MARXIST STUDENT

Student bulletin of the Workers Socialist League



STALINISM AND STUDENT LEADERSHIP

The new academic year also brings a new president for NUS-- Trevor Philips, a 'left-wing' supporter of the Labour Party. Philips' election was greeted with joy by the last incumbent--Sue Slipman, Communist Party member. The end of Slipman's term of office gives us a chance to asses the role she played while in control of the National Union of Students.

Of course, we cannot assess the role of the likes of Slipman merely as individuals, but we must examine their actions in the light of the role of the S Stalinist movement internationally and the needs of capitalism in actue, and deepening crisis.

One aspect of this crisis of imperialism is the upsurge of popular opposition in the semi-colonial and underdevloped countries.

One example is given by the recent events in Iran, where the Shah's regime is increasingly threatened by mass opposition (see the following article in this issue) In Zimbabwe, the "internal settlement"--Smith's last ditch attempt to preserve white rule by disguising it with a few black faces--is now acknowledged as a failure. Each day, fresh news is heard of new struggles in South America.

The role of Stalinism in these international struggles is best exposed in the events in Ethiopia. The strategy of the Stalinists throughout the world starts from the interests of the bureaucratic caste which controls the workers' states of Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba. Part of that strategy is to preserve the class rule of the bourgeoisie in those states reserved for imperialism--which include the USA, and Western Europe.

Another aspect of their strategy, is to defeat or divert national liberation struggles which threaten the stability of world imperialism, or those states such as Ethiopia, which the Stalinist bureaucracy supports. Russian and Cuba guns and soldiers are therefore engaged in genocide of the Eritreans, who have been waging a struggle against national oppression since 1962.

'Corporate Bargainning'

The Stalinists' role in the bourgeois democracies of Western Europe is less spectacular, but contains the same treachery.

In Britain, Communist Party members use their positions in the trade union movement to divert the struggles of the working-class--struggles whichhave particularly emerged recently over the question of pay and wage control.

Just one example of this policy of diversion, is the policy of the Communist Party in favour of corporate bargaining in British Leyland. The Stalinists in the Cowley Morrises plant fought against the recent claim for an extra £27 a week on the Shop Stewards Committee, arguing that claims should only go in on a national level, in line with the company's plan for corporate bargainning. This plan is designed to take pay bargaining out of the hands of elected shop stewards, in touch with the militant mood of the shop floor, and into the hands of the full-time national officials.

The ruling-class needs to cut pay, destroy social services, and create mass unemployment, if it is to restore the profits of the bosses. However, its ability to do that is continually threatened by the strength and combativity of the labour movement.

While the working-class is strong the bosses' often rule through social-democracy--for instance the Labour Party in this country. The illusions that workers have in these reformists, and the links between the trade union leaders and their Labour Party cronies mean that it is often easier to attack the working class through a Labour government, than an overtly anti-working class Tory government.

Increasingly, attacks are made on union democracy and rights, not just by the Labour government, but also by their friends in the trade union movement. The AUEW executive voted unanimously to expel the SU Carburettor workers for striking against wage control. A week later, the Executive was forced to climb down ignominiously because of the response of the toolmakers throughout BL. However, the need to attack basic democratic rights, such as the right to strike remains.

Union organisation is directly threatened in the student movement, with the government proposals on financing (see article in this issue--SU Autonomy and the Fight against the Cuts). However, Slipman and her cronies on the NUS Executive prepared the way for this attack, and refuse to fight it.

Union Democracy

As President Slipman continually attacked basic union democracy. She denounced the right of students to decide union policy through general meetings, by engaging in tirades against 'extremists'. She attacked the right of union members to control their own funds, by claiming that it was public money which should not be used for such 'non-student' activities as supporting workers' struggles.

The Broad Left, led by Slipman, made a deliberate effort to bring Tories on to the National Executive. At thesame time as proclaiming opposition to the cuts, unemployment, low grants, college closures, Slipman and Co were embracing the Federation of Conservative Students--a section of the party which represents the class in whose interests these attacks are being made.

Students, like the working-class, have shown their willingness to fight the attacks on themselves and the labour movement.

