left Opposition crystallised inside the Third International. Trotsky's book, *The Permanent Revolution* was also a product of this period. The revolutionary exile's reward for these outstanding theoretical contributions to the class struggle was – complete banishment from the USSR, and February 1929 found him in Turkey where he remained for four and a half years during which

time he established the monthly magazine, the *Russian Bulletin of the Opposition*.

SURVEILLANCE

In July 1933 Trotsky moved to France but after living under constant police surveillance for two years because of his revolutionary activities, he accepted the invitation of the newly-elected government of the Norwegian Workers' Party to reside on Scandinavian soil.

But Stalin's apprehension of the old Bolshevik leader's relentless exposure of the reactionary role of the Kremlin increased with each day

that passed and, as a result of pressure applied by the Soviet Government through the Norwegian Shipowners, Trotsky and his wife, Natalia Sedova were arrested by the Norwegian Social Democratic Government on August 27, 1936. Erwin Wolf and Van Heijernoort, his two secretaries, were deported without any reason being given. In January 1937 Comrade Trotsky and

his wife arrived in Mexico; the country which was to be his final resting place.

During this period the desperation of the Stalinist hierarchy increased in ferocity and Trotsky was compelled to fortify his home in Mexico City against the Kremlin's murder gangs. Numerous attempts have been made by the GPU to end the life of the most feared and hated adversary of Stalin during this period of his exile.

A propaganda campaign of unparalleled vilification and slander against "Trotskyism" has accompanied the physical annihilation of the opponents of Stalinism. History has been rewritten and falsified beyond recognition by the "literary" retainers of the

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► Kremlin for this base purpose; all literature dealing with the Russian revolution portraying Trotsky's true role have been banned, the classic example being John Reid's *Ten Days That Shook The World*. An instructive specimen is provided by the high priest of organised falsification Joseph Stalin. On November 6, he wrote in *Pravda*. "All the work of practical organisation of the insurrection (of October 1917) was conducted under the immediate leadership of the President of the Petrograd Soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It is possible to declare with certainty that the swift passing of the garrison to the side of the Soviet, and the bold execution of the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee, the party owes principally and above all to Comrade Trotsky."

The same Stalin, six years later, in his book *Trotskyism or Leninism*, wrote:

"Comrade Trotsky played no particular role either in the Party or the October insurrection, and could not do so, being a man comparatively new to our party in the October period."

Nor is this the extent of the Kremlin's crimes. Trotsky's entire family – two sons and two daughters – have been brought to their deaths by the GPU which also bears responsibility for the deaths of eight of his secretaries: M. Glasman, G. Butov, Y Blumkin, N. Sermuks, I. Poznasky, R. Klement, E. Wolf and the victim of three months ago, R. Sheldon Harte. Thousands of Trotsky's partisans in the Soviet Union have been massacred in the monstrous "purges". The odour of the infamous Moscow Trials will remain for decades an offence to the nostrils of class conscious workers the world over.

These facts provide the background to the culminating event, the most tragic of all, the murder of the last remaining Bolshevik leader – apart from the perpetrators of the crime, Stalin and



Police picture of young Trotsky

Molotov. With the exception of these two arch-reactionaries the entire "Old Guard" has been wiped out. The question as to which of these two will exterminate the other, or whether they will succumb simultaneously to each other's machinations awaits an answer from history.

TERRORISM

The brutal murder of Leon Trotsky will rouse the indignation of every class conscious toiler on our planet. This act will add yet another weapon to the armoury of the world bourgeoisie for use when influencing mass opinion on the occasion of a future assault on the first workers' state. Thus the question



Red Army recruiting poster

automatically poses itself: Why this uncontrolled terrorism and violence on Stalin's part? Why this compulsion to remove Leon Trotsky?

The politics of Stalinism for nearly two decades have manifest themselves in desperate acts. And the most desperate moves of all are the most recent. The frame-up "trials" and "purges", the unconcealed suppression by violence of the revolutionary workers in Spain, the Pact with Hitler, the invasion of Finland and now the assassination of Leon Trotsky, the leading figure of the Fourth International.

A passage from the Manifesto of the Fourth International War and the World Proletarian Revolution reads:

"The politicians of the big bourgeoisie are far better at orienting themselves on the role of the Fourth International than our petty bourgeois pedants. On the eve of breaking off diplomatic relations, the French Ambassador Coulondre and Hitler, seeking during their final interview to frighten each other by the consequences of the war, were in joint agreement that the only real victor would be the Fourth International. Upon the launching of hostilities against Poland the major press of France, Denmark and other countries carried dispatches saying that in the workers quarters in Berlin placards appeared on walls: "Down with Stalin, long live Trotsky!". This means: "Down with the Third International, long live the Fourth International". When a demonstration was organised by the more resolute workers and students of Prague, on the anniversary of national independence, the 'Protector', Baron Neurath, issued an official declaration placing the responsibility for this demonstration upon the Czech 'Trotskyites'. The correspondence from Prague which appears in the newspaper edited by Benes, the former president of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, confirms the fact that the workers are becoming 'Trotskyites'. As yet these

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are only symptoms. But they indicate unmistakably the trend of development."

We can rest assured that Stalin has not failed to note this trend of development and even more revealing instances are at hand. The most important of these is the mass imprisonment of revolutionary Communists of the recently incorporated Baltic States. These militant, class conscious workers, accepting the promises of the Kremlin propaganda apparatus, welcomed the Stalinist occupation of their countries and attempted to apply the principles of genuine Soviet democracy which they wrongly believed appertained in the Soviet Union. They found their activities outlawed – as "Trotskyism"! It is from these important historical events that we derive the reasons for the Kremlin's terrorist acts against revolutionaries.

