

Socialist
Action

No 12/13
Autumn 1991
£1.50

**The Russian
revolution
fights for its life**

Comment

After Labour's conference

The 1991 Labour Party Conference was dominated by being the last before the general election — one which Labour can win.

However, even such a conference, marked by compliance with the leadership, and overall weakness of the left, saw some significant successes socialists can build on — successes, in particular, which indicated the resistance a Kinnockite government would face.

Significant new defeats for the left were on party democracy and in the NEC elections. The defeat of a resolution opposing the 'trigger mechanism' for reselection of MPs, and defending the current trade union input, was a major blow to party democracy. It also renders meaningless the position passed by previous Labour conferences for mandatory inclusion of a woman on every short list. While the chair declared the resolution lost on a show of hands, and refused a card vote, it is well known that a card vote would have shown the resolution had been passed. A resolution calling for women only short lists in Labour held seats was defeated. Opposition to the suspension of David Nellist and Terry Fields was heavily defeated.

Also significant was the defeat of proposals to maintain the present rights of CLPs and trade unions to submit resolutions and amendments directly to annual conference. The outcome of these changes is to concentrate still more power in the national Labour Party leadership.

The NEC elections, the first to be held in the CLP section using One Member One Vote, instead of voting by GCs, saw a sharp decline in participation — with 141 CLPs, 22 per cent, not voting (in the last five years the number has varied between 35 and 67). The results saw a strengthening of the right, with the election of Kaufmann, and a general victory for male backwardness with the votes of all women and black candidates falling regardless of political position. Jo Richardson's support fell by 138,000 votes; Diane Abbott's by 88,000; Margaret Hodge's by 65,000; and Alice Mahon's by 53,000.

Disunity on the left, with the Campaign Group presenting the unacceptable candidate of Dave Nellist, who opposed black sections and positive action for women, led to the result being worse than necessary.

In the trade union section Barbara Switzer (MSF) lost her seat — there are now no women on the NEC in either CLP or union sections.

The areas where the left moved forward were also clear. Against enormous front bench pressure last year's commitment to reduce defence spending to the average level of other west European countries was reaffirmed with a two-thirds majority. The Black Section's demand to clarify that membership of the new Black Socialist Society be open only to black people was passed. The debate at conference showed the fight against Proportional Representation had taken a major step forward in the last few months — with speakers against PR getting strong support and the First Past the Post Campaign having done effective work. The resolution supporting the demand that women's conference elect the NEC women's places was defeated but increased support by 600,000 votes compared to previous years. The fringe meeting against the Gulf War, and for a Just Peace in the Middle East, was a major success.

Finally, a step in organising the left around a more coherent economic strategy took place with the publication of a programme signed by 50 Labour MPs, trade unionists and economists and jointly sponsored by *Socialist Economic Bulletin* and *Beyond the Casino Economy*.

These successful moves at conference were all associated with currents around Labour Left Liaison. The Labour Party Socialist (LPS) current was very weak.

The campaign against PR, the continued strong support for mandatory reselection, the victory on the Black Socialist Society, the success on defence spending and the Gulf War all continue to show the success that can be gained by systematic campaigning in the Labour Party and trade unions. That remains the top priority for the next year.

Inside

No 12/13
Autumn 1991

*Special
Double
Issue*

The Russian Revolution fights for its life

p3

**If the Russian
Revolution should
fall...**

p4 onwards

**The USSR after the
coup**

by Geoffrey Owen

**The recomposition of
the international left**

by Sylvia Ashby

plus

Supplement

The economic consequences of Socialism in One Country

by John Ross

Socialist Action

Building an alliance
for socialism
PO Box 50, London
N1 2XP

Editorial/Business
071-254 0128

Typeset, designed and
printed by Lithoprint
Ltd (TU), 26-28
Shacklewell Lane,
Dalston, London E8.
Phone: 071-249-7560

Published by Cardinal
Enterprises Ltd.

If the Russian revolution should fall...

The Soviet putsch of 19 August was an attempt to put the clock back towards the Brezhnevist past. Its failure made transparent the greatest class struggle in the world since 1917 — that for the survival of the Russian revolution. It left the pro-capitalist forces in the USSR greatly strengthened.

These forces will betray the interests and hopes of the Russian and Soviet peoples. The Soviet peoples wanted to create a democracy and an economy which would serve their interests. But, as Boris Kagarlitsky put it: 'Millions of people in Russia have been fighting for democracy. But what they have got is Yeltsin.'

Yeltsin's government is a betrayal even of the democratic hopes of the Russian people — let alone the democratic socialism that alone can save their country from catastrophe. Through the attempt to reintroduce capitalism, it would create a new dictatorship in Russia, consign the Russian working class to a poverty it has not seen for decades, and finally allow imperialism to destroy the independence of Russia and other Soviet republics. Similar results would follow from the victory of the bourgeois nationalists who are strengthening themselves in the Ukraine.

If such a course were successful then, after seventy years of resisting the onslaught of world capitalism, the Russian and Soviet working classes would finally be defeated and the goal imperialism set itself in both the First and Second World Wars, to dismember their country, would be accomplished.

The catastrophic consequences of this for the Soviet working class and peoples, and the obstacles to such an outcome, are dealt with at length in this issue of *Socialist Action*.

But what would be the consequences for the rest of the world if the Russian Revolution were to fail, that is if capitalism were to be restored in the former USSR? It would open a period of the most ex-

treme international reaction, pose a new, qualitative, threat to a large part of the historical gains of the world working class, and that of the peoples oppressed by imperialism, and, as we are already seeing, unleash, even in its first phase, a wave of racism that would engulf Europe and probably shatter its framework of liberal politics. The next stage, which would not be long delayed, would be an attempt to eliminate the welfare state and move Europe decisively towards the pattern of US and Japanese capitalisms — which, because they did not confront such a direct threat from a non-capitalist mode of production, never felt the necessity to concede the welfare state of Western Europe.

In Eastern Europe a new wave of capitalist dictatorship would set in — the consequences of which would pose a long term threat to democracy in Western Europe.

The longer term consequences, and those for the 'third world', the overwhelming majority of humanity and already suffering the greatest wave of impoverishment this century, would be far worse.

Every major progressive step forward this century for freedom from imperialism has been inseparably connected to the fate of the Russian Revolution.

This was inevitable. For five hundred years prior to 1917 Western colonialism spread through the world. Whole continents were conquered. Imperialism carried out crimes — annihilation of peoples, throwing back of whole countries, oppression of the entire African and Asian population of the world — which have no parallel in history. Imperialism's superior productive power allowed it to defeat every revolt with only the smallest exceptions.

The Russian revolution was the first devastating defeat imperialism suffered in half a millennium. The inspiration it gave, the material aid it could supply, and the ever present threat it posed that a

movement against colonialism, if radicalised, could become a movement against capitalism, meant the existence of the USSR played a decisive role in bringing to an end colonialism — the single biggest act of liberation in human history.

That victory of the colonial revolution, in turn, spread a liberal and progressive climate into the imperialist countries. The civil rights movement in the United States, and the fact that the US ruling class felt it could not directly confront it, was inextricably linked to the pressure of the colonial revolution. The civil rights movement, in turn, helped provide an impetus for a whole series of other progressive movements — above all the renewed movement of women. The combined struggle of the imperialist working classes for reforms, and the advance of the colonial revolution aided by the existence of USSR, created the progressive and liberal climate of politics in the imperialist countries which developed from the 1950s.

The defeat of the Russian Revolution would throw that whole process into reverse. Like a resurgent cancer imperialism would respread through the world — with the Gulf War merely the first taste. Imperialism would, furthermore, have a renewed instrument with which to compel surrender to its dictates — nuclear weapons. It was *only* the fear of the reaction by the USSR that prevented the US using nuclear weapons against Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, or China.

Eventually the destruction of the Russian revolution would reignite the open contest of the imperialist powers for the division of the world. Anyone who has contemplated the consequences for the future of humanity of a nuclear arms race between the United States, Europe and Japan will understand with perfect clarity the stakes in the survival of the Russian revolution.

Precisely because the stakes are so gigantic the events in the USSR will churn the world working class movements to its depths. For the instrument which imperialism found to derail the Russian revolution was a force within the workers movement — Stalinism, not an outgrowth of the Russian revolution but a product of imperialist pressure on it.

Stalinism for sixty years, despite its increasingly well known crimes, appeared to the overwhelming majority of the militant working class on a world scale to have one immense virtue which outweighed all else. It seemed to safeguard the existence of the Soviet Union, and on that bedrock, in time, other forces in the world would have the opportunity to advance. That was the reasoning of the majority of the world working class vanguard.

Trotsky broke with Stalin because he knew this was an illusion. That the policies and methods of Stalinism could neither offer a way forward for the world working class nor even defend the non-capitalist state in USSR. That is the reality which has now exploded into world politics. Trotsky's genius was to foresee this, and the implications which flowed from it.

Two things are occurring simultaneously. First that the world working class is engaged in its most desperate struggle since 1917. A determination of the most advanced working class forces in the world that *everything* that can be done must be done to prevent the destruction of the Russian revolution, and the historical catastrophe that this would represent for humanity. Second that within this framework *every* position and strategy that fights to defend that non-capitalist state in the USSR must be objectively discussed — because the stakes are too high to have the luxury to do anything else.

The result will be the greatest reorganisation of the world working class movement since 1917.

The USSR after the coup

'Russia will be dictating to the republics and not vice versa. This is what they have to realise.' — Anatoly Sobchak, 'liberal' Mayor of Leningrad

'Initially much of the new business class will be hardly distinguishable from spivs and mafiosi. The day of the carpet bagger looms... the real need now is to allow those who know how to make money to emerge from obscurity and go for it. They will be the middle class of the future. Significantly, it was precisely such people the *biznismen* and *ko-operators* — who flocked to Mr Yeltsin's banner from the outset of the coup. Russia needs more of them.' — *Financial Times* 1 October

For the first time since 1917 a capitalist government, that of Yeltsin, has been established in Russia. With the putsch of 19 August the immediate initiative passed, from Gorbachev's attempt to enlist the help of imperialism to reform the Soviet Union's planned economy — always a hopeless enterprise, to those, today led by the Russian president Boris Yeltsin, who are attempting to directly replace the planned economy with capitalism. Since the coup Gorbachev has largely subordinated himself in a bloc with Yeltsin for capitalist restoration.

Yeltsin is directly setting out to overturn the October revolution. Gorbachev, much reduced, is disorganising possible resistance to this.

Although Yeltsin emerged from the coup as the dominant political figure in Russia he still faces three massive obstacles to capitalist restoration. First, no-one knows what the response of the Russian working class will be to the economic collapse, which has already started and will become far worse even than Eastern Europe, if moves to restore capitalism were commenced. Furthermore, this time around Yeltsin himself will be directly held responsible for the results.

Second, the capitalist government of Russia is necessarily already on a collision course with the other republics and nationalities, most importantly the Ukraine, threatening to tear apart a Soviet economy which is completely integrated across the union. The Yeltsin camp is itself deeply divided. Some want to recreate the Russian empire. Some think Russia should stop subsidising the rest of the USSR and go it alone.

Third, to confront these obstacles, Yeltsin has no armed forces of his own. He is engaged in a race to purge and dismantle the Soviet state apparatus, and replace it with a capitalist dictatorship under his own control, before the outbreak of open mass conflict with the working class, other republics, or both.

It is the scale of these obstacles which underlies the tensions and divisions which have exploded within the liberal camp in Russia since the coup — making it still more difficult for Yeltsin to consolidate his position on any other basis than dictatorship — but which he is not strong enough to yet impose in a thorough-going fashion.

Take first the economic situation. The latest *World Outlook* published by the IMF admits that it completely underestimated the impact capitalism would have on Eastern Europe — output projections for the first half of 1991

had to be "revised down by considerable margins". It now admits the total fall in output for 1990-91 for Eastern Europe and the USSR was 19 per cent.

In April the World Bank had already concluded that Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia would not regain the income levels they enjoyed in 1989 until at least 1996, whilst the rest of Eastern Europe would not achieve the living standards they enjoyed in 1989 until the next century: 'Simply recovering from the contractions of 1989-91 could take five to ten years. Reaching the per capita income levels now prevailing in industrial countries could take decades.' (*The transformation of economies in eastern and central Europe*, April 1991).

The planned economies, even distorted by Stalinism, produced higher living standards than capitalism. Capitalism is economically worse, far worse, than what it is replacing in Eastern Europe.

But the IMF goes on to argue that restoring capitalism in the Soviet Union will bring more unfavourable results even than Eastern Europe. Anatole Kaletsky reported from Bangkok: 'But their [Eastern Europe] prospects are brilliant compared with the Soviet Union's... IMF economists said developments in the Soviet Union were so uncertain that it was impossible to make any serious forecast for that country's performance this year or next.' (*Times* 10 October)

The reason for this, the IMF admits, is that much of the collapse in Eastern Europe is the result of the elimination of production and businesses that are 'no longer viable' in the world capitalist market. But in the Soviet Union the fall in output is already comparable to that in Eastern Europe *before* the economy is opened up to the world market. This world economy would then devastate Soviet industry on a far greater scale than anything yet seen in Eastern Europe, because the Soviet economy has been constructed as a sort of 'world economy in miniature' and much of it would simply be crushed by international competition.

Nor is the IMF a lone alarmist voice. *The Economist* agreed, in an article aptly entitled 'Free fall': 'What is striking — and terrifying — about the Soviet Union is that the fall has started through sheer decay of the planning system, not in response to market forces. That being so, who knows where the floor, if any, might be?' (28 September)

In fact, it is the combination of (i) the historic under-investment in agriculture, distribution, the infrastructure

and light industry; (ii) Stalinism's economically irrational elimination of markets and the petty bourgeoisie in agriculture and retailing; and (iii) all brought to a head by the complete disruption of central planning by Gorbachev's market reforms and the breakdown of economic relations between republics — which has culminated in the present economic crisis.