That strength must be mobilised against the Broad Left traitors, and a new leadership built which is armed with policies which can defeat this onslaught. The Workers Socialist League has set itself the task tof creating that new, revolutionary leadership, by fighting in NUS, as well as the labour movement, around the programme of the Fourth International. This bulletin will expound some aspects of that programme and method, as do the other publications of the WSL.

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SOCIALIST PRESS

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IRAN: BREAK ALL ECONOMIC AND MILITARY LINKS

The CIA backed coup which bore the Shah of Iran to his present occupation of the Peacock Throne in order to safeguard the interests of imperialism is today being challenged by massive opposition from the Iranian workers, peasants and students.

The imperialist plunder of this oil rich state, which has been facilitated by the Shah's brutal police and army regime has meant falling standards of living and political terror for the masses. Events of this last month have proved the deep discontent and determination of the population to oust this tyrannical dictatorship and the pressing need for a revolutionary leadership capable of realising this aim.

The present religious leaders of the opposition have no such intentions Their gestures of Islamic brotherhood and 'peace' towards the armed forces have been ruthlessly answered by the imposition of martial law in the cities and an estimated murder of over 1,000. These gestures have also indicated that they hope to realise their demands within the context of a "democratised" dictatorship.

In protest against the latest lash of repressive measures, tens of thousands of workers, peasants and students, including many women were led by YOUTH in a demonstration which proved that they are not to be tied to the limitations of the present reactionary leadership.

However, popular discontent alone is not sufficient for the overthrow of imperialism.

The Ba'athist leaders of Iraq, the feudal lords of Saudi Arabia, and French, British, Dutch and US companies have the sole target of stability in this crucial zone of the Middle East which figures high in global military strength.

British tanks

The Shah's vehement anti-Soviet stand has also prompted the Chinese bureaucracy to formaalliances against the primary enemy of "Soviet imperialism".

A break from the leadership which applies the brakes of the Iranian revolution is vital. This can only be achieved by a conscious revolutionary leadership prepared to organise and give a political direction to the independent strength of the workers and peasants of the Middle Eastern countries

This st

TThis strategy alone will prevent the utilisation of Iran and its neighbouring countries as a battleground for imperialist exploitation and as a bulwark against communist influence.

MeanwhileeBritish-built Chieftain tanks sold by the Labour Government parade the streets of Tehran to maintain the vicious order of repressive rule. Callaghan has even overtly expressed sympathy for the Shah over the recent destruction and viole violence which, he claims, has stunted Iran's "progress" towards modern industrialisation and democracy. This support for the Shah's bloody regime is an outright betrayal of the very real and desperate struggles of the Iranian peoples.

In Britain, the fight must be taken up in the trade unions and the call raised for immediate action to end all military and economic supplies. The defeat of the Shah and his allies is a victory for the working class internationally.

WHO HAS CONTROL OF WHAT IN EDUCATION?

A Discussion Artisle

The illusion of free, liberal intellectual thought in universities and colleges is soon dispelled when students attempt--on social science courses in particular--to argue, discuss and analyse from a Marxist standpoint.

It is not that Marxism is forbidden, (the bourgeois intellectual is too subtle for that); courses on Marxism do exist but their content and direction is all too often devised by liberals whose approach to Marxism is at the level of ideas--another ideology to be "tested for validity". Accompanying this is the standard, and for the most part traditional, methods of teaching and assesment; lectures are given, reading lists handed out and essay titles set. At the end of the course most students are faced with formal 3 hour examinations.

Clearly students are in a difficult position regarding control over their work--which is the question raised by the lack of choice over content of courses. Students cannot always know, when they begin a course or a degree, what they would rather learn and how they would prefer to learn it.

Indeed the whole education system mitigates against this since from the early y years at school formal and inflexible relationships are established between pupil and teacher--those who "know" and those who are there to "learn".

However, at many universities and colleges, "Alternative Prospectus's" are written for the students. These are usually compiled by students who are part way through, or who have completed, a course. Usually they take the form of descriptions of courses, teachers and resources to give an indication of what a course is like and how far the course has fallen short of expectations based on descriptions of them that are found in formal university information.

In some universities and colleges students get together and hold their own "alternative seminars", set up essay banks to pool ideas and facilitate the task of writing 'standard boring essays' and compile alternative reading lists.