Commenting on the foul activities of the GPU in Spain (the murder of Andres Nin and others) Comrade Trotsky wrote:

"Stalinism has become the scourge of the Soviet Union and the leprosy of the world labour movement. In the domain of ideas

Stalinism is a cipher. But by way of compensation it controls a colossal apparatus which exploits the dynamics of the greatest revolution in history and the traditions of its heroism and its conquering spirit. From the creative role of



Trotsky with his wife Natalya and grandson Seva - Mexico, 1939

revolutionary violence in a given historical period, Stalin, with his congenital empirical narrowness, has deduced the omnipotence of violence in general. Imperceptibly for himself he has passed from the revolutionary violence of the toilers against the exploiters to the counter-revolutionary violence against the

toilers. Under old names and formulas the work of liquidating the October revolution is thus being consummated."

The party of Lenin, which organised the revolution, had a rich tradition of Marxist struggle against the futile method of individual terrorism which found on Russian soil, soaked in violence and arbitrary rule, a fertile field. Stalin failed to learn that Marxism opposes individual terrorism, not from moral but from political considerations. Acts of violence against individuals contribute precisely nothing towards the struggle against oppression inherent in a given social system or political regime.

EMANCIPATION

They cannot replace in any degree the action of the masses. Conversely, action of this nature against individuals who represent the policy of the masses will avail Stalinism as little in its efforts to frustrate the oppressed toilers in their progressive march towards emancipation from imperialist slavery and the establishment of a new world socialist order. The gunmen and hatchet-wielders of the GPU may kill revolutionaries but they cannot kill the revolution. That is a task beyond even the combined efforts of imperialism and its last prop – Stalinism.

And with the inevitable victory of the world proletarian revolution, not only imperialism but also the abominable Stalin regime will be swept into the sewers of history. Thus will fittingly end the reign of its personifier – Joseph Stalin – the gravedigger of the revolution, the most monstrous and sinister tyrant ever to besmirch the history of working class politics. ●

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Council workers fight for jobs and services

Council workers throughout north and east London are taking action in defence of services and against cuts imposed by right-wing Labour councils. Budget cuts in Islington, Hackney, Camden and Newham have produced widespread strike action.

The cuts will mean job losses across the board and education is particularly hard hit.

Class sizes will increase and support staff reduced to put further pressure on teachers already under government attack.

Islington NALGO staged eight days of action and plan to escalate their action after talks with union officials. The council approved a budget containing £16 million worth of cuts, or about 6%.

One of the targets is the Direct

Labour Organisation. Other measures include the closure of a library, the abolition of the economic development unit, 10p on school meals and the shutting of neighbourhood offices.

Demonstrators in the public gallery accused council leader Margaret Hodge of selling out to the Tories. Six Labour councillors voted against the cuts package.

FINANCIAL CRISIS

Hodge and other council leaders had gambled on the election of a Labour government to get them out of a financial crisis.

With the failure of that plan, they have no qualms in offloading the crisis on to the backs of workers and those who depend on services.

It is clear that local councils cannot

deliver services any longer. The Tories have taken control of key areas and imposed cuts on the remainder.

Next year's implementation of "care in the community" and the switch to the new council tax will deepen the financial crisis inside the town halls.●

This is a special 16-page issue of *Socialist Future* made possible by great sacrifice as well as the support we have received for our first issues. This expansion needs money to maintain, however. There is a real need for a non-sectarian, revolutionary paper like *Socialist Future*. So send what you can, large or small, immediately to: *Socialist Future Fund, PO Box 942, London SW1 2AR*

What we stand for

Grave dangers now confront millions of workers and young people as the world economic crisis of capitalism drives the Tories to destroy living standards. The vital question is how to defeat the Tory plans to create a violent police – military dictatorship.

It is clearly not possible to vote out the Tories and elect a Labour government again. The Tories have fixed the election system to ensure they stay in office.

The Tories could not have succeeded in their plans without the assistance of the right-wing Labour Party and trade union leaderships.

The election of the right-winger John Smith as the new leader will propel Labour even further to the right, towards a merger with the reactionary Liberal Democrats and a complete break from the trade unions.

The end of parliamentary politics means alternative forms of struggle must develop. Real power has, in any case, always been exercised behind the scenes in the boardrooms and banks, in the higher reaches of the civil service, by property companies and landowners.

To challenge the Tory dictatorship it is necessary to engage in a struggle for power itself. Denied the right to political expression by a Tory dictatorship, workers have every right to organise independently of the state.

There is now a vital need to build Councils of Action

throughout Britain, in every locality, to bring together all those in the Tory firing line.

Every organisation opposed to the Tories, representing trade unionists, the unemployed, young people, ethnic groups, students and small businesses should be represented in Councils of Action.

They would defend and organise health, education, housing and other services and jobs, and protect communities from racist attacks. Workers organisations would struggle for their policies in Councils of Action.

The Communist League's view is that such Councils should be ready to assume power itself, to destroy the Tories' dictatorship throughout Britain. It is the only way forward for workers in England, Scotland and Wales. Reject the nationalists who want to divide and rule and leave the Tory enemy intact.

Class, not religion, race, nationality or gender, is the fundamental basis for the struggle for power. It should be the perspective of Councils of Action to transfer power from the ruling class, to break up and overthrow the capitalist state and its institutions.

Power must pass to the working class, out of the hands of the employers who sack thousands, building societies who make people homeless, and banks that wreck small businesses