As Martin Wolf noted in the *Financial Times*: 'Mr Gorbachev did nothing to reverse the stagnation of the Brezhnev era. On the contrary, the Soviet economy is on the brink of hyperinflation: discipline over wages has been lost; public finances are out of control; the framework of the command economy has disintegrated; and the Soviet Union may have to reschedule its external debt. No wonder gross national product is widely forecast to decline by 10-20 per cent this year, following a fall of 4 per cent in 1990... liberalisation ruptured existing links and destroyed existing disciplines rather than introducing a coherent alternative.' (FT 20 August)

The Soviet economy is already experiencing a level of economic collapse comparable to eastern Europe even before the far greater collapse which would accompany the attempt to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union itself.

And the immediate situation is equally dire. The state committee for statistics says GNP fell 10 per cent in real terms in the first six months of 1991. Vladimir Volsky, deputy head of the committee charged with running the economy, estimates output will fall 17 per cent over the year. Grigory Yavlinsky, in charge of economic reform, estimates inflation has already reached an annual rate of 365 per cent. Aslund Anders, the director of the Stockholm Institute of Soviet and East European economics estimates: 'A real drastic slump of 20 per cent seems likely for 1991 as a whole, presenting us with the worst economic catastrophe in Europe after World War II, even surpassing the great depression in the United States.' (Newsweek 9 September)

The most acute immediate problems are food and fuel supplies for the winter. Ivan Silayev, the head of the interim Soviet government, stated Soviet power stations only had 60 per cent of the fuel stocks required for the winter, with both oil and coal production 20 per cent below planned targets, and at least 40 cities facing shortages of power and heat. The oil industry is suffering from massive underinvestment in its infrastructure, including the living and working conditions of the

oil workers. For example, on average one per cent of overall investment goes on maintenance of pipelines and pumping stations, compared to typically fifteen per cent, for Western oil companies — especially those operating in harsh climatic conditions.

Food production is falling at an annual rate of 12 per cent, together with huge losses in distribution, refusal of farmers to sell foodstuffs at state prices and moves by some republics, most importantly the Ukraine, to ban exports of grain from the republics.

One of the by-products of forced collectivisation and the destruction of the distribution system created by a market in agricultural products, is that a quarter of the annual grain harvest is lost every year, along with half the potato crop and nearly 60 per cent of other fruits and vegetables — worsened by under-investment in the distribution system.

On top of that, the government can't provide the consumer goods farmers need, so that the roubles they receive for their crops are useless to them. Wild schemes such as the decision to allocate all consumer durables produced in September to the countryside have not materialised.

As a result Western officials reckon the farmers have so far this year met only 25 per cent of their state orders. 'As the command system breaks down individual economic units are acting to maximise their incomes: the state and cooperative farms, learning from last year, are now keeping their grain in store until the state is willing to pay almost any price to get it.' (John Lloyd, FT 21 August)

And some farms can now sell produce grain on commodity exchanges at their own prices, or direct to markets and shops where prices can be more than five times those in state shops.

Finally, republics which have food supplies want to hang on to them or exchange them for goods they in turn

urgently need.

Worst hit will be those on low incomes and the unemployed — enterprises can shield their workers to some degree by directly distributing food to them. 'There is a danger that inflation will make life impossible for the more than 70 million citizens below the poverty line, who used to scrape by on low rents, and cheap bread and energy.' (FT 1 October)

The aid promised by the west, \$7.5bn, will make a difference and is precisely designed to get Yeltsin through the winter without a social explosion. But still it boils down to roughly \$28 each for everyone in the USSR. The Soviet Union is simply *too big* for international aid to be effective — international capital just does not have the resources to develop the Soviet economy. (That's why it was overthrown there in the first place!)

That is simply the immediate situation. Serious moves to capitalism would make things far, far worse. Grigory Yavlinsky estimates there will be more than 20 million unemployed and a 20 per cent fall in living standards in the first year alone. That is what the *Economist* means by 'Free Fall'. Such an economic programme could only be carried out by a capitalist dictatorship.

This is indeed explicitly recognised by the more serious bourgeois commentators: 'During all times, in all countries, an extensive reform effort was carried through only by those leaders who were reasonably authoritarian. Never and nowhere had a transition of society to a qualitatively new status been accomplished during, let's say, a flourishing parliamentary democracy,' argued Sergei Stankevich, a close Yeltsin adviser.

Or more generally for Eastern Europe: 'It is unlikely to be an accident that many successful stabilisations cum market-oriented reforms have taken place under authoritarian or

'Yavlinsky estimates there will be more than 20 million unemployed and a 20 per cent fall in living standards'



semi-authoritarian regimes (as in Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Chile or Mexico), or under foreign occupation (as in post-war Germany and Japan). It is similarly no accident that the east Asian record of market-oriented interventionism, proposed as a model by Stanley Katz is also a record of political authoritarianism.' This was the analysis of Martin Wolf in the *Financial Times* on 9 May.

Or again, Jonathan Eyel, director of studies at the Royal United Services Institute, noted: 'Market economy is now increasingly associated with robber barons, theft and greed. East Europe's dwindling Thatcherites are already giving way to people who advocate an authoritarian, state controlled economic transformation of the kind achieved by Far Eastern states previously... what began as a wonderful dream almost two years ago may yet be transformed into Europe's nightmare.' (*The Guardian* 8 October)

The dislocation and fall in living standards of the working class is so drastic, and the social base for capitalism so narrow, that it's simply impossible to introduce it without dictatorship: 'A revolution supported by the proletariat must reduce the relative position of that class in favour of a middle and upper middle class that either does not exist, or to the extent that its does consists largely of the communist nomenklatura. The democratic process allows full expression of the fears of those who can see what they will lose in the near term; it can barely represent those whose future gains are obscure or altogether invisible.' (Wolf *op cit*)

Thus having sold the peoples of Eastern Europe the idea that democracy was impossible without capitalism, the think tanks of capital now argue that only dictatorship can establish capitalism — and above all in the USSR where capitalism has been telling us for 70 years that the problem is precisely lack of democracy.

The social base that is emerging for such a reintroduction of capitalism is also hardly inspiring: 'Initially much of the new business class will be hardly distinguishable from spivs and mafiosi. The day of the carpet bagger looms... the real need now is to allow those who know how to make money to emerge from obscurity and go for it. They will be the middle class of the future. Significantly, it was precisely such people the businessmen...who flocked to Mr Yeltsin's banner from the outset of the coup. Russia needs more of them,' was the *Financial Times* comment on 1 October.

This also requires a new moral order for the USSR. As Anatoly Kalet-

sky argued in the *Financial Times* on 20 August 1990: 'Today it is the merchant and even the "speculator", not the engineer and scientist, who must become the hero figure in Soviet life.'

A representative of this emerging class of Russian proprietors beautifully summed up its different relations to a Gorbachev as opposed to its now direct representatives: 'Mr Gorbachev has released a genie that will not go back into the bottle. He cannot turn back since he can no longer rely on the support of the Communist old guard, such as Ligachev or the lower echelons of the bureaucracy. He has only one option to move forward. To do this he must align himself with his real supporters those who have attempted to put his reforms into practice. These are those in the cooperatives [small private businesses] who are attempting to devise new solutions although not communist to today's problems... There is a new breed of man in the Soviet Union today: a radical, educated and committed patriotic entrepreneur. Even I am surprised at the speed and extent of this phenomenon. If the West wants constructive reform in the Soviet Union then it should not support Mr Gorbachev directly. Instead it should support the independent-thinking part of the civic society which is becoming the main prop for his reforms. (Victor Vladimirovich Aksyutich, editor of *Vibor* [Choice] a cooperative venture, *FT* 5 April 1989)

In other words Gorbachev's policy could only be a bridge to more fundamental class forces — the capitalists themselves. Furthermore the 'spivs and mafiosi' of the emerging Russian bourgeoisie are only able to display any courage because they know that behind them stands *international* capital. As Trotsky put it in 1929: 'However weak our national bourgeoisie may be, it is conscious, and rightly so, of being part of the world bourgeoisie, and it serves as a transmission belt of world imperialism.' (Writings 1929, p118).

Confronted with this trend, the role remaining to Gorbachev is to disorganise those parts of the former Communist Party who wish to block a transition to capitalism. Thus it was Gorbachev who was the direct instrument of de facto dissolving the CPSU — something Yeltsin was not strong enough to do — after the coup.

Nonetheless the problem for Yeltsin is that, however much international capital would like him to succeed, directly capitalist forces are very weak in the internal relation of forces in the USSR and not in control of the

core of the economy or the armed forces. You simply cannot run an economy the size of the Soviet Union on the basis of 'spivs and speculators' let alone construct a social and political bloc capable of commanding sustained popular support. It is for that reason that the role of Gorbachev in disorganising potential opposition from ex-Communist Party forces is still crucial. To give some idea of that, figures quoted by the IMF in its study of the Soviet economy indicate that the turnover of the cooperatives, which are private businesses, has increased nearly two thousand fold between 1987 and today. That is a spectacular increase, to some 215,000 cooperatives employing 5.2m people. But it is still only 3.5 per cent of total employment and the Russian government itself estimates there are only 29,000 private farmers in Russia.

These forces are, of course, being supplemented by a headlong rush of sections of the former communist nomenklatura to establish themselves as capitalists. Anders Aslund estimates in the Ukraine alone young communist officials have formed 1,500 enterprises at the expense of the state — selling themselves the state assets they control at very low prices. And we can add to this social bloc for capitalism those professional layers who might reasonably expect a sharp increase in their own personal living standards in a capitalist society — doctors, state functionaries, higher technicians, managers, etc.

But still this is not a powerful social base from which to seek to impose an economic catastrophe on the biggest working class in the world. The strength of this pro-capitalist bloc in fact derives not from its positive programme but from the massive opposition to Stalinism and the dreadful weakness of a coherent socialist political alternative within the working class created by Stalinism.

Fear of that the working class is precisely what has blocked the various proposals for restoring capitalism from the Shatalin plan to Yeltsin's repeated vetoing of proposals to end subsidies on basic necessities in Russia. The problem now for Yeltsin is that he directly holds the reins of power and will be held directly responsible for the state of the economy. He has the opportunity to implement his plan for capitalism. Since the coup, for all the ideological commitment to the market what has actually happened is that fear of political opposition has led politicians in the different republics to continue to try to buy working class support.

'The Russian working class did not respond to Yeltsin's call for a general strike'

According to Arnold Volukov, the deputy chair of Gosbank, whilst national income declined by 13 per cent in the first eight months of 1991, wages and bonus payments rose by 45 per cent and the budget deficit of the union and republics combined has now reached 25 per cent of GDP. The result is galloping inflation with more bank notes printed in August than in the whole of 1990.

There is no evidence of substantial active working class support for the market. This was clear in the course of the coup itself. Despite attempts to create a myth of a 'second Russian revolution' after the event the fact is that the Russian working class did not respond to Yeltsin's calls for a general strike and mass demonstrations.

To show that we will take a selection of reports from those with no reason to underplay the response. John Simpson for the BBC pointed out that the mobilisations in Moscow com-

pared unfavourably in absolute size to those in the Baltic states which have only a fraction of the populations.

James Adams, defence correspondent of *Sunday Times* noted on 25 August: 'In the early part of last week there was no sign of any significant mobilisation. "This was not a revolution that failed because of people power," said one Western intelligence source. "There were fewer people on the streets than the plotters might have expected. It failed because they did not put enough troops on the ground or use them effectively."'

Mark Frankland, in the *Observer* concluded on the same day: 'The Moscow working class has not been prominent in the Russian democratic movement and it did not heed Boris Yeltsin's call for a general strike though most other large groups of workers did not either, apart from miners in the Siberian Kuzbass.' On the mobilisation outside the Russian parlia-

'Yeltsin's attempt to transfer control of key institutions of the Union to Russia collided with the other republics'

ment he noted: 'The number of those who stayed overnight outside was very much smaller: on the dangerous, foully wet night of Tuesday, it was perhaps 10,000.'

The *Guardian* reported on 21 August: 'the response [to Yeltsin's strike call] in industry as a whole was apathetic.'

There were somewhat larger demonstrations in Leningrad but the army was not on the streets of the city.

The fact that the working class did not strike or march in support of Yeltsin, certainly indicated no support whatever for those who organised it, but equally it showed no great enthusiasm for the market amongst the Russian working class.

Outside Russia, the Ukraine and Kazakhstan adopted a wait and see attitude and opposed Yeltsin's call for a general strike. They only came out clearly against it when it was clear it would collapse. For different reasons

No future for capitalist democracy in Eastern Europe

The one thing the revolutions in Eastern Europe will not secure is democracy. The introduction of capitalism has meant: a massive rise in unemployment, attacks on welfare and state benefits, attacks on the rights of women and a horrifying upsurge in racist and fascist activity. Democratic rights only recently won are already being eroded.

In Hungary the ruling Democratic Forum has announced plans to introduce strict controls over the media, including television and radio. Istvan Csurka, the anti-semitic vice-president, has demanded a campaign of 'fear' be conducted against ex-communists under a slogan of: 'Those who lie should be afraid.' (*Independent* 7 September).

In Poland, Lech Walesa is demanding special 'executive' powers in order to push through the market reforms: 'I am angry about what I can and what I can't do... I am head of the armed forces; I nominated the prime minister in your (the Sejm's) name. Everything is mine — and it is worse than it was before. Very often I have doubts whether evolution from the communist system is possible, or whether different methods — though, strong, revolutionary methods, using fear (are needed) to re-orient the economy. I don't know yet which it will be.' (*Financial Times* 3 September).

Party X, led by Tyminski, the right wing populist ex-patriot

business man, who came runner up to Walesa in the presidential elections, has been banned from participation in the elections. During his visit to the United States in July Walesa inquired of the US government what would be its attitude to his imposing a state of siege.

In the Baltic Republics violations of democratic rights are being carried out by the very same people who called for their democratic right to independence.