Negative

Often, however, alternative prospectus's are very negative, stating what actually to expect from your course and then simply saying it is up to you if you want to come or not.

Similarly, where alternative seminars, essay banks and other activities are es established, often they are organised and run by a small group of students with the minimum of union involvement and political perspective.

The involvement of the union--through union-based committees and campaigns around the questions of control in education--is very important. Many aspects of student control in education are central to their problems, such as the cuts in public spending.

When existing libraries are being threatened with a slower rate of operation and replacement of books, for instance, for 'lack of money', the possibility of extending the range of books is equally threatened. Another important reason for a union based campaign is the great risk students run of victimisation or even expulsion if they persist in writing the 'wrong' kinds of things of refuse to participate in assesment methods as a protest.

While capitalism continues our perspective must be that only under socialism will we achieve socialised education. For it is under the growing economic crisis that the real role and function of liberal democratic education becomes exposed as sharper turns are made in attempts to repair the political and economic crisis.

With the growth of unemployment in this crisis, there are attempts to decrease the number of so-called 'wasteful' products (the unemployable arts and social science graduates) and increase the more profitable and amenable products for capitalism (scientists, technological and trained/skilled students). And under such conditions it becomes crucially important not only to fight to defend the education that exists but, further than this, to fight to extend the narrow conception of the role of education.

But in order to gain more control over the content of courses and how they are taught and assessed, students must have a perspective of taking up this fight through the union both locally and nationally.

This means fighting for democratically run unions so that students can be fairly and forcibly represented, and also fighting for students to have a part in control over courses, so that student views on education are taken into account and acted on and are not just passively listened to by university and college academics and government education department.

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Marxist Student welcomes comments on the question of the role of education, and who controls and directs education. Readers should send their views to:
Marxist Student, 31, Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR

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STUDENT LEADERS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM

Leeds has an appalling record of fascist violence which dates back to the 1960s when there were racial attacks along Burley Road (near the centre of Leeds and on the edge of the "student quarter"; in fact a deprived area shared mainly by immigrants, students and the elderly).

These attacks developed at times into mass battles which the press described as "race riots". The last five years or so have, however, seen a steady escalation of organised and regular fascist violence against a growing number of people.

These attacks have usually been by organised gangs of thugs and have in the main been directed against first, (as indicated earlier), immigrants and their families, and then against "lefties". Organised attacks against specifically students are a fairly recent development. These attacks, many of them extremely serious, are now an often unreported weekly feature of Leeds life. For a short time in the early 1970s, a respite was allowed after the "left", represented mainly by the IMG, chased the fascist National Democratic Freedom movement from the Town Hall steps. This respite was however, brief and the fascists have re-emerged, (and will, of course, continue to re-emerge as long as capitalism exists).

The fascists have, in the recent past, thrown a Young Communist League member down some stairs, inside the Communist Party building, breaking her arm; attacked students coming out of the University Union, fracturing the skull of one of them; and partially blinded a drinker in a "student" pub during an organised attack. The last (blinded) man was, incidentally, later charged by the police for his part in the attack. These are just a small sample of fascist activity in the area. Other, equally serious outrages have been perpetrated, plus many, many more smaller incidents .

Police Collusion

The police have, of course, colluded with all of this. They are slow to arrive at the scene of such attacks, and, when they do arrive, (the fascists having disappeared), they are as likely to arrest the victims as anyone at all.

All this have presented the local student leadership with a problem. At first individual attacks on (mainly foreign) students were ignored, but, after drunken British National Party members tried to enter the University Union building one night, after officer cadets stood by and watched; after one student had his skull fractured whilst others were beaten up; and after the police took twenty minutes to arrive, student outrage was such that action had to be taken.

The University Union employs its own professional thugs to eject drunken students (often violently) from the Union building at the least provocation -- so why can it not protect all students from fascist attacks?

The answer, of course, is that the present student leadership serves the same capitalist masters as the fascists.

The Broad Left/Tory leadership, under pressure, considered protection of the Union building by students after asking for "professional" advice from the same officer cadets who had watched the earlier attack., (and promptly voted against their own advice), but finally settled on -- a demonstration. Not a demonstration

against fascism, mind you, but against racism.