The worst case is Lithuania. One of the first acts of the newly independent Landsbergis regime was to attack the Polish minority closing down Polish run regional councils.

The most extreme act of the Lithuanian government, however, has been to attempt to rehabilitate hundreds of war criminals convicted of collaborating with the Nazis during World War II. Even the strongly pro-Baltics *Newsweek* pointed out on 16 September that the Lithuanian collaborators were described as having 'a reputation as being among the worst Nazi collaborators anywhere.... (who) worked with "indescribable brutality"... The 11th and 12th Lithuanian Police Battalions, paramilitary units that collaborated with the Germans, were known for the fearsome efficiency with which they helped to liquidate Jews.' Almost the entire Jewish population of Lithuania was wiped out

during the war.

In Croatia the most famous statement of its president Tudjman was that he thanked god his wife was 'neither a Serb nor a Jew.' The Croatian state during World War II was a Nazi puppet regime under the Ustasha. However, Dobroslav Paraga, president of the Hos (Croatian Defence Association) with 15,000 armed members, declared that the Ustasha was: 'too liberal in the eyes of the Croatian people. If it had achieved what it set out to do, we would not be in this position now.' (*Guardian* 16 October) It 'set out' to eradicate Jews and Serbs.

In Georgia the right wing President Gamsakhurdia, brought the country to the brink of civil war by arrest of opposition leaders. Gamsakhurdia threatened to deprive of citizenship anyone who did not vote for independence.

Similar threats on citizenship have been made in Latvia and Moldova. In Latvia automatic citizenship has been granted only to those who were citizens before 1940! The status of the 40 per cent Russian minority is unclear (*Financial Times* 10 October). In Moldova it was declared that 'honest people who had not smeared themselves by collaboration with the criminal leaders of the coup d'etat will remain fully fledged citizens of the republic.' This did not appear to include the

650,000 strong Russian and Turkish minorities. (*Financial Times* 29 August)

These attacks on democracy are in addition to the general assault on women's rights across Eastern Europe — particularly the right to abortion, which is under threat in Eastern Germany, under the terms of reunification and Poland, where a commission examining abortion law is recommending a two year imprisonment for any women or doctors having or performing abortions.

Racist attacks are endemic across Eastern Europe.

The above are simply the first wave of attacks on democracy in Eastern Europe — occurring when the democratic rhetoric used by the capitalist forces in the struggle against Stalinism is still current, while imperialism still requires a democratic cover for its assault on the USSR, and the full weight of the economic collapse following the reintroduction of capitalism has not yet developed. It is therefore quite clear that these steps will be followed by further, more severe, attacks on democracy.

Bourgeois democracy will probably be able to sustain itself in the 'western tier' of Eastern Europe — certainly Germany, and probably Czechoslovakia and Hungary. But East of that the dynamic towards capitalist dictatorship is clear.

BERNADETTE MILLS

Georgia and Armenia likewise avoided committing themselves. The other Central Asian republics basically supported it. The Baltic states and Moldova seized upon the coup to push for independence.

Finally, although the imperialist states quickly rallied to Yeltsin, their initial reaction was most cautious simply demanding the new government respect previous international commitments.

In fact the coup failed, not because it confronted significant mass resistance, nor because any significant part of the army defected to Yeltsin, nor because of international pressure, but because the majority of the military command and the CPSU leadership continued to support Gorbachev.

Newsweek reported: 'One of the leaders of the Alpha Group KGB squad said: "We could have fulfilled our task [storming the Russian parliament] in 20 to 30 minutes." (9 September) and Yeltsin specifically thanked the KGB commanders for refusing to do so.

The decisive meeting was that of the senior commanders of the general staff, at the defence ministry, on the Tuesday night which decided that they would not order the soldiers to fire on the demonstrators. The attempt to convene a meeting of the CC of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) to endorse the coup also failed because they could not get quorum, ie the authors of the coup were a minority.

The majority of the leading staff of the state apparatus remained loyal to Gorbachev — it was not shattered defeated in a collision with mass opposition.

Just weeks after the failure of the coup there are the first signs of stirring against the Russian government in the Russian working class. According to TASS on 9 October the Russian trade unions threatened to stage a one-hour warning strike on 13 November. TASS said the Federation of Russian Independent Trade Unions was demanding wage indexation, privatisation 'which did not harm' working people, and the publication of 'a convincing and clear government plan to tackle the economic crisis.'

It is precisely any such plan that the government lacks.

The second problem for Yeltsin is the republics. The initial test of strength between Yeltsin's Russian government, the republics and the all-union state apparatus came immediately after the coup. Yeltsin was able to temporarily ban the Communist press, humiliate Gorbachev, secure ap-



pointments acceptable to him at the head of the KGB, Defence Ministry and Interior Ministry and the interim all-Union government and begin a purge of the state apparatus.

Yeltsin was able to push Gorbachev to endorse, and propose to the Supreme Soviet, the suspension of the Communist Party and seizure of its property. The Russian government emerged with the decisive political initiative, but without a state apparatus, above all without a military force of its own. The armed forces were intact, though with the supporters of the putsch greatly weakened and even the supporters of Gorbachev losing ground. In order to proceed further Yeltsin had to have the support of Gorbachev — which is what he was given. Yeltsin aimed to seize control of the Soviet state apparatus for himself.

But Yeltsin's attempt to transfer control of the key institutions of the Union to Russian control immediately collided with the other republics whose position vis a vis the centre had also been greatly strengthened by the collapse of the coup.

Yeltsin and the Russian government issued decrees transferring control of all-union institutions to the Russian government including: all enterprises and resources on Russian territory, Russian control over all financial and currency dealings and transactions in precious stones and metals, control over the Soviet finance ministry, the state bank (Gosbank) and the Bank for Foreign economic relations (Vneshekonombank), Soviet state TV and radio, all government communications, the KGB and CPSU archives.

But this met a storm of protest from the other republics which one after another had followed up the collapse of the coup with their own declarations of sovereignty or independence. In some republics nationalist separatists were

already in control and took the opportunity to get out of the union — as with the Baltic states, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova (as a first step towards unity with Romania). In Azerbaijan and the Central Asian republics the 'ex'-Communists governments asserted their sovereignty to prevent the Russian purge and witch hunt of Communists being extended and to try to head off their own nationalist movements. In the Ukraine, the ex-Communists are under intense pressure from the nationalists with both an independence referendum and presidential election on 1 December.

Ukrainian leader Leonid Kravchuk argued that: 'There is fear that the government is being formed by the representatives of only one republic.' Kazakhstan also announced its national sovereignty. Announcing Uzbekistan's independence, Islam Karimov attacked 'the control over the union administration by Russian nominees.'

The Russian 'liberals' responded with crude threats. Yeltsin's press spokesman announced that Russia might want to reconsider its borders with republics leaving the union, specifically looking at the Donbass region of the Ukraine and northern Kazakhstan. Anatoly Sobchak, mayor of Leningrad, said: "Khrushchev's gift of Crimea to the Ukraine should no longer be tolerated." The 'liberal' Sobchak later spelt out the spirit in which he proposes to conduct relations with non-Russians: "Russia will be dictating to the republics and not vice versa. This is what they have to realise." (*Newsweek* 9 September)

Nursultan Nazarbayev, president of Kazakhstan, responded that civil war could break out if Russia re-opened the border issue.

'Republics outside Russia bristled with fear that, having saved the country from dictatorship, Boris Yeltsin was seeking to re-impose a new

'The economic crisis puts pressure on every republican leadership to hang on to whatever it can'

Russian diktat on the rest of the country.' (FT 29 August)

The immediate crisis was defused by the Soviet and Russian parliaments despatching peace delegations to the Ukraine and Kazakhstan — with Sobchak booed by the crowds outside the Ukrainian parliament. Leonid Kravchuk made clear: "We must renounce any action which would revive imperialist ambitions. If we fail to do so, it would lead to violence." (FT 30 August)

By the end of the week of the coup the rush to immediate Russian control of Soviet institutions was halted. Temporary agreements were concluded with the Ukraine and Kazakhstan which referred to 'the former Soviet Union'. The decision for Russians to take over top jobs at union institutions, in particular Gosbank and Vneshekonombank, was cancelled.

This clash gave Gorbachev more room for manoeuvre, in a bonapartist role, between Russia and the other republics. The outcome was registered at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies with the key bodies giving equal weight to the republics, the role of the president, Gorbachev, greatly reduced but still there, and, significantly, the maintenance of a single Soviet military command and armed forces. The terrain of the coming test of strength is also quite clear — the struggle over the extent and form of an economic union, whether the Soviet armed forces remain intact, and the degree of influence of the Russian government over both.

In this, the next decisive test of strength is likely to be between Russia and the Ukraine.

The economic crisis exerts immense pressure on every republican leadership to hang on to whatever it can for its own population — however irrational from the standpoint of the union economy as a whole and even for its own long term interests. Thus the Ukraine, by far the most important republic after Russia, accounting for a quarter of Soviet industrial output and a third of agriculture, has banned coal mines and collective farms from making barter deals with partners outside the republic.

Yavlinsky's first draft for a new economic union, approved on 16 September by the leaders of 10 republics, foresaw a banking union, a common currency, and a free flow of goods and services, equal rights for all businesses in the republics, a rapid transition to free prices for most products, and a common labour market. Since then there have been constant alterations.

Growing Russian chauvinism from the Yeltsin camp — which appears to have little other way forward — simply fuels the conflicts. At the meeting of the IMF in Bangkok, Yavlinsky himself, responded to the vice chair of the Ukraine's central bank objections to a single economic space based on a single currency, by saying: "You haven't been a country for hundreds of thousands of years, so why should you be a country now?" (Times, 15 October) In the same vein Gennady Burbulis, the Russian State Secretary and right hand person of Yeltsin, declared to the Russian parliament: "Russia is the only republic that could and must become the rightful inheritor of the former Soviet power." According to the *Wall Street Journal* on 2 October: 'that statement split Mr Yeltsin's entourage in two and sent shudders through other republics already nervous of Russian chauvinism.' An emergency session of the Russian cabinet on 21 September reportedly accused Ivan Silayev of little short of treason because he proposed rescinding decrees transferring union property to Russia.

A break down of economic relations between the republics would have devastating consequences. The Soviet economy is totally integrated, far more so than the Common Market. The republics' industrial structures are constructed as so many cogs in a vast Soviet wheel and make no sense outside that context.

This is compounded by the sheer scale of the plants. The IMF report on the Soviet economy reports 'an estimated 30-40 per cent of total industrial output is accounted for by products for which there is but a single manufacturer'. According to the CIA: 'The Soviet Union's entire output of potato, corn and cotton harvesting machinery comes from single factories all in different republics.' (*Beyond Perestroika*, May 1991). All oil producing equipment, for example, is produced in Azerbaijan. The Byelorussia chemical industry is supplied entirely by oil from Russia at a fraction of the world price.

At the same time the results of a breakdown of the union would not be symmetrical. Russia is far more self sufficient than any other republic with only 18 per cent of its industrial production destined for other republics, compared to 40 per cent of the Ukraine's and 70 per cent of Byelorussia's. Russia accounts for 91 per cent of oil and gas production, 85 per cent of paper, 63 per cent of electricity, 60 per cent of cement, etc.

As the *Guardian* noted on 28 Au-

'The issue of the army could come to a head relatively rapidly'

gust: 'The Russians and the Ukrainians can go it alone and impose economic impositions on the rest, even including the Baltic states, that will make the shortages of the last few months look, in retrospect, like a golden era.' But both, and especially the Ukraine, without cheap oil from Russia, would still be thrown back massively by a break up of the union. Without the 52 million strong Ukraine, the USSR would no longer be a superpower.

That economic structure gives Russia great leverage to force the other republics into line, with the threat that those which do not participate will be charged world market prices for their raw materials — bankrupting them. Some in the Russian government are demanding that it does this anyway. Rutskoi, the Russian vice-president responded to Yavlinsky's plan, by saying Russia should no longer be a 'milch cow' for the other republics. Among the conditions the Russian parliamentary leadership have laid down for signing any economic agreement is that there must be no common development fund to help the poorer republics. Yeltsin has also called for a new Russian currency to protect Russian interests and ruled out giving a Soviet central bank control over the Russian central bank.

The biggest conflict is looming with the Ukraine. Its Prime Minister, Vitold Fokin, has threatened to establish direct economic ties with the autonomous republics *within* Russia if Russia cuts off oil shipments or makes claims on the Crimea.

Both the Ukrainian nationalists and the ex-Communists, led by Kravchuk, are campaigning for a 'yes' vote in the 1 December independence referendum. The nationalists gained a majority in the Ukrainian parliament at the beginning of September and are putting the ex-Communist administration of Kravchuk under intense pressure.

The nationalists say an independent Ukraine will carry through a rapid market reform including massive privatisation. A western team, including Geoffrey Howe, visited the Ukraine at the end of December to help draft its own economic reform, privatisation, to start at the beginning of next year. One of the team, George Soros, explained: 'I think it is easier to guide the Ukraine into a democratic, market oriented economy than it is to reform Russia because there is a unifying force here: they all want to break with Moscow. It is very difficult to break with Moscow in Moscow.' Kravchuk, is competing

with the nationalists's rhetoric, but claims an independent Ukraine will have lower prices.

Both currents agree that the nuclear weapons in the Ukraine should *not* be moved to Russia as Yeltsin has proposed. Kravchuk has signed a decree prohibiting any movement of nuclear weapons unless the republic's parliament is consulted. Ivan Plyushch, deputy chair of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet says: 'We're categorically against dismantling nuclear warheads. If we say take them away, where will they go? To Russia? Why should they?'

Volodomir Filenko, deputy leader of the Narodna Rada opposition, is even more explicit: 'Most MPs agree we cannot just give the weapons to Russia. It would upset the balance between Russia and the Ukraine. We're afraid of Russia, if you like. We're

fighting for independence from Russia. We cannot say there is a nuclear threat, but they did recently raise territorial claims.' (*Guardian* 4 October).

Kazakhstan has taken a similar position, with president Nursultan Nazarbayev saying on US ABC TV: 'Kazakhstan has received nuclear weapons and should keep them in future. We cannot allow other republics, even the largest of them, to control nuclear weapons on our soil.' Both want nuclear weapons to be under the collective control of the republics.

The Ukrainian parliament has also approved the formation of independent Ukrainian armed forces and security forces. Eventually, according to the *Financial Times*, they intend to have up to 420,000 soldiers — one of the biggest armies in Europe. The Ukraine refused to even attend the

meeting in October where eight other republics agreed to a single union army. Forty two per cent of the officers in the Soviet army are Ukrainian and they are all being invited to return home. The Ukrainian parliament is also demanding control of all troops stationed on its territory, 1.5 million soldiers, and has said that only those divisions which agree to this will be given the coupons needed to buy food in the Ukraine.

The issue of the army could come to a head relatively rapidly. A Soviet tank division in the Ukraine, the 48th army division, has defied orders from Moscow to move to the Caucasus, and placed itself under the command of the Ukrainian parliament.

According to Ukrainian Minister of Defence, Major General Konstantin Morozov: 'We need our own army to protect the Ukraine from palace coups in Moscow. The people of the Ukraine need to know that we are a real state with our own army.' (*FT* 12 October)

The Ukrainian government is also linking up with the other republics, for example at a meeting at Tallinn, the Estonian capital, in September, to oppose Russia taking control of all-Union property.

Concerning the other republics, the independence of the Baltic states has been recognised. Moldova has declared its independence — with the 100 MPs representing the Russian and Turkish minorities, boycotting the session. Its final goal is unification with Romania. Armenia voted overwhelmingly for independence on 24 September. Georgia is locked in internal conflict.

In Azerbaijan and the Central Asian republics ex-Communist forces are strongly entrenched and using their increased independence to try to defend their position. In Uzbekistan anti-communist demonstrations were still being broken up weeks after the coup. Russia is, however, starting to intervene against them, as with Anatoly Sobchak's trip to Tadjikistan, to persuade the parliament there to renew its ban on the Communist Party and remove its leader from the presidency.

But the Soviet Union was not a simple 'Russian empire' — notwithstanding Stalin and his successors' gross violations of national rights. The Czarist Russian empire would have met the same fate as the Ottoman empire — divided up between more powerful imperialists — if it had not been overthrown by the October socialist revolution. As we are seeing it cannot be held together on the basis of the re-introduction of capitalism — either of a free union of capitalist

Declaration by the Initiating Group for the Association of Russian Left Forces of Socialist Orientation

Dear fellow citizens and comrade Communists!

We are appealing to you with a call to begin speedy work for the creation on the basis of the progressive forces of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union of a new Russian party, uniting left forces of socialist orientation. It is bitter for us to acknowledge, but the CPSU as a political structure in its previous form has exhausted itself, has lost trust, and has in fact ceased its existence.

It bears responsibility before the people, millions of ordinary people, betrayed in their expectations, and has brought on itself a grievous time of discord, lawlessness and poverty. This is a tragedy for millions of Communists. But it pales before that profound shock, into which long-suffering Russia has been plunged. It is precisely in these days, dramatic, but also filled with new expectations, that we propose the unity of all those who preserve their political energy and capacity for activity in the name of civil harmony, of the peaceful, constitutional way out for the country from chaos and disintegration, and of the deep renewal of the whole of our life.

Today there is the possibility of creating a non-bure-

aucratic and strong party of like-minded people, united around healthy ideas, noble goals, and comradeship. This will be a party of Freedom, Truth, Justice, and Equality. A party recognising the paramount value of the human being as an individual. Each honourable toiler, each Russian can reckon on its support, and defence from tyranny, unemployment and destitution. Our compatriots, wherever they find themselves, may be sure of consistent upholding of their interests.

These ideas, which find their reflection in the new Programme of the CPSU 'Socialism, Democracy, Progress', underlie the position of the Russian Party of Left Forces of Socialist Orientation. Defending socialist values, showing sobriety and consistency, we are obliged to learn mutual understanding and common activity with all those for whom the paramount goal is the creation of a democratic state with the highest level of welfare for its citizens. It is essential to defend society from left and right extremism and adventurism of whatever form, wherever they come from. The truly democratic forces of Russia will receive, in the form of the new Party, their principal ally. Since we main-

tain fidelity to the international friendship of peoples, we consider it important also to create a mechanism for common activity with our fellow-thinkers in the other republics.

Comrades, we invite all those who share our positions, to set up regional initiative groups and to prepare for the convening of a republican constitutive conference in the last ten days of October this year.

Our contact telephones in Moscow: 451-12-84, 298-00-25, 205-44-71.

Signed: A Denisov, Peoples Deputy of the USSR; A Maltsev, First Secretary of Nizhegorod City Committee of the Party, City Soviet Deputy; V Sevastyanov, Peoples Deputy of the RSFSR, Cosmonaut of the USSR; A Solovveyev, Peoples Deputy of the RSFSR, Head Doctor at a Moscow Hospital; R Medvedev, Peoples Deputy of the USSR; G Sklyar, First Secretary of the Obninsk City Committee of the Party, Deputy for the Kaluzhskaya Region of the City Soviet; I Ribkin, Peoples Deputy of the RSFSR; N Solodyakova, Peoples Deputy of the RSFSR; Ye Krasnitskiy, worker, Sankt Peterburg; Yu Lavrenev, worker, Moscow.

Pravda, 3 October 1991

states, given the economic collapse capitalism would bring, nor is there any evidence that a capitalist Russia could sustain in the long term the type of fascist or semi-fascist dictatorship over the union as whole that would be necessary to maintain its unity on a bourgeois basis.

In Russia the beginning of the elimination of democracy was seen in Yeltsin's move to rapidly try to put in place his own regime outside the control of even the Russian parliament. His personal representatives were despatched to all regions of Russia, and a State Council, appointed by him, oversees foreign policy, internal security and finance.

But serious divisions have emerged within the Russian government under the pressure of the rising economic crisis and the fact that none of Yeltsin's supporters has a plan to deal with it. In Moscow there were protests against the powers Yeltsin conferred on Gavrii Popov, the mayor, overriding the Moscow city council. Banners, for example, told Yeltsin to keep his hands off Moscow.

Most importantly for the long term, Yeltsin has been unable to take control of the Soviet armed forces on Russian territory. The highly paid national guard he is planning obviously does not remotely solve this problem — that the crushingly dominant military force on the territory is outside his control.

The Moscow business community has itself been emboldened since the coup. They were enraged by Popov's powers to cut or freeze prices and threatened: 'to leave Moscow a graveyard in which Popov and Luzhkov will govern masses of unemployed.' (*FT* 13 September) After being charged by Georgy Matiukhin, chair of the Russian central bank, with laundering money for organised crime and charging many times the agreed interest rate, the leaders of Russia's booming commercial banks denounced Matiukhin's 'harsh and anti-market regime' and vowed to draft their own legislation for the Russian parliament.

When the Russian parliament opened in Yeltsin's absence, deputies queued up to attack Yeltsin for strengthening his executive powers at the parliament's expense and passed a resolution criticising the Russian government and demanded Yeltsin bring forward a plan to stabilise the economy.

Yeltsin also began to be attacked for surrounding himself with his old cronies from Sverdlovsk. Leonid Katkin, a leader of the right wing Democratic Russia movement said of Yelt-

sin's prefects: 'Some are nothing but thugs whose appointment offended local democrats.' (*International Herald Tribune* 11 October) As criticism of Yeltsin gained legitimacy, the liberal newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, warned in a front page article: 'Russia is sliding towards a presidential monarchy.'

Thus by October Yeltsin had already lost much of the momentum that he gained during and immediately after the coup — to the extent that the

Russian Information Agency reported he was advised not to hold the local elections due on 24 November because he was likely to lose most of them. (*Guardian* 12 October)

This situation creates time, limited time — an interregnum between two dictatorships — for the left. Those who oppose the restoration of capitalism therefore have the opportunity to organise themselves and clarify their programme. The choice is brutal. Either the Soviet Union will be

Moscow appeal for a Party of Labour

A new political situation has been created in our country. During the events of August 19 to 21 1991, the people demonstrated their refusal to live like in the past and their determination to defend the elected authorities. Nonetheless the crisis in our country is not over. It is essential to find a rapid way to lift the economy out of chaos, reestablish normal economic relations between regions and enterprises, and to provide sufficient goods for the consumer market.

The dominant forces in the country, whatever nuances one might find, are all united in their belief that the country's problems can only be resolved by very wide privatisation, a massive appeal to foreign capital and the systematic defence of private entrepreneurs and the new possessing classes issuing from the old bureaucratic nomenklatura. The desire to create a 'radiant capitalist future', expresses itself by the rejection of everything that can, in one way or another, be associated with socialism, including elementary social guarantees such as the right to work, free education and health care.

We consider that the unanimity of the victors is dangerous above all in the absence of opposition; without the representation of alternative positions in the organs of power there will not be a real democracy. If the majority of the present ruling majority assume the objective of defending entrepreneurs, we state that our objective is before all else the defence of the wage-earning population.

The decades of the totalitarian Communist regime has brought discredit on socialist values and on the very idea of the emancipation of labour. But these values did not arise

from the armchairs of intellectuals, they spring from the need for a political defence of the workers. The defeat of the CPSU at last opens the possibility of creating an authentic left-wing movement that can give expression to this need.

Society needs a mass party that can defend:

The right to work;
The reform of the system of social guarantees;

Economic democracy, workers' participation in the enterprises, in the making of decisions about their material situation and their conditions of work;

The independence and guarantee of the rights of the unions in all the enterprises, whatever the form of property, as well as the ratification by our country of the international convention of the International Labour Organisation;

The development of collective and municipal forms of property, the transformation of the state sector of the economy into a decentralised social sector that is modern and efficient, capable of leading the country out of crisis;

An end to the unregulated bureaucratic privatisation of the former sector of 'the property of the whole people' and a refusal to transform state monopolies into private monopolies;

For the rights of the consumer and of independent domestic entrepreneurs;

The democratic regulation of the economy, an indispensable condition for the establishment of civilised forms of the market;

Integration into the world market in a way that upholds the interests of the national economy and not those of the international corporations;

Self-management and a strong power based on representatives of the people as a counterweight to the power of the executive;

For honest government, guaranteeing the separation of the activities of the state from the economy, and with a clear distinction between the social private sectors within the mixed economy;

For real equality of women and for their possibility to fully participate in the life of society without this being to the detriment of their rights and obligations as mothers;

For the rights of national, cultural and religious minorities.

We announce our intention to create a mass Party of Labour, founded on rank-and-file initiative. We reject the notion of the vanguard party. The Party of Labour must be the party that gives political support to the trade unions and workers movement. Only such a party can become an integral part of the international movement of left forces.

We are calling on all social forces, all union organisations conscious of the necessity of a political defence of the interests of the wage earners, and all citizens aware of the danger represented by a one-party system and who share the ideas expressed here to join this initiative.

Signatories include: Nikolai Gontchar, President of the Moscow Soviet; Boris Kagarlitski and Vladimir Kondratov, Members of the Russian Socialist Party and Deputies in the Moscow Soviet; Mikhail Nagaitsev and Tatiana Froleva, Trade Union officials in Moscow.

plunged into an historic catastrophe by capitalism or working class political forces will re-impose a planned economy. The present interregnum cannot continue over a prolonged period.

What is called for in this situation is a united front of all those who want to maintain a planned economy in the Soviet Union, and any of its parts, against capitalist restoration and social catastrophe. This united front is in the interests not only of the working class but *all* who wish to prevent Russia and the other Soviet republics being enslaved by imperialism. That requires hammering out an economic programme to meet the immediate crisis.

If the TASS reports of the demands of the Russian trade unions for wage indexation and an economic plan are accurate that is the most encouraging development. So too is the support of the Moscow trade union federation for the call for a Party of Labour uniting trade unionists, socialist and ex-Communist Party members on a platform for maintaining the planned economy and defending the living standards of the working class. The driving force of this is the Socialist Party of which Boris Kagarlitsky is a member. But it is not confined to that party's supporters.

The *big* question, however, which will decisively influence the relation of forces, is what currents will emerge from the former Communist Party in Russia itself. Roy Medvedev was amongst the first to denounce the ban on the Communist Party and has now taken the initiative, with others to create a new party based on the programme adopted by the CPSU just

prior to the coup — a party describing itself as 'of socialist orientation'. Its declaration is printed on this page. But it is unclear whether the party actually stands for the socialised base of the Soviet economy or not — Kagarlitsky is unequivocally *for* this.

According to press reports, Medvedev's initiative is supported by Gorbachev, whose only aim in light of his bloc with Yeltsin would be to prevent any regroupment of former communists from entering on a collision course with the capitalist political forces. The issue is whether Medvedev is trying to create a party to rally forces to fight the restoration of capitalism, as is Kagarlitsky's Party of Labour, or to acquiesce in it in the hope of then acting as the constitutional social democratic opposition. Which alliances Medvedev chooses to make — with Yeltsin or against him, towards socialist initiatives such as Kagarlitsky's or away from them — will clarify this issue. Furthermore Medvedev is almost certainly *not* the only force that will emerge from the old CPSU.

What is now being acted out, above all in the clash between the Ukraine and Russia, is the fact that only a workers' state and planned economy can protect the Soviet people from disaster or maintain the unity of the Soviet Union. And only a united non-capitalist state, formed from the core of the old Soviet Union, can prevent its constituent parts, including even Russia, becoming subordinated by, and reduced to suppliers of raw materials for, the imperialist powers which dominate the world capitalist economy.