The police made it clear that anyone carrying an anti-fascist banner would be arrested. Provocation, they said, could not be allowed. And so Leeds' biggest anti-racist demonstration was held in late 1977, with the Zionist Jewish Students Association marching in front of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign!

That was the extent of the Union leaders' response, and the attacks continue.

The lessons are quite clear. The present servants of capitalism who purport to represent student interests must be removed if students are to be protected from fascists. Students in turn must elect a leadership that will fight for the overthrow of the capitalist society which breeds fascism. This means linking arms with the organised working class, the only class in society which can bring down capitalism, to build workers defence squads, and, ultimately, a socialist society.

It is not as easy as rushing everyone around town on a demonstration, but it is the path that leads to success.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS ON TRIAL

The decision to prosecute Crispin Aubrey, Martin Berry and Duncan Campbell under the Official Secrets Act was taken at Cabinet level by some of the top traitors in the Labour movement.

The Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees, and Attorney General, Sam Silkin, were acting as servants of the bourgeois state and the trial has become a demonstration of strength from the forces of the state.

Liberal protests have centred on the fact that the Government has allowed a prosecution under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act - a section that the Labour manifesto promised to abolish, but which the Labour Government has merely rewritten.

In fact such protests are largely irrelevant. While criticism about the use of Section 2 were at its height the Attorney General added Section I charges, the section used in "serious" spying cases, demonstrating that the prosection was going to go ahead on a broad front as a "anti-subversive" witch hunt.

The three men chosen for trial - two journalists and one ex-soldier - could have been picked more or less at random. The charges arose out of a conversation they had, never published, after Berry (who had worked in SIGNIT the military signals department seven years earlier) contacted the defence committee for Agee and Hosenball.

The link to Philip Agee is extremely important. His book Inside the Company, and other writings on the CIA had put flesh on CIA interventions into South America and provided lists of names of agents. The CIA claimed that his book was responsible for some of their agents being killed. Whether or not that is true, Agee proved a thorn in the side of US imperialism. The fact that he still is being hounded out of one 'democratic' European country after another demonstrates how faithfully these democracies are carrying out their orders from Washington.

Although the work that Aubrey and Campbell have done in exposing a few of the surface trappings of British surveillance work has not been insignificant, it was their connection with Agee linked to the fact that they are members of the NUJ which probably picked them out for prosecution.

The trial in short is a demonstration not of illiberal secrets acts or broken manifestos, but of the nature of the capitalist state, 'democratic' or no.

The fact that all three could face I4 years in jail makes it one of extreme importance for the working class.

But the case has **not** gone as the state demanded. The protest campaign run by the ABC Committee meant that it started with virtually no hope of industrial action to defend the three. But events inside the courtroom showed that the clumsiness with which the inevitable verdict has been pursued has its dangers.

First the defence discovered that the entire list of more that 80 potential jurors had been handed to the prosecution for security vetting. John Leonard, prosecution counsel, said that anyone known to be 'disloyal' would be disqualified.

In fact the 'loyalty' of most of the jury was beyond question. Three had signed the Officials Secrets Act and one, who immediately volunteered for the post of foreman, was a former SAS man, who had served imperialism in Malaya, Singapore, Cyprus and Northern Ireland.

Nor did he bother to disguise his views. According to other jurors he never stopped talking about the case, said that in his view Berry should have a "straight in, fourteen years, straight out" military trial and gave strong opinions about the guilt of the defendents.

The judge, Mr. Justice Willis, stopped the trial after this had been challenged by the defence and had then been broadcast on the Russel Harty Programme by New Statesman journalist, Christopher Hitchens.

It was not 'gratutious journalistic gossip' that stopped the trial. The prosecution had decided that far from demonstrating appropriate ruthless stamping out of 'disloyalty' the trial was turning into a field day for the defence in which witnesses and evidence was being held up to daily ridicule.

While the case was halted, one charge against Duncan Campbell for collecting information was withdrawn by the Attorney General. The prosecution announced they would run a 'more economical' (ie. less public) trial. Then the judge - who despite his Signals Corps background, had proved inefficient in preventing the defence grabbing headlines - had a diplomatic illness and withdrew.