The break up of the Soviet Union, and the redrawing of borders this

would entail, given the vast Russian population outside Russia's borders — especially in the most industrialised parts of the Ukraine and Kazakhstan — would create a bloodbath. Into this situation, in a similar way to Yugoslavia, the German and Japanese imperialist powers would dust off their plans for controlling, even if initially only indirectly, the raw materials of the Ukraine and western Russia on the one hand and Siberia on the other. The fate that capitalism has in store for the peoples of the Soviet Union — economic collapse, massive national conflicts and imperialist exploitation would make the present turmoil in Eastern Europe pale into insignificance.

Given the gigantic scale of the forces involved no-one can predict the exact forms in which this struggle will be played out. But what is clear is that socialist forces in the USSR have only a limited time to save their country from disaster. They have in a very short period to create a united front that can save the socialised base of the USSR — because only by this can economic disaster be averted and any possibility to preserve the living standards of the working class be gained. If that is not achieved the harsh night of capitalist dictatorships, perhaps alongside, in certain republics, the maintenance of ultra-Stalinised and enfeebled, workers' states and catastrophic consequences for the Soviet people, will descend on the former USSR. The consequences of that would be felt in the world for decades.

In these circumstances any sectarianism would be unforgivable — either from new socialist forces to currents emerging from the old CPSU who want to defend the socialised base of the USSR, or from ex-Communist Party currents who hanker for the old, and gone, days of the Stalinist monopoly. *Everything* must be subordinated to saving the Soviet peoples from catastrophe.

Everything that can be done from the outside must be done. Socialists have the same duty to show the utmost non-sectarianism, and strain every muscle for victory, outside the USSR, as they do inside. For in the next few months and years the course of the rest of the twentieth century, and far into the next, will be determined.

But the truth is that whatever can be done from outside it is *in* Russia and the other republics that the struggle will be determined.

As twice before in this century, in 1917 and 1941, the fate of the world will be decided on Soviet soil.

GEOFFREY OWEN

Get rid of all nuclear weapons

At the end of September, with much fanfare, George Bush announced plans to reduce the nuclear arsenal of the United States inviting the USSR to respond. The White House presented the cuts as a big step forward in world disarmament. They are not. They are in fact designed to pile further agony on a weakened USSR, whilst the USA retains all its strategic military advantage. As *Time* magazine put it 'Moscow should read the fine print'.

The US proposals entail destroying short-range nuclear weapons made redundant by events in Eastern Europe. But the core of the US strategic arsenal remains, particularly the 5,440 nuclear warheads aboard US ballistic

submarines, the Midgitman single warhead missile programme, Star Wars, and the development of the hugely expensive B-2 Stealth bomber designed to seek and destroy Soviet mobile missiles and command centres after a nuclear war breaks out.

Tactical air to surface nuclear missiles are still planned to be deployed in Europe later this decade.

Bush also called for the eradication of land-based multi-warhead missiles which would eliminate the main strength of the Soviet's nuclear force whilst leaving the US's main submarine nuclear forces virtually intact. The effect would be to leave the US in a far stronger position.

tion.

So the Bush proposals in fact are designed to shift the nuclear balance further in favour of the US. But the fact that this has to be done through proposals to *reduce* the numbers weapons rather than a Reagan-style escalation shows the acute financial pressure on the Bush administration, particularly with the 1992 presidential election looming.

This, together with the Soviet Union's proposals for even deeper cuts, can be exploited to call for a radical reduction in US, and indeed British military spending, and the elimination of *all* nuclear weapons.

SAM AUDE

The recomposition of the international left

Trotsky analysed that the Soviet bureaucracy contained, and compressed within itself, every political current — all of which would be liberated if it disintegrated. As he noted in the *Transitional Programme of the Fourth International*: 'all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F Butenko). The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat. The fascist counterrevolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with ever greater consistency the interests of world imperialism. The candidates for the role of compradors consider, not without reason, that the ruling layer can ensure their positions only through rejection of nationalisation, collectivisation, and monopoly of foreign trade in the name of the assimilation of "Western Civilisation", ie capitalism. Between these two poles, there are intermediate, diffuse-SR [Social Revolutionary]-liberal tendencies which gravitate toward bourgeois democracy.'

The current situation in the USSR, with a significant part of the bureau-

The events in the Soviet Union since the failed coup of 19 August ensure that the greatest recomposition of the international working class movement since 1941, probably since 1917, has been set in train. The most powerful political centre of the world working class movement for the last seventy years, the CPSU, does not exist. Billions of people who were affected by it, and tens of millions of the most militant workers who looked to it directly for leadership, now have to reorganise their entire world outlook and activity. The consequences of that will affect hundreds of millions more who are under the influence of social democracy and various forms of anti-imperialist nationalism in the third world. These events have also politically smashed to pieces the former 'extreme left'. While the detailed working out of the implications will take many twists the general line of development of the working class over the next years is already clear. SYLVIA ASHBY looks at the main trends.

crazy going over to a capitalist force organised around Yeltsin, the resistance of others (publicly in the former Marxist platform of the CPSU), and with Gorbachev now attempting to create some sort of social democratic alternative, completely confirms that analysis.

Trotsky, equally, predicted what would be the relations among the different forces released by the explosion of the bureaucracy. The would-be social democratic, now Gorbachevite, project would form a bloc with the open capitalists, represented by Yeltsin, for the restoration of capitalism. Other forces from the Communist Party, and outside, would rally against them to defend the social base of the Soviet workers state.

As Trotsky noted: 'The Mensheviks [the social democrats] and Social Revolutionaries would form a bloc with the praetorian wing of centrism and serve to cover for the imperialists on the precipitous decline of the revolution as they sought to cover for them in 1917 during the revolution's sharp ascent. In the opposing camp, a no less decisive regrouping of forces would take place under the banner of the struggle for October. The revolutionary elements of the Soviets, the trade

unions, the cooperatives, the army, and, finally and above all, the advanced workers in the factories would feel...the threatening danger... Not only the centrist faction but also the right wing of the party would produce not a few revolutionists who would defend the October Revolution.' (Trotsky, 'Problems of Development of the USSR', *Writings 1930-31* p222.)

A regroupment would take place in which the forces which Trotsky had originally led would by no means initially be the largest numerically but would be politically crucial: 'They [the diverse forces moving to defend the socialised base of the USSR] would need a painful internal demarcation, which cannot be carried out without a period of confusion, vacillation, and loss of time. Under these circumstances the...presence of a Leninist faction would double the chances of the proletariat in the struggle against the forces of the counterrevolution.' (*ibid*)

While after 1933, Trotsky concluded that the CPSU could not be reformed and the bureaucracy must be overthrown that did not alter his views of the forces contained within the



CPSU, as the earlier quote from the *Transitional Programme* shows. The detail that Trotsky did not foresee was simply that, due to the long delay between his death and the disintegration of the Soviet bureaucracy, a number of those who claimed to support him would have broken with his ideas, and gone over to the side of the counter-revolution — in an analogous fashion to the way that Kautsky and Bernstein broke with the positions of Marx and Engels following the latter's death.

This analysis of Trotsky regarding the bureaucracy within the Soviet Union, of course, applied also to the currents within the world Communist Parties. The events which started in Eastern Europe, and have now culminated in the USSR, have resulted in every political current in the workers' movement, and some moving outside it, being released from the Communist Parties. We will start by examining the most right wing of these forces and then progressively considering those further to the left.

As regards the right wing of the Communist Parties, Trotsky already outlined in the 1930s that the turn of Stalin towards collaboration with imperialist powers would begin a development producing strong social democratising currents within the Communist Parties — a process which was greatly speeded up by the turn to the Popular Front in 1935. As Trotsky wrote of that year's Comintern Congress: 'The Seventh Congress of the Comintern... will sooner or later go down in history as the liquidation con-

'Some currents, such as Marxism Today, are becoming open apologists for imperialism'

gress. Even if all its participants do not today recognise the fact, they are all... busy in practice with the liquidation of the programme, principles, and tactical methods established by Lenin...

'Twenty one years ago Lenin proclaimed the slogan of a break with reformism and patriotism... it cannot be disputed that it was precisely on the idea of the irreconcilability of the two basic tendencies in the workers movement [social democracy and Marxism] that the Communist International was founded. The Seventh Congress has arrived at the conclusion that sectarianism was the source of all the subsequent great defeats of the proletariat. Stalin is thus correcting the historical "error" of Lenin.' Of the most extreme trends being unleashed by Stalin within the Communist Parties Trotsky concluded that: 'Nothing now distinguishes...[them] from the Social Democrats except the traditional phraseology, which is not difficult to unlearn.' (*Writings 1935-36 pp84-94.*)

The trends which began in embryo under Stalin have now developed to the point where the majority of entire Communist parties have passed over to social democracy — the most important, of course, being the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the largest Communist Party in Western Europe, with its recent refounding as the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS). This paralleled the proposal of a section of the Greek KKE to *de facto* dissolve into an electoral front, the SYN, which was involved in coalition governments with the parties of the right following

the defeat of PASOK in the June and November 1989 elections. The Dutch CP has dissolved itself. The key exponents of such a line of consistent social democratisation (or worse) in Britain are *Marxism Today* and the 'Democratic Left' leadership of the CPGB — with the proposed renaming of the CPGB, and abandonment of Marxism, at its November Congress.

The chief Communist Parties which have held out against this trend in Western Europe are those of Portugal and France.

The impact of the events in Eastern Europe and the USSR has merely been to propel these social democratising currents to more rapid and explicit support for some of the most classical Menshevik/Social Democratic positions. Most notable and crucial is the open affirmation that the October 1917 revolution was a mistake.

In Britain this view is now quite explicit. Bea Campbell announced a year ago that the 1917 revolution was an error. Monty Johnson has echoed this view at CP forums since the putsch. Chris Myant, writing in *Changes*, 28 September, argues that: 'The important thing is to understand why October 1917...was such an historic error'. While such views are objectionable, and politically ridiculous, they at least have the merit of bringing out into the open the truth — that the 'new thinking' of *Marxism Today* was merely the recycling of stale, seventy year old Social Democratic rubbish.

The general trajectory of such currents is to become open apologists for imperialism — a trend most clearly expressed in the August issue of *Marxism Today* devoted to 'The New Third World'. In this Melvyn Westlake argued that the Third World no longer existed, because 'today everybody is in the same camp', and that economic failure in the semi-colonial countries was due to 'domestic policy failures and mismanagement' rather than the debt crisis or imperialist exploitation. The role of imperialism is reduced to 'structural defects of the international economic system'.

In the same issue Fred Halliday, a supporter of the Gulf war, polemicised that the left was prone to knee-jerk anti-Americanism — when in fact the US has given the world fine jazz music and Hollywood — and attacked the 'tendency for the liberal and left opposition, in Europe and the US, to oppose intervention as such' — for example in the Gulf. To cap the collection off, Lynda Chalker was given space to argue why aid should come with political and economic preconditions defined by the World Bank and the

IMF.

A number of such ex-Communist social democratic currents, which continually talk about 'democracy' while supporting policies that crush liberty by condemning hundreds of millions to starvation and tens of millions to death, will probably pass outside of the workers movement altogether. None are of the slightest interest as far as the development of progressive politics is concerned. All were on their present track long ago and the events in the

USSR have simply clarified and speeded up their trajectory.

The most serious impact of the events in the USSR is on the forces that have remained *within* the framework of Communist Parties — or, in some cases, have been expelled from them against their will. These currents, unlike the pro-social democrats, contain the majority of the militant working class forces in or looking to the Communist Parties. On a world scale,

as Social Democracy is dominant only in the imperialist countries, this constitutes the majority of the most militant forces of the working class.

A number of such currents already had few illusions in Gorbachev — and none at all in forces such as *Marxism Today* or the Italian PDS. A number had hoped for a defeat of the Gorbachev-Yeltsin course, and defence of the non-capitalist character of the USSR, from within the Soviet Union by a political reaction by the CPSU, or

Optimism of the will, absence of the intellect

"'Communism has collapsed' our newspapers and TV declare. It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing." (*Socialist Worker* 31 August 1991)

The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) is unique on the British left in holding a 'state capitalist' analysis of the Soviet Union. This argues that since 1929 a society no qualitatively different to capitalism has existed in the USSR — and that the working class should therefore be indifferent between this state capitalism and the restoration of private capitalism.

This theory, developed by the SWP's founding figure Tony Cliff in 1947, is itself incoherent and incompatible with any marxist understanding of capitalist society. Cliff himself states that the Soviet economy is based on the production of *use values*. If so it is, in marxist terms, by definition *not* capitalist — for capitalism is a system of production based on *exchange values*, as *Capital* is devoted to explaining.

The theory of state capitalism has always been completely irresponsible and damaging in its international implications. It makes an enormous difference to the people of any semi-colonial country, or black people, whether capitalism exists in the USSR or not — indeed the whole wave of post-war decolonisation would not have been as successful as it was without the existence of a non-capitalist state in the USSR which could give material aid and constituted a permanent reminder that resisting a movement against colonialism might radicalise it to the point where it became a movement against capitalism as well.

Similarly, when applied to countries other than the USSR, state capitalism produces political positions which are gross. For example today Cuba faces



the greatest threat in its existence. Yet *Socialist Worker* can devote an entire page in its issue of 12 October to an article entitled 'Cuba: Socialism in One Island?' which does not even bother to call for the country to be defended against the United States!

The SWP refuses to recognise any class difference between a state under Batista, in which every sixth woman was forced into prostitution by poverty, and that under Castro — where Cuba has the best health service in Latin America and a life expectancy approaching that of the United States.

This reactionary line of reasoning is, however, now producing a wierd and wonderful form of 'ultra-leftism' (in fact a profoundly right wing line) when applied to the USSR. Following logically from the theory of state capitalism the SWP argues that Russian workers should be indifferent to whether a planned economy or private capitalism exists in the

USSR. Thus, according to John Rees in *Socialist Review* of September 1991: 'The different courses advocated by Yeltsin, Gorbachev and the "hardline" sections of the apparatus are different ways of restructuring state capitalism. There can be no justification for a strategy which asks workers, as a matter of principle, to choose one over the other.'

However simultaneously with this, the only theory consistent with state capitalism, Tony Cliff explains quite a different reality. In the same issue of *Socialist Review* he points out correctly that: 'To achieve a real market economy would mean a massive amount of unemployment ... (it is) estimated that between 31 and 38 million will be out of work before the transition to a market economy is over'. He continues: 'Putting over 30 million people (over 100 million including their families) out of work on top of the 70 million people in the USSR who already live below the poverty line is terrifying.'

Now according to Rees', and state capitalism's, logic the workers must not choose, as a 'matter of principle', between a situation of almost full employment and one where 30 million are unemployed!

If such a theory were seriously advanced one would have to conclude that it was one of the most grotesque pieces of ultra-leftism ever propounded. Imagine, to take comparable figures, someone informing the British working class that they should be indifferent between a situation where there was almost full employment and one where there were six million unemployed, or one where at least the rudiments of a welfare state existed and one where it was totally destroyed by market forces! But in fact it is not ultra-leftism at all — it simply derives from a ridiculous theory which was aimed not to

incur unpopularity in the West by defending the USSR during the cold war and which is now showing its theoretical incoherence.

Indeed, ironically, the SWP would now be forced to conclude that, on their own theory, state capitalism was a superior system of production to capitalism and must be defended against private capitalism — after all, if one economic system produces full employment and the other 30 million unemployed, then clearly the former system is preferable to the latter and should be defended against it!

In Britain the SWP would defend a trade union against an attack from the state but it says in Soviet Union the nationalised economy which prevents mass unemployment and poverty should not be defended!

In short the SWP has got itself into a completely incoherent position. *Either* it is guilty of absurd ultra-leftism, to be indifferent between full employment and thirty million unemployed, or it has to conclude that state capitalism is superior to private capitalism and, therefore, must be defended against the latter.

The SWP argue it is necessary to support the theory of state capitalism in order to avoid pessimism (which is scarcely a justification for adopting a scientific theory). The trouble is it also destroys the intelligence as well.

But perhaps a 'left state capitalism' current will emerge that will call for defending state capitalism against private capitalism. That would at least be a political step forward if theoretically incoherent. The current line, refusing to choose 'on principle' between the current economy of the USSR and private capitalism is simply profound rightism in an ultra-left guise.

SARAH SHERIDAN

a military one by the Soviet army/state apparatus. This was conceived of as blocking Yeltsin and either removing, or changing the course of, Gorbachev. Currents with such views now face the question of why the forces they looked to in the Soviet Union were incapable of achieving this outcome and what the consequences are of the disintegration of the CPSU and USSR.

Such a development does not unfold in a situation where the battle for the future of the USSR is over. But the drastic inability of the CPSU and Soviet state apparatus to deal with the Yeltsin/Gorbachev bloc's attempts to restore capitalism forces currents who had looked to the CPSU to reassess their position.

Some currents opposed to the Yeltsin/Gorbachev bloc, and course, distinguish between Gorbachev, whom a number (not all) support, and Yeltsin — to whom they are violently opposed. Such a line of 'opposition to Yeltsin/support for Gorbachev' does reflect, at one level, a correct point. Rule by Gorbachev means rule by the pro-capitalist wing of the Soviet bureaucracy. It is now opening the way for the restoration of capitalism but it does not itself represent rule by capital — indeed Gorbachev would be swept away by capitalist restoration just as were Pozsgay and similar forces in Eastern Europe who earlier attempted to create a social democratic project for the bureaucracy. Rule by Yeltsin, in contrast, means a direct government of capital.

From the nature of these social forces it is entirely correct, in principle, to propose a united front with even the social democratising wing of the bureaucracy, Gorbachev, against Yeltsin to prevent the restoration of capitalism in Russia — indeed such a united front *must* be proposed to the supporters of Gorbachev. The proposal that Gorbachev break with Yeltsin and instead fight to defend the socialised base of the USSR, is the *de facto* line proposed by certain forces within the Communist Parties.

But in reality, and logically given his line, Gorbachev has not entered into a bloc *against* Yeltsin to oppose capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union but a bloc *with* Yeltsin — a bloc which cannot lead to the defence of the socialised base of the USSR but only to moves to the restoration of capitalism. Indeed, without the cover given by Gorbachev, Yeltsin would not have been able to make progress either in the past or today.

Therefore, while the Yeltsin/Gorbachev distinction is correct in terms

'From a dictatorship with a welfare state, to a dictatorship without a welfare state'

of analysis that they *do not* represent the same social forces, it has no operational value at the top levels of the Soviet Union today. This situation, however, will be much more varied at the base of the Gorbachevite current in the USSR and among those who support his line internationally. Not simply the attitude to Gorbachev *per se* but which bloc he should create has therefore become a distinguishing feature among Communist Parties.

The *Marxism Today*/social democratic current is of course explicitly for a Gorbachev-Yeltsin bloc — that is a bloc *with* capital for capitalism. They are part of the enemy. Those who call, in theory or practice, for Gorbachev to break his bloc with Yeltsin, and oppose capitalist restoration in the USSR, are, in contrast, part of the left seeking to defend the social base of the USSR — even if they have a mistaken view on how to achieve this. Other Communist Party forces, of course, oppose not simply Gorbachev's bloc with Yeltsin but his entire politics.

Discussion on this issue will continue — and will largely be settled by events. But it *should not* interfere with unity in action by those fighting to defend the socialised base of the USSR. This latter bloc, furthermore, should be extended to the struggle within the USSR — a point we will come back to.

Objectively, therefore, two international blocs have been created. The first stretches from imperialist capital, with Yeltsin as its chief agent in Russia, through Social Democracy, with Gorbachev in alliance with it, and taking in, as a pathetic tail, even so-called 'Trotskyists' supporting an alliance with capital against Stalinism. The unifying element of this grouping is a call for a bloc with capital's chief representative in the USSR — Yeltsin. The nature of this bloc is not determined by the pathetically small 'left' forces within it but by its real powerhouse — US, West European, and Japanese imperialism.

The second bloc which objectively exists, and must be subjectively developed and organised if it is to be effective, is that for the *maintainance* of the socialised base of the USSR, and the development of that society on the basis of a non-capitalist state. This takes in, starting with the clearest and not the biggest, forces, those who maintain Trotsky's views on the USSR, the 'new left' in Eastern Europe, left forces within the Communist Parties, all those in the USSR who remained committed to its development as a state based on socialised

property, and those in the Social Democratic and anti-imperialist nationalist movements who understand the importance of this. The task is to render such an objective bloc subjectively aware of itself, and more politically coherent, and to push forward the most advanced forces within it as a precondition for its success.

These two blocs objectively confront each other on a world scale with implications that will progressively feed into every country and which will be the driving force of the recomposition of the international working class movement.

This is precisely the moment in the disintegration of the Stalinist bureaucracy which Trotsky foresaw in the passages quoted at the beginning of this article. It is on this developing left wing bloc that we will concentrate in the rest of this article.

The force which should have played the politically leading role in this progressive bloc were Trotsky's supporters organised in the Fourth International. After all Trotsky, as we saw at the beginning of this article, foresaw with perfect clarity what would occur. He also left no doubt as to what line should be pursued. Indeed he stated it with the utmost brutality in *In Defence of Marxism* immediately before his assassination: 'We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution.' (p53)

What took place in Eastern Europe in 1989, and what is involved in the USSR today, is *not* the advance of the political revolution overthrowing the bureaucracy and maintaining a socialised economy. But the leadership of the Fourth International is refusing to acknowledge something which the entire world, except it, knows — that the events in Eastern Europe are towards *capitalism*. The imperialists are *for* this development, the most advanced workers in the world are *against* it. Only those who act like an ostrich-like sect, sticking their head in the sand because they don't want to acknowledge the truth, fail to realise it. In such circumstances, as Trotsky put it with the utmost brutality, 'the decisive issue is the question of preserving state property in the means of production'.



The reason for that is simple. *The replacement of Stalinism by capitalism will leave the workers of Eastern Europe, and most of all the workers of the USSR, in a worse condition than under Stalinism.* This is obvious at the social and economic level. Unemployment and poverty is rising rapidly in every East European country. In most industrial collapse is also gathering pace. On this base racism and reactionary nationalism has enormously strengthened itself.

On the political field the situation is evident. In all but a handful of East European countries (obviously East Germany, probably Czechoslovakia, and possibly Hungary) we are *not* moving from Stalinism to bourgeois democracy but from Stalinism to capitalist dictatorship via a bourgeois democratic interlude — from a 'dictatorship with a welfare state to a dictatorship without a welfare state' as it has been aphoristically put.

Under these circumstances the East European left is, rightly, regrouping on the basis of 'for or against the destruction of the socialised economy and social gains of the working class'. They understand perfectly well that on the basis of capitalism their societies are heading towards a dictatorship not democracy.

Boris Kagarlitsky made the point perfectly explicit in *New Statesman and Society* of 6 September. While he does not use the term, what he describes perfectly was a type of 'dual power' which existed between the Communist Party and the capitalist

Yeltsin bloc prior to 19 August. A democratic interlude was, as always, created in a situation of dual power. The events of 19 August, by bringing to an end that type of dual power, opened up the new trend to dictatorship under Yeltsin (which is why a putsch was incapable of defending the social base of the USSR).

As Kagarlitsky put it: 'The Communist Party is no more, the federal organs of power are being dissolved, and there is no longer any opposition, not even in the press. All the prominent parties are united in their support of the government and the president. Those who oppose them know the fate of the Communist Party...

'Of course, Yeltsin's "Democratic Russia" is not yet a fascist party. But the CPSU in the years of *perestroika* had also shed its old Stalinist totalitarian structure. Both parties are far less totalitarian than their prototypes of the 1930s. But they still resemble the totalitarian movements of the past much more than the democratic organisations of the contemporary west.

'What took place on 19 August was not a triumph of democratic freedoms, but the beginning of the end of the democratic interlude between two dictatorships, the Communist and the right-wing populist.'

Or as Kagarlitsky stated in the October issue of *Labour Briefing* when asked 'How would you define the relationship between the socialist left and the Yeltsin camp?' he replied: 'What is happening in the country can be characterised as the formation of a

populist right wing dictatorship with growing fascist tendencies. Clearly there can't be any relations with a government which we consider to be a real disaster for the country and probably even for humankind.'

As far as the socialised base of the USSR is concerned Kagarlitsky, when asked, 'Is it realistic for you to attempt to preserve the social ownership of the means of production,' replied simply: 'That is exactly our policy.'

On that line, *against* the growing dictatorship of Yeltsin, *for* defence of socialised property, Kagarlitsky's party will inevitably be led into alliance with forces coming from the suspended Communist Party — as indeed it should.

In Poland a similar dynamic has opened — of course in a very different form. The Polish Socialist Centre, based in Wroclaw, whose best known leader in the West is Jozef Pinior, has formed an anti-capitalist electoral bloc, on the basis of defence of the welfare and standards of living of the working class, with 'Labour Solidarity', led by Modzelewski. In addition to running its own list for the lower house of the Polish parliament this bloc is calling for a vote for a candidate for the senate of the Union of the Democratic Left, the electoral force led by the party formed from the former Communist Party.

In Eastern Europe and the USSR these developments are crucial. The more Marxist forces can hegemonise the struggle in defence of the planned economy, and the economic position of the working class, under the banner of democratic socialism, the greater chance there is of a working class fight back against capitalist restoration. The struggles and response of the working class will be weakened the more it appears that the only alternative to capitalism is a simple return to the old system. The more the forces of democratic socialism are in the vanguard of the fight, the greater the chances of success. But to lead that fight they have to fight to create a bloc *for* the defence of socialised property.

The leadership of the Fourth International should have been proposing and fighting for such a bloc in Eastern Europe, attempting to strengthen the Marxist forces within it against the Stalinists. Instead the leadership of the Fourth International was paralysed and minorities within its sections were supporting counter-revolution. Indeed this reached farcical self-delusion — a classic case of extreme rightist disguising itself as leftism.

'What took place on 19 August was not a triumph of democratic freedoms, but the beginning of the end of the democratic interlude'

Thus for example in France, G Filoche, representing a significant minority current in the Fourth International organisation, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), considers this an appropriate moment to lead the struggle for the tearing down of the Lenin Mausoleum — and denies the simple reality that the attacks on the statues of Dzerzhinsky, Sverdlov and Lenin were not distorted forms of socialist consciousness in a progressive anti-Stalinist socialist struggle but were the simple products of anti-Communist violence. In an article in *Rouge* of 19 September entitled 'Down with the Mausoleum of Lenin!' Filoche writes: 'It is we who demand that Lenin's mausoleum be demolished... Bring down the icons! Eliminate the the external signs of the cult of the personality! Destroy the caricatures of the revolutionary ideas... Lenin will rise over the ashes of the hideous statues... We were the first to demand that they be overthrown.'

Now there is no doubt that a victorious democratic socialist political revolution in the USSR would, with due respect, take Lenin out of the mausoleum and rebury him. It would do so for a very important political reason. To show that no individual, not even the individual who lead the greatest struggle for liberation in the twentieth century, can substitute for the masses. Lenin's greatness was that he was able to express better than anyone else the needs and policies of the Russian and international working class. But it was to them, and not him, that victory was due. Removing Lenin from his mausoleum in that context would be part of showing that it is the masses, the 'ordinary people' not famous individuals, who are the great heroes of history. No one in the world would misunderstand that act and we hope to live to see that day.

But the issue is *who* is demanding Lenin be taken out of the mausoleum now and *for what* reason, and *who* is attacking whose statues and *why*. Those who demand the attacks on the statues and Lenin's mausoleum are first and foremost the capitalists, who are not for socialism and against Stalinism, but against both Stalinism and socialism, and *for* capital. They attack Lenin and Bolsheviks' statues to promote capitalism not socialism, and there is nothing progressive in it whatever — not even in a distorted form. Those who proclaim that they are in the forefront of such struggles are no different in essence to those who believed that allying with the Nazis to attack the social democrats was going to produce something progressive.