The prosecution has already demonstrated that reporting of Parliament can be curbed, that jurors' 'loyalty' can be examined and that suitable jurors are found to control the proceedings backstage.

For communists it is of extreme importance. We recognise that the solution does not lie in more liberal secrets acts, but in no capitalist secrets acts at all - since the only layer not already in possession of these secrets is not another state power, but the working class.

We defend democratic rights, (freedom of the Press, and freedom of information) but at the same time we try to demonstrate to workers and students how such attacks are an inevitable part of capitalism and will only cease with its overthrow.

As a first step we have urged the ABC Defence Campaign to turn away from mere protests towards calling for strike action in the labour movement should Aubrey, Berry ar Campbell be jailed. We have already fought for such a policy ourselves.

We have also called for a Labour movement conference on the trial to campaign for a united labour movement struggle against the trial.

STOP THE TRIAL

Abolish the Official Secrets Act

Expel those who authorised the prosecution from the Labour Party

No secrets from the working class.

Call strike action to stop jailings.

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S.U. AUTONOMY AND THE FIGHT AGAINST THE CUTS

The most dangerous threat to student union organisation for 6 years is posed in an insignificant-sounding document entitled: 'The Financing of Student Unions in Universities and other Institutions of Higher Education and Further Education--Discussion Ppaer by the Department of Education and Science'.

The technicalities of these proposals are explained below, but their purpose can be stated very simply: the government, through the DES, intends to dismantle student union organisation as it exists today.

Strong union organisation, whether of workers or students cannot be tolerated by capitalism in crisis--and student unions, at least in the universities and big polytechnics, have become very strong during the post-war expansion of higher education. Automatic membership--a form of closed shop--has been established and defended, despite threats by the Conservative government in 1972.
Funding has increased, and the militant unions have participated in workers' mobilisations, such as Grunwicks and demonstrations against the cuts, besides taking action within colleges against college closures, and increases in tuition fees.

The proposed new maximum subscription fee of £15-20 would not cover the administrative and social facilities of most of these big unions--let alone allow them to actively defend their members' interests by participating in or organising direct action.

The Broad Left leaders of NUS, including the president, Trevor Philips, have all either 'welcomed' the proposals, or adopted a 'wait-and-see' attitude. None of them has been prepared to expose this plan and organise a campaign in defence of student union autonomy. Indeed, they all acceptthe phoney arguments about 'public accountability' on which the proposals are based.

EMERGENCY CONFERENCE

The Workers Socialist League calls on all its student supporters to fight in their unions for a principled defence of their right to organise and control their own funds.

This must start by demanding that the NUS Executive call an emergency national conference to discuss student union autonomy and launch an immediate campaign in the unions to mobilise students against these plans.

The DES, defended by Philips and his Broad Left friends, continually argue that their concern is not with how the funds are used but the amount of money involved. This is only partly true--their main purpose is to sap the strength of the bigger unions--but, nevertheless, the new plan will save money, and can therefore, be seen as part of the cuts ordered by the Labour government.

The education cuts have already led to many college closures, especially in the teacher training sector. The massive tuition fee increases introduced last year were another attempt to 'save money' at the expense of students, in this case, foreign students in particular.

The cuts also affect the level of the student grant which has been falling further and further behind price rises since 1962. The Broad Left have no clear

policies against the cuts--in fact they sabotaged the occupations which did break out over the past 2 years against college closure and tuition fee increases by refusing even to coordinate them.

The Worker's Socialist League does have clear policies to fight the cuts. All college closures must be resisted by occupations, of both students and campus trade unions. But occupations alone are not enough--they must be backed by strike action from the trade union movement, in particular the public sector unions such as the National Union of Teachers, the National Union of Public Employees, and the National Association of Local Government Officers.

We demand that public spending, including the student grant be consolidated to compensate for past cuts and inflation. Labour movement-based committees, including delegates from tenants' associations; housewives;students and unorganised unemployed workers and youth should be established to monitor price rises. Public spending and grants should keep up with inflation as it affects the working-class, and as it is assessed by these committees.

All local education authorities should be forced to open their accounts to similar committees. The government and the Stalinist and Social-Democrats who dominate NUS talk about student unions being 'publicly accountable'--what about these local government bodies being accountable to the working-class? Where does the money go to? How much has been cut already and what are the effects? What profits are being made out of education by the private enterprise suppliers? All these questions should be answered by these "open the books" committees

Mandatory grants

We also demand that all students over the age of 16 get a full mandatory grant. This applies to school students, and to those in the Further Education sector, many of whom are ineligible for mandatory awards.

FE Students face particularly severe problems--not only are they discriminated against, in their educational facilities and living standards, but they are often not organised into effective student unions. These weaker unions must be strengthened as part of theautonomy campaign against the DES proposals. This needs a national NUS campaign to organise FE students on thebasis of a fight for mandatory awards, including a minimum student union capitation fee of £15, for all students.

Only with these policies, and a consistent fight against the treachery of the present NUS leadership, can students' interests be defended. WSL student members and supporters will be fighting in this way in colleges throughout the country over the coming year. We will be holding public meeting in these colleges at the beginning of the academic year to further explain our programme

* NO TO THE DES PROPOSALS--DEFEND STUDENT UNIONSA!

* OCCUPATIONS AND STRIKE ACTION TO DEFEAT THE CUTS!!

* FOR A SLIDING SCALE OF PUBLIC SPENDING AND GRANTS, UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT!!

* OPEN THE BOOKS OF THE LEAs TO WORKERS' AND STUDENTS' INQUIRY!!

THE DES PROPOSALS:

Every student in this country who receives a grant and has his/her fees paid by the Local Education Authority, has the student union subscriptions--the capitation fee--also paid automatically by the LEA.

Under the present system the level of the capitation fee is determined by negotiation between individual student unions and the relevant college authorities. Whatever sum is decided on by these negotiations is then paid by the LEA, who can claim 90% of what they pay back from central government.

Obviously, capitation fees vary enormously throughout the country. In a big university it could be about £60 per student. In a Polytechnic with a strong union it could be about £20 per student. In a College of Further Education, it could be as little as £2 (in CFEs, of course, many students are not eligible for grants and therefore have to pay the capitation fee themselves).

The Broad Left argue that, because student union funds are paid out of public money, that students should treat it as public money and not their own We argue, against this "public accountability" notion, that the capitation fee forms part of the student grant which, in line with the principle of automatic membership, is paid directly to the union.

This system puts those unions, most of whose members have mandatory grants, in a strong position, and it is a system which should be extended to the FE sector alongside the fight for grants for all students.

The DES are proposing to introduce a new '2-tier' system, under which the maximum capitation fee is reduced to £15-20, This will be a compulsory maximum, and if any student union wants more, it must negotiate for a 'subvention' from the college's ordinary funds.

In order to get this money, the SU will obviously have to 'justify' it in the eyes of the college authorities. It is not easy to imagine them handing out money to finance a coach-trip to a demonstration or publicity material for a political campaign. Just as insidious, is that the SU will be competing with other departments of the college for a limited amount of finance--the student union will be set against science equipment, lecturers' salaries, libraries, etc..

'Advisory' minimum

The Broad Left, in particular Slipman, have seized on one aspect of these proposals as a 'great gain'--the DES suggest that it might introduce as 'advisory' minimum capitation fee of £1.25 for full-time students. NUS policy is for an enforceable minimum of £15 per full-time student The DES 'advisory Minimum' is meaningless

Both the level and control of student union finance is at stake here If these proposals are introduced, every student unions' range of activity will be drastically cut, and the ability of students to defend education alongside the working-class will be set back and curtailed.

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RED YOUTH

RED YOUTH is the monthly paper of the Socialist Youth League--the youth organisation in political sympathy with the WSL. Price, 5p, it is available from Socialist Press sellers, or direct from 31, Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR

INTO THE DUSTBIN OF HISTORY

(reprinted from Socialist Press)

A new face has been found lying on the cutting-room floor. In the faded company of blighted starlets the features of Josef Stalin have been consigned to cinematic perdition.

Paul Neuberg, producer of the current ITV series 'Red Tsar' discovered that Stalin had been systematically eliminated from Soviet historical documentaries. In some cases, new figures had been superimposed to block Stalin out of vital scenes, but mostly film had been simply and effectively cut.

Neuberg argues that this blanket censorship was carried out in the mid-sixties by the Kremlin bureaucracy, which just offered international holders of the originals what were supposedly 'cleaner prints' while they substituted their new versions.

The irony of this absurd tale is complex. The films in question were generally made with the express purpose of enlarging Stalin to revolutionary heroic proportions, and in particular to show the leading role he was supposed to have played in the October revolution Without the central figure they lose most of their point--not to mention playing time. For example, 'Lenin in 1919' now runs for 108 minutes, as opposed to the original version which is recorded at 133 minutes.

But Stalin himself was of course one of the earliest and most vicious of film censors This typical example of Stalin's bureaucratic methods started its course in 1927: The great Soviet director, Sergei Eisenstein, had been commissioned to produce a film celebrating the tenth anniversary of the October revolution. But the finished product proved an embarrassment to the bureaucracy--Trotsky featured as a leading figure beside Lenin, and this was scarcely convenient to Stalin at a time when he was preparing to expel Trotsky from the party and throw him into exile.

'October'

When 'October' was finally screened shortly before these events of late 1927 the film had been judiciously censored.

Trotsky had been eliminated except for one scene at the Petrograd Soviet, where ingenious cutting made him appear in a counter-revolutionary role! The history of 'October' marked the turning point of the Soviet film industry. In the early years after the revolution, it was in film above all that the revolutionary ardour of Soviet Russia was expressed in the arts Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov and others revolutionised the techniques of cinema as they sought to create revolutionary art

In 'Strike', 'Battleship Potemkin' and 'October', Eisenstein presented the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat in a form that has never been surpassed In his early documentaries Vertov used film as a tool of the revolution, screening the realities of the Civil War and the new society throughout the cities and villages of the Soviet Union. Vertov's greatest achievement, 'Man with a Movie Camera', was completed after 'October', and escaped the scissors of the bureaucracy only by avoiding any overt political statements.

It remains a unique expression of the day-to-day reality of a society undergoing revolutionary transformation. But as the bureaucracy consolidated its power, the revolutionary cinema was appropriated as a propaganda machine for counter-revolution

Not even Vertov and Eisenstein could escape or transcend the new conditions. In 'Three Songs of Lenin', Vertov contributed to the building of the Lenin personality cult which the bureaucracy used to launch the Stalin personality cult.
In 'Alexander Nevsky' Eisenstein mingled this unwilling task with a display of Great Russian patriotism and anti-German hysteria which servied as a substitute for revolutionary struggle against fascism.

All the genius of Eisenstein and one of Prokoviev's most brilliant scores are not enough to save this film from the status of crude Stalinist propaganda dished up as art.

But now the bureaucracy has turned to cut its former head Needless to say, in censoring Stalin the new regime of Stalinist bureaucrats was not renouncing its counter-revolutionary heritage. The latest manipulations of the Kremlin clique have not negated Stalin's falsifications of history, but simply compounded them.

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W.S.L.

The Workers Socialist League is a Trotskyist organisation which fights to build a revolutionary leadership that can politically prepare and mobilise the working-class and its allies for the taking of state power and the construction of a socialist society.

The fight of the Workers Socialist League in Britain is a part of the struggle for the reconstruction of the Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist REvolution, founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky. The basis of this fight is the theory and practice of the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

The WSL puts forward a programme to defend the interests of the working class today against the attacks of capitalism in crisis. The aim of the programme is the independent political mobilisation of the working class towards the overthrow of capitalism and its state machine in the capitalist countries

In the workers states which must be defended against imperialism the task is the political revolution to overthrow the parasitic bureaucracies which repress the working class and endanger the gains that have been made.

The fight for socialism is impossible without the fight to expose at every step the misleaders of the working class: the Labour and trade union leaders (both 'right' and 'left'), the Communist Party Stalinists (both 'Eurocommunist' and 'pro-Moscow'), the petty bourgeois nationalists who derail anti-imperialist struggles in the underdeveloped countries and those groupings which pay lip service to Trotskyism whilst rejecting its basic methods and programme.

Only through such a struggle can the working class find a road out of the capitalist crisis--falling living standards, unemployment, denial of basic rights, colonial repression as in Ireland, and the threats of fascism and war.