Those who have such views, coupled with their more serious ones on Germany discussed below, have *no* place within a Marxist organisation.

It was, indeed, Germany which created a class split in the Fourth International. The currents led by G Filoche in the LCR and his supporters in Britain supported the capitalist reunification of Germany — that is the destruction of a workers state by an imperialist state. In so doing they passed out of the political framework of the working class. The current wave of racist murders and attacks in Germany, and the economic collapse in eastern Germany, are merely the first tiny install-

ment of the terrible price humanity will pay for that capitalist reunification.

This is a process the Fourth International has seen before. Politics does not rest on pure ideas. 'Trotskyism', in particular in Western Europe and the US, passed through fifty years of isolation from the working class, which repeatedly led to currents breaking from the political framework laid down by Trotsky and abandoning the interests of the working class to social democracy and imperialism.

A large number of these breaks — Cliff and Pablo for example — involved explicitly abandoning Trotsky's position on the USSR and therefore the defence of it against

Socialist Organiser (SO) has for many years played the same role in regard to 'Trotskyism' that *Marxism Today* does in regard to the 'Communist' Parties. It continually talks about 'new thinking' and going 'against the grain', while the actual content is always that the left should abandon some previously held position in favour of an idea of the bourgeoisie. Indeed Sean Matgamna's column in it, 'Against the Stream' should be called 'With Imperialism, Against the Left'.

As a logical part of this process of bourgeois rethinking in 1988 *Socialist Organiser* abandoned Trotsky's position that the Soviet Union was a degenerated workers state and decided that it was a new form of class society. This path was previously trod by Burnham and Shachtman. But the question is then posed whether this new form of class society is more progressive or more reactionary than capitalism, which determines whether it should be defended against capitalism, or not.

Shachtman decided that the new 'bureaucratic collectivist' mode of production was more reactionary. Trapped in the logic of this view, Shachtman therefore supported the US invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs and the US war against Vietnam.

SO have adopted the same theoretical position, but have not yet fully worked it through. The events in the USSR have, however, led them to take a further great lurch down this road.

SO explain that what is taking place in the USSR is 'a bourgeois revolution having much in common with the

Alliance for Workers' Liberty



revolutions against absolutism in France after 1789 and in various parts of Central Europe in the mid-nineteenth century.' (SO 497) SO at least has the merit, unlike some others, of understanding clearly that what is dominant today in the USSR and Eastern Europe is an attempt to install capitalism, or in their words a move 'from Stalinist collectivism to a bourgeois society', and not to pretend it is something else.

What makes SO unique (except for the bourgeoisie's direct hangers on) is that it *welcomes* this reintroduction of capitalism. For SO, alongside Shachtman, has arrived at the view that capitalism is more progressive than what exists in the USSR and is to be supported against it. Thus the Stalinist system in the USSR is allegedly comparable with 'the decayed oriental despotism of China at the beginning of the century.' Furthermore capitalism is *clearly* superior to this system: 'In terms of human liberty, freedom of utterance, organisation, sexuality, habeas corpus, the rule of law — the Stalinist world until recently had fallen backwards in history hundreds of years, further back even than some of the notoriously brutal third world authoritarian regimes.' And that 'It was as

if all the advances since the middle ages associated with the rise and spread of bourgeois civilisation had never happened: except that they existed and flourished in Europe and the US and other places, side by side with, but beyond the borders of the Russian Empire.' (SO 497)

Indeed, to give this imperialist position a left face SO claim that the capitalist countries of western Europe are closer to socialism than the USSR. 'Such "Socialist societies" [in Eastern Europe] were in fact a great deal further from the socialism of Marx — and of Lenin — than is the bourgeois system in countries like Britain, France and Germany.' (SO 498)

As a result SO support the rising bourgeoisie even in dictatorial actions taken against the Stalinists. In the 3 October issue Sean Matgamna supports the banning of the CPSU by bourgeois forces in the USSR. According to his article, 'Why we should support the ban on the CPSU', 'The Yeltsinites... represent not our class but the nascent bourgeoisie in the USSR.' Therefore 'we must, it seems to me, support and cheer on the destruction of the CPSU, even by the Yeltsinites.' Hence the 'Alliance for Workers Liberty' promoted by SO

imperialism — as Burnham and Shachman did earlier. Confronted with the imperialist offensive in the 1980s this explicit abandonment of Trotsky's positions has again developed — *Socialist Organiser*, some forces which left the French LCR, and the Cyril Smith around *Workers Press* representing such views.

But there have always been forces which, while not explicitly rejecting Trotsky, in fact developed the view that imperialist forces should be defended against Stalinism — Lambert's theory in France that Social Democracy was more progressive than Stalinism being the classic example of this. The support of Filoche, and the

journal *Socialist Outlook* in Britain, for imperialist reunification of Germany just continues in that path and is the latest class split from Trotsky.

The most serious event from the point of view of leading a concerted international recomposition of the working class movement, however, is not the degeneration of this or that current. Unfortunately in the adverse situation Marxists face in the imperialist countries this will periodically occur. Most serious was that the current leadership of the Fourth International, while not passing into a different class camp, was itself totally disoriented by the events in Eastern Europe and refused to apply Trotsky's

view.

From the first the current leadership of the Fourth International completely misunderstood the dynamic in Eastern Europe — Ernest Mandel arguing in April 1989 that: 'Contrary to what a superficial glance might indicate, the European bourgeoisie does not look favourably on this destabilisation. It has no hope of recovering Eastern Europe for capitalism.' (*International Viewpoint* (IV) 3 April 1989). And in October 1989 he was still arguing that: 'The main question in the political struggles underway is not the restoration of capitalism. The main question is whether these struggles head in the direction of an anti-bureaucratic political revolution or of a partial or total elimination of the democratic freedoms acquired by the masses under glasnost. The main fight is not between pro-capitalist and anti-capitalist forces. It is between the bureaucracy and the toiling masses.' (IV 30 October 1989) This line was developed systematically over a prolonged period (For the record see Geoffrey Owen, 'The Dynamic in Eastern Europe', in *Socialist Action* No 9).

This radically wrong evaluation of the political situation, of course, rapidly ran into conflict with the facts. At this point a very serious error in political judgement began to turn into something much worse — an overturn of Marxist class position. For what was now discovered was a revolution with no class character — the so-called 'democratic revolution'.

A revolution with no class character is of course absurd in Marxist terms, there are capitalist bourgeois revolutions against feudalism, bourgeois political revolutions which transfer power from one section of the capitalist class to another, working class socialist revolutions overthrowing capitalism, and working class political revolutions which overthrow a bureaucracy or transfer power from one section of the working class to another. But there have never been, nor will there ever be, revolutions which have no class character. That is a negation of Marxism.

This is, however, exactly what the leading organs of the Fourth International discovered in Eastern Europe. There was now a 'democratic revolution' with no class content. Thus for example the 9 April 1990 issue of *International Viewpoint* announced its subject was 'Workers and the democratic revolution' (class character unknown). The next issue carried an article by Colin Meade on

supports banning of CPSU

is really not very democratic at all!

All that remains is to complete the transition to reaction on the international front as well. After all according to SO Cuba, Vietnam, China are all societies qualitatively the same as the USSR, so, while the workers movement may not grasp it, the ex-Batista, Mafia linked bourgeois thugs in Miami must also be more progressive than Castro.

Or, in China, as Mao-tse tung was the bearer of relations of production which were more reactionary than capitalism, evidently socialists should have supported Chiang Kai-Shek against the Chinese Communist Party.

The only reason SO don't spell out these implications is that they would be laughed out of court.

And SO completely fails to grasp the real meaning of the reintroduction of capitalism in the USSR.

Trotsky accurately described what capitalist restoration would involve for the USSR in 1932: 'what would Russian Capitalism look like in its second edition? During the last fifteen years the map of the world has changed profoundly. The strong have grown immeasurably stronger, the weak incomparably weaker. The struggle for world domination has assumed titanic proportions. The phases of this struggle are played out upon the bones of the weak and backward nations. A capitalist Russia could not now occupy even the third rate position to which czarist Russia was predestined by the course of the world war. Russian capital-

ism today would be a dependent, semi-colonial capitalism without any prospects. Russia number 2 would occupy a position somewhere between Russia number 1 and India.' (*Writings* 1929 p55)

If this is what capitalist restoration meant in 1929 then today it would be equally economically catastrophic. SO claim that a transition to capitalism in the USSR will mean the possibility for 'political and civil liberty — including the right to organise the free trade unions and working class political parties now outlawed by the putschists' (SO 497).

Quite aside from their obvious illusions in modern capitalism, which is responsible for such human values and civilisation as the absolute impoverishment of one quarter of humanity, dictatorships, and the slaughter on the Basra road, their own version of 'democracy' is cast in imperialist colours. For 'democracy' in the SO version has now come to include, as we have seen, supporting banning the CPSU.

In fact, given the economic devastation that would ensue from the restoration of capitalism, there is no possibility of a transition in the Soviet Union to a bourgeois democracy at all. What is possible in the USSR is not a bourgeois democratic revolution but the attempt to restore capitalism in the form of an authoritarian pro-capitalist dictatorship — as the most clear-sighted elements of the left in the USSR, such as Boris Kagarlitsky, are already explaining is represented by Yeltsin.

Indeed Trotsky had already

noted the trajectory rightly that: 'what is absolutely excluded is a transition from the Soviets to parliamentary democracy... The very same causes that prevented our weak and historically belated [bourgeois] democracy from carrying out its elementary historical task will also prevent it in the future from placing itself at the head of the country. There is a handful of impotent doctrinaires who would like to have a democracy without capitalism. But the serious social forces that are hostile to the Soviet regime want capitalism without democracy.' (Trotsky, 'Is Parliamentary Democracy Likely') All that SO are doing in supporting the methods of Yeltsin is aiding the attempt to create a bourgeois dictatorship.

It has always been the case that 'ultra-leftism' reflects imperialist pressure. The positions of SO on such issues as Zionism, the Malvinas, Ireland, women, child abuse and pornography were a manifestation of this. But their position on the USSR, to consider capitalism more progressive than Stalinism, is the almost final step. The only one that remains is to complete the transition from supporting capitalism on the national to the international field. Then 'Against the Stream' can carry articles on 'Why, despite itself, NATO was a progressive organisation compared to the Warsaw Pact', 'New thinking on Chiang Kai-Shek', and 'The Bay of Pigs reconsidered'.

It's too late to hope they'll reconsider.

ALEX McCLEOD

Czechoslovakia which explained that this 'democratic revolution' was deepening: '...the Czech and Slovak nations will find themselves let down by their rich Western "friends" before the end of the century and the possibility of a second, more profound stage of the democratic revolution will open.' The moment any Marxist finds themselves talking about a revolution, or any political phenomenon, without a class content they have gone off the rails — or to be more precise revised Marxism. That is what had duly occurred in these articles.

This concept of a (classless) democratic revolution has not yet found its way into any programmatic or major political document of the Fourth International — although similar formulas such as 'anti-bureaucratic revolution' (class character unknown) have. However the formula of a democratic revolution with no defined class content has been sharply taken up by those who have already broken with the working class on the issue of Germany, for example. Thus for example *Socialist Outlook* declares: 'August 1991 was the month when the democratic revolution, having swept through eastern Europe in 1989-90, finally came home to the Soviet Union...' and later that the outcome depends upon 'the development of a mass workers' movement able to complete the anti-stalinist democratic revolution.'

This formula of 'democratic revolution' is, naturally, also taken up by those who have explicitly broken with Trotsky on the issue of the USSR and Eastern Europe. Thus for example Janine Booth, in *Socialist Organiser* of 10 October, informs us that what took place in 1989 were 'democratic revolutions' in Eastern Europe. But in general, to give them their due, *Socialist Organiser* gives a clear class character to the revolutions — bluntly calling them 'bourgeois' (Sean Matgamna, *Socialist Organiser* 29 August). The only point is that *Socialist Organiser* support these revolutions because they are capitalist!

While the leadership of the Fourth International has not stepped over the class line — although completely wrong on the dynamic in Germany it was unequivocally against capitalist reunification — its press is beginning to carry articles which do step over the class line. The most serious is the article in *International Viewpoint* of 16 September by Michele Lee which clearly calls for an imperialist blockade of the Serbian/Yugoslav workers' state: 'no peace conference... will succeed unless this regime [that of Serbia/Yugoslavia] is defeated. Its down-

fall can only be envisaged as the result of a combination of efforts; an economic and political isolation of Belgrade by Europe as a whole.'

This is an individually signed article, although not presented for discussion, but no rejection of this line has appeared and (a) no article supporting such a line should have been printed (b) if the Fourth International's leadership ever did endorse an imperialist blockade of a workers state it would have passed out of the camp of the working class altogether.

What is at stake in this is, literally, a life and death question for the Fourth International. The question of whether the organisation Trotsky created, and for which many people gave their lives to build, will continue to be a revolutionary instrument. For the first time in its history what is involved is not the degeneration of this or that current within it — but the total disorientation of its leadership in the front of the greatest events of the class struggle since 1917 — and, in the theory of the classless 'democratic revolution' a clear revision of Marxism in the attempt to justify a break with Trotsky's class criteria. The fight that will take place round these issues will determine the fate of the Fourth Inter-

'For or against glasnost has not in the slightest served as the touchstone for right and leftward moving currents in the Communist Parties'

national itself.

The tragic immediate effect of this disorientation of its leadership is that the Fourth International, as an international and not all its individual sections, by not standing on Trotsky's views, has placed itself outside the most important processes of recomposition of the working class movement.

According to an eight page article 'Glasnost and the crisis of the Communist Parties' by Ernest Mandel in October 1989 the great line of divide inside the Communist Parties created by the events in Eastern Europe was to be the issue of *glasnost*: 'The so-called World Communist Movement is more deeply divided today than at any time in its history. Above all, it is the attitude of the Communist parties to *glasnost* that is the indicator of this crisis.' (JV 30 October 1989)

In fact *glasnost* has not in the slightest served as the touchstone for rightward moving and leftward moving currents — which is the crucial distinction for Marxists — in the Communist parties. The most extreme right wing currents of all (*Marxism Today/Italian PDS*) are openly for capitalism, social democracy, or liberalism, and the most enthusiastic supporters of *glasnost*. In the USSR *glasnost* has been rejected by some of the most extreme pro-capitalist forces who call for a 'Chilean model' to introduce the market — including by the extreme pro-privatisation Kazakh leader, Nazerbayev, who has developed an entire theory of the 'Asian road of development' with South Korean capitalism as its model.

The real line of divide has become, internationally, *for or against the restoration of capitalism, how did the USSR get to the point where capitalist restoration was posed, and how to fight back in a situation where the events in the USSR threaten to give imperialism the greatest victories in its entire history? These are the questions which obsess the most advanced working class currents in the world. By refusing to acknowledge that this is even the situation the Fourth International's leadership has placed the international, although not all its sections, outside the progressive trends in this debate.*

For the disintegration of the CPSU, naturally, does not stop the crisis in the 'Communist Movement'. It simply unleashes huge centrifugal forces — in some cases organised around different, sometimes regional, poles of attraction.

The most important of these, above all in Latin America, is the Cuban Communist Party — and outside Latin



America the Cuban leadership has also become a pole of attraction for minority currents within the Communist Parties.

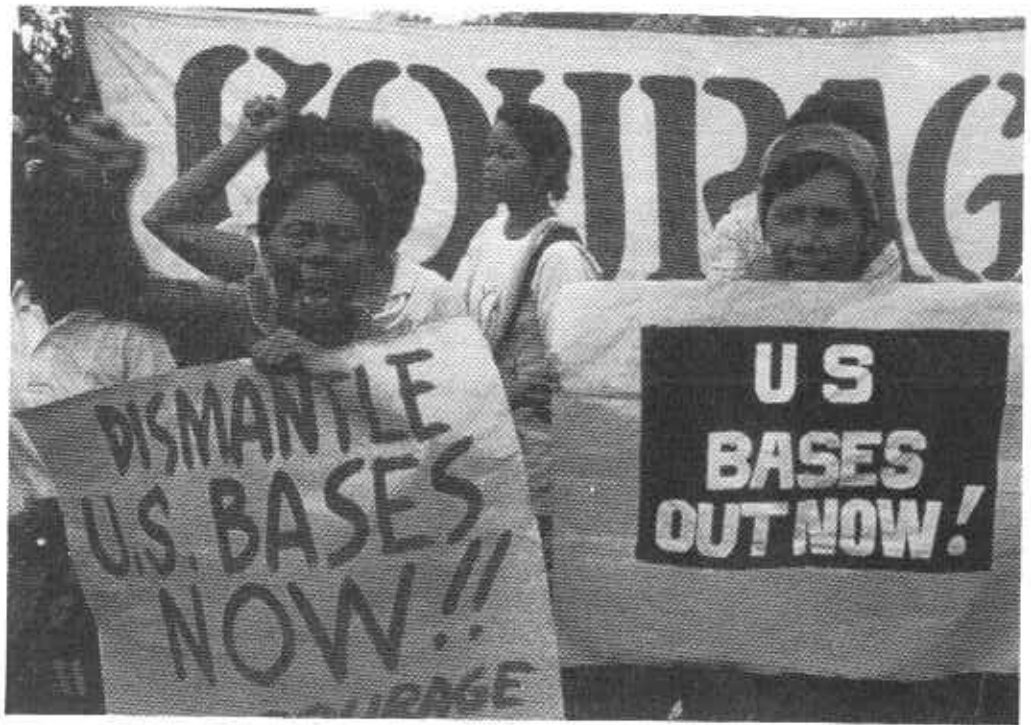
This is a major step forward. The Cuban Communist Party does not have a fully developed programme for the world class struggle. It is also totally wrong on some things — including its treatment of gays and lesbians. But it is *not* a bureaucratised party. Its practical contribution to advancing the class struggle is immense — above all its role in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Angola. It is a huge step forward for Communist Parties, and other forces, to be looking to such a force rather than the CPSU.

A regroupment is taking place not *against*, but with the Cuban Communist Party. This was seen in the declarations made by the Latin American Communist Parties describing the Gulf War as genocide — which was scarcely in line with Gorbachev — and, most notably, the coordination created between the Cuban Communist Party, the Brazilian PT, the FMLN, FSLN and other groups (including the Latin American sections of the Fourth International). This is potentially one of the most important left wing regroupments produced by the current crisis within the 'Communist Movement'.

What is also occurring is that other left wing sections of Communist Parties are being forced to reconsider Trotsky in attempting to account for how the USSR was led into the present impasse. Thus for example an article in the September issue of *Communist*, the journal of a current within the CPGB, incorrectly characterises Trotsky's position vis a vis Stalin as to "go for broke" in the international class war'. But also concludes that: 'it is impossible to consider longer term causes of the failure of Soviet socialism without giving Trotsky his due, for it was he who argued, as soviet power was first established, that socialism could not survive a minority world system.'

These are the type of forces in the Communist Party, for example, that played an extremely active role in the struggle against the Gulf war and are indisputably leftward moving in their direction. Such forces, in the light of events in the USSR, are more open to reconsider Trotsky's views than at any point in history. But they will only find Trotsky's own views of interest — not those of the groups who *falsely* claim to speak in his name.

Finally, these trends, of course, have the greatest significance for the situation in the USSR itself. Be-



cause the scale of issues now posed mean that forces from the Communist Parties, including in Russia, are almost certainly, for the first time, going to have to cooperate with those outside them in defending the socialised base of the USSR itself. The same logic which leads the new democratic socialist forces in Eastern Europe into blocs with the Communist Parties to defend nationalised property, or the socialised base in the USSR — and creates the pressure for the Communist Parties to accept such blocs — leads to Communist Party forces outside the USSR conceding this is correct.

In his contribution to the debate on 'Democratic Socialism is the Only Way Forward in the USSR', in the *Morning Star* on 26 September for example Tony Chater, the paper's editor, argues that: 'The danger of the restoration of capitalism is now great. If it takes place, it will be very serious for the Soviet people and for the world. It will not be a Swedish type welfare capitalism which some have deluded themselves into believing... If the Socialist option is to reassert itself, it will require a rallying of all left wing forces around a programme for dealing with the crisis in the context of democratic Socialism.' Such a perspective, which is entirely correct and justified means a complete turn from considering forces such as Kagarlitsky 'agents of imperialism' to be imprisoned, let alone the physical killing of Trotskyists, to seeing them as legitimate defenders of the socialised base of the USSR.

In such collaboration those who support Trotsky's ideas have nothing to

fear whatever. In a joint fight to defend the socialised base of the USSR we have no doubt that Trotsky's ideas will be proved right. But it is a life and death matter for the international working class to wage such a fight.

Out of that fight to defend the social base of the USSR, and the working class in Eastern Europe, is going to come the greatest recomposition of the working class movement since 1941 — probably since 1917. It is already producing left currents among the Communist Parties beginning to be committed to that path on a new basis, a deepening of the course of the new left in Eastern Europe and, most importantly, the USSR, and deep echoes of this within the left of the social democracy — which understand perfectly the catastrophic consequences for the world of an overturn of the Russian revolution. It is absolutely impossible today to know what *organisational* form these processes will take. But the *political* recomposition of the working class which was inevitable after the colossal defeats inflicted by Stalinism in 1989 is already well under way.

Absolutely nothing prevents the Fourth International, as an international, from participation in that process except the disorientation of its leadership. That simply means that the fight to rewin the leadership of the organisation Trotsky founded to the course he outlined has to be deepened. Because it was his ideas, more than any other, which foresaw with incredible clarity what would happen in the Soviet Union and the political course the world working class should adopt when it did.

'Trotsky foresaw with incredible clarity what would happen in the Soviet Union'



Hands off Cuba!

The Cuban revolution is facing its most perilous hours since the victory of the 26 July movement over the US-backed Batista dictatorship in 1959.

The revolution, at the height of the Cold War and in the midst of the relative quiescence of the international class struggle during the long post-war boom, was the first successful revolution in the Western hemisphere. This immediately won it the undying enmity of imperialism, while providing a point of inspiration and renewed hope for a whole generation of those struggling against imperialism in the Third World. Its leadership, particularly Castro and Che, became an element in a new radicalisation in the West, particularly of young people.

From the outset it faced escalating hostility from the US, which in 1961 organised an armed intervention at the Bay of Pigs, engineered the so-called missile crisis in 1962, and imposed a brutal economic embargo. As a small and desperately poor country — its economy deeply distorted by centuries of colonisation and imperialist exploitation — and situated 90 miles off the US coast, this threatened to destroy it. Hence, its survival rapidly became deeply reliant upon the economic, diplomatic and military support of the Soviet Union.

Today this support has virtually ended. Economic subsidies are being cut, and Gorbachev and Yeltsin have announced the end of military support. The decisive meaning of the latter is to begin to bring to an end the status quo established after the 'missile crisis', where the US could not invade Cuba, because the USSR would clearly retaliate.

On the economic front, the decision by the Russian government that all oil in the coming year will have to be purchased at market prices faces Cuba with desperate choices.

The US embargo, since 1961, bans all US trade with Cuba including medicine and food, and denies it access to international finance institutions. Thus Cuba's trade with the former COMECON countries accounted for 85 per cent of its supplies.

In the coming year Cuba expects only half the oil supplies it received in the mid-80s. Most foods and clothing are rationed, petrol will not be available for private cars, oxen will have to be reintroduced for most agricultural work.

Cuba has no natural energy source, although it has a joint projects with a number of countries to prospect for oil and gas off the coast, and a planned nuclear energy plant is due on stream in a few years time. Thus it is totally dependent on imports of oil and fuel.

Moreover, Yeltsin is going way beyond ending aid to Cuba, to active support for the imperialist project for the island, evidenced by his visit to Miami to meet the Cuban-American organisations, and the invitation to them to open an office in Moscow — which has now occurred.

The Bush administration is responding to these openings for its aims by stepping up the pressure on other countries to break their links with Cuba. Recent cancelled economic projects with Spanish and Brazilian companies, fell through at the behest of the US. The Mack amendment, designed to penalise US owned subsidiaries trading with Cuba out of third countries, has not been endorsed, but the State department is seeking other means to achieve the

same end.

For imperialism the crushing of Cuba represents not just the destruction of a planned economy 90 miles off the US coast, but also the elimination of one of its most vociferous opponents.

Cuba remains a decisive factor in the relations between the imperialism and the third world, particularly Latin America. It has campaigned against the imperialist plunder of the Third World foreign debt, calling for unilateral cancellation.

Moreover, the leadership of the Cuban revolution never adopted the disastrous policy of Socialism in one Country. It saw Cuba's survival as intimately linked to the progress of the national liberation struggle across the Third World and especially in Central and Latin America. Hence, in recent years, its massive support to the liberation struggles in Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador and West Africa. Cuban construction workers, medical teams and military advisers are sent virtually wherever they are welcomed.

This international role has won Cuba considerable support in the semicolonial world, and created openings to breach the US's economic blockade. This is now being brought to bear against the US offensive, with some initial success. At the Ibero-American summit in Mexico City — which many thought would deepen Cuba's isolation, and which was extensively lobbied by Cuban-Americans — a number of diplomatic breakthroughs were made, including the re-establishment of diplomatic links with Argentina. Additionally Taiwan has recently reversed its support for the US blockade. South Korea may well follow suit.

In Britain the urgent task is to build the broadest possible support for Cuba's right to regulate its own internal affairs without outside interference, and for an end to the US embargo on trade. An appeal launched on this basis is circulating widely in the labour movement, and already has over 100 signatories, including MPs, MEPs, trade unions and trade unionists, journalists, actors and others.

There is a fund of goodwill towards Cuba in this country, despite the imperialist smear campaigns and attempts to discredit Castro. This goodwill has now to be mobilised. For Cuba, and its people, it has never been more urgent.

JERRY SMITH



The appeal for Cuban national sovereignty, and a fund-raising appeal, 'A Boat for Cuba', raising money for a European shipment of oil can be obtained from:
Britain-Cuba Resource Centre, Casa Latinoamericana, Kingsgate Place, London NW6 4TA.
or Central America Labour Group, 37 Huntingdon Street, London N1 1BP.

■ special fund-drive

Socialist **Action**

has placed on the agenda the issue of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. If this were to be successfully carried through it would not only mean economic devastation of the USSR, and the impoverishment of millions of people, but would be the greatest defeat suffered by the working class in its history. The first reactionary wave that would unfold would be against the third world and the workers of Eastern Europe, but the working class in West Europe would not be immune from the impact of this, with a more ferocious attempt to roll back the welfare state gains won in the aftermath of the Second World War, a new wave of particularly vicious racism, and the driving back of the position of women.

Working with all those forces prepared to defend the socialised economy in the Soviet Union, helping support those in Eastern Europe and the USSR fighting on this basis, and working to create a marxist current in this country and internationally, are the necessary response to this. But *Socialist Action* urgently needs resources to produce more propaganda and information arguing for this. If you support what *Socialist Action* is arguing for then please show it by making a donation to our special fund-drive — however small or large, every penny is welcome. ■

has produced this special double issue in order to respond to the events in the Soviet Union. The aftermath of the putsch which led to a reinforcement of Yeltsin and the directly pro-capitalist forces supporting him, and the closer alliance of Gorbachev with these forces,

**Please send your
donations to
Socialist Action,
PO Box 50, London
N1 2XP.
Cheques payable to
Socialist Action.**

Socialist **Action**

Annual subscription rate

£5.50	inland subscriptions
£11.00	multi-reader subscriptions
£7.50	European subscriptions
£10.00	all other international subscriptions
£30.00	airmail multi-reader subscriptions

Name Address

.....
Subscription to start from issue number

Return to Socialist Action, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP