

# TROTSKYIST BULLETIN

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# ***Down with the PLO-Israel Peace settlement!***

*International Secretariat of the LRCI, 14 September 1993*

1. Yasser Arafat and the majority of the PLO leadership have betrayed the Palestinian people. Israel has secured a historic victory for Zionism and the United States now has within its grasp a Pax Americana over the whole the Middle East. The peace settlement, brokered in Oslo, finessed in Tunis and Tel Aviv and finally signed in Washington on 13 September 1993 is the biggest blow yet made against the Palestinians since they were first driven from their land by Zionism 45 years ago.

2. The first element of the betrayal lies in the PLO's official, unambiguous and final diplomatic recognition of "the right of Israel to live within secure borders". At a stroke this sanctifies the barbarous pogroms and forced population transfers carried out by Zionism in 1947-48 against the Palestinian people. It sanctions the results of a war by which Israel was founded on 73% of the territory of the Palestine mandate by 33% of its (Jewish) population. This could only take place by robbing 750,000 Palestinians of their land and their homes. The survivors and descendants of this monstrous act have been told that the oppressed must now forgive the crime of their oppressor.

The new autonomous area will only contain less than 30% of all Palestinian people, less even than those that live in Jordan. Secondly, this agreement forever confines the 30% Arab minority within the Zionist state of Israel, to permanent second class status with no hope of unification with their Palestinian brothers and sisters. They too are victims of the 1948 war, robbed of their own land and property and imprisoned within the borders of an alien state. Subject to virulent anti-Arab racism, ghettoised and super-exploited in a few sectors of the economy they are forced into a "beggar thy neighbour" competition for jobs with their Arab brethren across the Green Line.

Thirdly, the PLO has betrayed the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. In the short term because they have agreed to distance themselves from the heroes of the intifada, to preach conciliation against the army of occupation, to cease the armed and unarmed resistance against a force that has claimed over 1,200 Palestinian lives since 1987. In the longer term, by renouncing real sovereignty over the territory they have been granted by Israel the PLO announces that the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinians for their own state has been abandoned in favour of a supervised bantustan with limited devolved powers granted by Israel.

3. For 20 years—since the Arab defeat in the 1973 war—the PLO leadership has in principle accepted that self-determination for the Palestinian people would fall short of the destruction of the Zionist state of Israel and its replacement by a secular, democratic state in the whole of mandate Palestine. The idea of the mini-state was born—a plan for a West Bank and Gaza state, possibly in some sort of (con)federation with Jordan.

This plan itself accepted the de facto right of Israel to its 1948 conquests. It accepted the right of Israel to supervise the interests of the USA in the region, armed to the teeth and able and willing to intimidate and bully the Arab states into compliance. In 1967, 1973 and in 1982 in Lebanon, Israel has done this directly, effectively annexing parts of Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. In 1991 Israel acted as listening post and second line of defence for the US in the Gulf war against Iraq.

This mini-state idea therefore turned self-determination of the Palestinians into a mockery, a denial of its genuine democratic and national content. During the 1980s, the PLO moved further and further towards a compromise with Zionism. In 1982, following the Israeli attack on Lebanon, the PLO was forced to withdraw its headquarters and its militias from Beirut. In November 1988, in Algiers, Arafat declared the existence of an "independent Palestinian state". But this was only a smokescreen for the capitulation which was to follow.

A month later in Geneva, Arafat declared to the UN that the PLO recognised the right of Israel to exist, condemned "terrorism" and accepted UN resolution 242. The next four years saw the continued weakening of the PLO in terms of its support amongst the Arab masses and its financing by the Arab bourgeoisies. In the meantime, the Israelis continued their state terror campaign against the PLO, killing hundreds of Palestinians in the intifada and assassinating PLO leader Abu Jihad in April 1988 and Abu Iyad in January 1990.

The US-backed negotiations which began in Madrid in November 1991 marked the recognition by imperialism that the collapse of Stalinism, coupled with the increasing preparedness of the PLO leadership to compromise, opened the way to a potentially long-lasting stabilisation of Middle East. Desperate to negotiate away the rights and aspirations of the Palestinians, the PLO eventually found itself pleased to be able to gain even the terms of today's abject surrender. according to the September 1993 "peace plan", the mini-state of 1973 has been shrunk into a micro-bantustan composed of two non-contiguous regions.

4. The agreement allows for Israeli troops to be withdrawn from Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank by the end of the year. A PLO police force will replace them and Israeli military administration of these areas will give way to PLO administration in five delimited spheres (tourism, education, welfare, health, taxation) none of which go to the heart of state power—that is, sovereign political institutions with control over all areas of civil society, the ability to conclude diplomatic treaties and control over an army to defend its borders.

For an indefinite period the Israeli army will be stationed in the West Bank, outside of Arab population centres but in Jewish settlement areas and capable of immediate deployment against the Palestinians. In nine months elections are to be held for a Palestinian Council to give a democratic mandate to this arrangement. The much vaunted “permanent settlement” is meant to emerge from a negotiation process that begins no later than 1996 and ends three years later.

Will this lead by the end of the century, as some PLO leaders promise, to a gradual widening of the spheres of authority and territorial control until step by step the Palestinian state is secured? Despite the claims of Abu Mazen that the accords will unleash an “irresistible dynamic” towards the creation of an independent state in the whole of the Occupied Territories, nothing could be further from the truth.

As the journalist Azuri Bishara put it shortly before the agreement was signed; “Irresistible dynamics’ only exist in the heads of vulgar determinists. What counts is the balance of forces”. And at the moment the Palestinians are clearly in a position of weakness, thanks to the decades long bourgeois politics of the PLO.

The agreement makes no mention of a future Palestinian state, even in the present autonomous areas. Rabin insists on his three “No’s!”: no return of East Jerusalem; no return of the Golan Heights to Syrian sovereignty; no to a Palestinian state. The Zionists insist that the 125,000 Jewish West Bank settlers will stay. They will remain as permanent enclaves of Zionist authority, armed to the teeth, protected by an Israeli garrison and occupying some of the most profitable commercial enterprises in the West Bank (e.g. the Qatif Block).

5. A number of objective developments within Zionism, Palestinian nationalism and imperialist politics have coincided in order for this agreement to be signed now. On the Palestinian side, the PLO—above all its Fatah faction—has presided over 25 years of defeats. This has diminished its military and diplomatic power and has scaled down its political ambitions while still allowing it to remain in a leading position within the Palestinian community both within the Occupied Territories and the diaspora.

Being a bourgeois nationalist bloc the PLO has always refused to put working class goals and methods of struggle at the centre of the fight for national liberation. It has sanctioned in its place bourgeois political diplomacy on the one side and futile, if heroic, guerrilla actions against one of the most sophisticated armies in the world on the other.

Increasingly in the 1980s, the Palestinian bourgeoisie

in the diaspora felt that its own narrow class self-determination would be satisfied by the tiniest of territorial enclaves that it could call its own; a fragment of a land in which to haul up the Palestinian flag. Like an oil tanker registered in Panama, it is to be a flag of convenience, a legal entity, in which to register its financial and commercial interests held across the globe.

Least of all in its mind was that any state should be a vibrant, dynamic and self-sustaining economic entity capable of providing for the needs of the masses. From the other side, the PLO paymasters in the conservative Gulf monarchies were always a pressure for settlement, though wary of outright capitulation to an unbridled and ambitious Israel.

The Gulf War impressed these petro-monarchies that powerful Arab national states such as Iraq may provide more of a threat to their own rule than Israel. The Gulf War saw Arafat siding with Hussein and provided the opportunity to withdraw its colossal funding of the PLO and make the PLO sue for peace. In addition, the collapse of the USSR and Stalinism removed an ideological and diplomatic prop upon which to lean against the pressure of US imperialism. Finally, the exhaustion of the intifada in the Occupied Territories assisted Arafat.

This uprising began originally because of the anger and frustration of the population with five years of retreat and misery after the PLO defeat in Lebanon and the futility of diplomatic negotiations. The PLO neither wanted nor organised the intifada. When it came they tried to direct it in order not to lose control of it to the Islamic groups—above all Hamas. Having used it and exploited it but not arming it effectively, the PLO exhausted it. This has given rise to a deep sense that some political settlement, any political settlement would bring relief from the daily and grinding brutality of Israeli military occupation.

6. For the Zionist bourgeoisie the agreement comes at a moment when the state possesses a leadership—the Labour Party—that not only recognises the historic weakness of the PLO but also sees that Israel has an opportunity to secure and expand its economic and political influence in the Middle East through such a settlement.

Labour’s election in July 1992 marginalised the Likud “expansionist” wing of Zionism. While little divided the Likud bloc from Labour on domestic economic policies they increasingly differed on the way to solve the Palestine question. Likud favoured more and more settlements and expansion leading in the direction of annexation; at root this project was based on the need for Likud to consolidate its electoral base within the oriental Jewish community of Israel, the growing proportion who formed the bulk of the new settlers, having diminishing economic prospects inside Israel.

The Labour Party, by contrast, increasingly feared the consequences that perpetual war would have upon the age old cross-class Jewish bloc within Israel. Especially since the debacle of the Lebanon invasion (1982) the polarisation within Jewish society has increased. More recently, the marked economic decline of Israel has seen unemployment among Israeli Jews mushroom, which both further undermined Jewish cross class unity and invalidated the need for lots of cheap Arab labour.

Prime Minister Rabin's "agrarian" wing of the Labour Party were forced to accept the decisive argument of the Perez pro-European faction: the Labour government could get a solution which did not cede sovereignty to the Palestinians but could end Israel's economic and diplomatic isolation in the region. Moreover, a settlement acceptable to European and US imperialism would induce them to take financial responsibility for the reconstruction of the Occupied Territories away from Israel's creaking budget.

Israel stands to gain considerably from a settlement. The US Congress funds will flow more liberally as a reward, boosting the \$5bn a year already given; Saudi can be expected to no longer penalise Arab companies that trade with Israel. In the medium term Israel, through investments and trade with the Arab state—blocked off after the 1967 war—could increase its penetration of markets and thus offset its present economic problems.

7. Norway may have provided the "honest broker" for the negotiations between the PLO and Israel. But the agreement was signed on the lawn of the White House in Washington. The US is the main architect and guarantor of this agreement even if it was distanced from the detailed working out of the plan.

Three years ago the Middle East was the powder keg of world politics. A raging uprising in the West Bank and Gaza threatened once again to ignite the region. Then came the Gulf War with the possibility to inflame the masses of Jordan, Egypt as well as threaten the stability of the petro-monarchies, so depriving the US of strategic oil reserves.

By the defeat of Iraq in the Gulf War and now this settlement the US has defused this powder keg and taken major step towards imposing a Pax Americana on the Middle East. In fact this "solution" to the Palestinian "problem" for the US is not an end in itself but a means to an end. US imperialist foreign policy in the region is guided by the need to strengthen its client state Israel and through this weaken the unity of the surrounding Arab bourgeois states which may combine to attack US economic interests in the region. Egypt was tamed between 1973 (humiliating military defeat by Israel) and 1978 (Camp David Accord); in return Egypt is now the second biggest recipient of US foreign aid after Israel.

Iraq, the world's fourth largest military power, was crushed in 1991. Now Syria and Iran remain. Syria is key in the short term. It plays host to all the oppositional factions to the PLO and Arafat and thus to a continued source of Palestinian guerrilla attacks on Israel. Assad promotes instability in Lebanon. But Syria could be bought off like Egypt and some deal struck on the occupied Golan Heights. Already minions like Jordan are scurrying to Washington to lay down its terms for reconciliation with Israel.

Morocco is ready to end its 45 year long non-recognition of Israel. Tunisia will follow. Syria could soon be following behind, the jewel in the crown for Zionist and US diplomacy. Syria has not accepted the agreement but neither has it rejected it. The petro-monarchies have declared that the agreement is progressive and are prepared to reward the PLO with renewed funds. They, like Jordan, the PLO, Syria and Egypt all have an interest in

a settlement that could isolate and crush the threat posed by Iranian sponsored fundamentalist groups that pose a plebian, if reactionary threat to settled bourgeois rule in these states.

8. Can the agreement be made to stick? Will it lead to civil war in the West Bank and Gaza? Will Hamas and the rejectionists within the Palestinian population be capable of making the agreement a dead letter? In south Lebanon the biggest demonstration since the end of the 1982 war protested against the agreement and was fired upon killing tens of Palestinians. Rejectionists have taken revenge on Israeli soldiers in Gaza.

Yet in the short term the prospects for a counter revolutionary settlement from above are good. The PLO has been given a boost politically by being brought back into the fold of international respectability. It is seen as the one who can deliver on economic aid. The EC has promised to increase its annual aid from \$47mn to \$340mn. The World Bank has said that \$4bn is needed for an immediate physical transformation of the infrastructure such as to have a noticeable impact upon the lives of the masses.

The EC and US seem prepared to inject this kind of cash in order to ensure some measure of stability in the transition period. This scale of injection—equivalent to the annual GDP of the West Bank—could have a significant short-term impact: in providing homes for some of the 250,000 camp dwellers, jobs for the 20,000 Palestinian UN workers in an administrative bureaucracy. This kind of public works programme could lead a bolstering of the PLO in the run up to elections and marginalise the Hamas if the latter refuse to be incorporated into the process.

Nevertheless, it will not bring long term prosperity for the nearly two million Palestinians. The new homes will continue to house impoverished workers working in sweat shops on contract to Israeli textile firms; the new roads will still carry, perhaps more directly and swiftly than before, the workers who are needed inside Israel to fill the worst paid and most arduous and menial of jobs.

Gaza will not become a new Singapore, an entrepot made rich by the passage of trade through its ports, or an influx of direct investment in new plants. The Occupied Territories as a whole do not have an operating port, nor an international airport. Key agriculturally productive and strategically important parts of the West Bank are now controlled by Israeli settlers, armed to the teeth. These settlers "rights" are explicitly protected by the agreement. The GNP per capita of the Occupied Territories is only 20% that of Israel and 30% of their inhabitants' income is derived from salaries earned within Israel. Far from being viable or potentially independent, these regions will be totally tied to the Israeli economy. Even with a massive injection of funds, separately or together—can never hope to escape from the complete control of the Zionist state.

9. The agreement has found its enemies within the PLO and in the Palestinian refugee camps. Even "Foreign Minister", Farouk Qaddoumi, criticised the agreement for in effect renouncing the Palestinian's "just struggle to achieve its legitimate national aims—liberate its land from Israeli occupation and set up its own independent state."

The DFLP and the PFLP members on the PLO executive denounced the recognition of Israel as "illegal" and called for the majority to be removed from the leadership. Can this opposition be relied upon? Will they mobilise the Palestinian people on the streets and camps against the agreement? Or will they carry on their struggle within the confines of the committees and councils of the PLO?

The DFLP and PFLP already had a chance to derail the PLO Executive's agreement to the plan but they walked out of the meeting that was to vote on it and thereby secured Arafat a majority he would not have had had they stayed and voted against! The DFLP ceded leadership to Fatah and the Arafat majority long ago. The leader of the DFLP, Naif Hawatmeh, was the originator of the idea of a liberated West Bank as being the first stage of the national liberation struggle, an idea Fatah transformed into the mini-state with ease. The DFLP have for the most part simply been critical, not of the goal of Fatah, but of its reliance upon Arab regimes to achieve it.

Both the DFLP and PFLP's programme for the liberation of Palestine is not a fundamental break with Arafat's mini-state ideas. Hamas, will try to reap the rewards to be had in any process of disillusionment among the most intransigent of the camp dwellers in the Gaza. Mass rejection could lead to a civil war among Palestinians. Arafat would then reply upon Israel to help defend his life and new power against the Palestinian left.

But even if Hamas were to prosper despite the attentions of the new PLO police force bolstered by Israeli troops, the money of imperialism and the temporary exhaustion of the masses, the Palestinians must firmly reject the entreaties of Hamas. It embraces a reactionary ideology containing a large measure of anti-semitism. For this reason alone some sectors of Israeli society will continue to hope that Hamas prospers, grows, promotes its anti-jewish message and instigates civil war against the PLO.

This would strengthen their view that no further concessions should be made to the Palestinians in future years since they cannot be trusted to govern. But if Hamas were to triumph then it is only necessary to look at present day Iran to see what the consequences of a Palestinian Islamic republic would look like; It would, of course, be a disaster for the Jews, ending the prospect of class solidarity between Jewish and Arab worker. But it would also lead to enormous oppression for women and a sharp curtailment, if not eradication, of democratic rights for the mass of the people.

10. The forces of the Israeli left are split and confused by the agreement. Some, tailing both Labourite Zionism and the PLO, are hailing the agreement as a step towards lasting peace. The Stalinists of the Israeli CP is backing Rabin and the Palestine ex-CP (now PPP) is openly supporting Arafat against the radicals.

Predictably, the frail forces of Israeli centrism have failed the test of this agreement dismally. In particular, the Revolutionary Communist League (Matspen), section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, is paralysed by internal differences, but has stated that the agreement could provide the basis for a just settlement if

only the Israelis were to withdraw all settlers and to carry out a series of democratic reforms, such as freeing political prisoners and opening the borders. Failing to understand the nature of the betrayal, the Matspen, in particular and the USFI as a whole, is paying the price of its long term accommodation to the PLO. The Israeli and Palestinian left must break both from all varieties of nationalism and the dead-end centrism of the USFI.

11. The reactionary settlement and the co-option by the Israelis' of the PLO leadership, holds a further danger. It may divert the struggle against Zionism into an even worse blind alley than it has been in before. There is a serious possibility that the most desperate, disillusioned (and bravest) people in the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the shanty towns in the Occupied Territories will become convinced that there is no other way now to abort the agreement than the road of individual terrorism.

Randomly chosen Israelis or even Palestinian supporters of the settlement could well be attacked. As Israeli repression and PLO/Hamas misleadership led to a decline in the mass character of the intifada an outbreak of indiscriminate assassinations took place. Now threats have been made to assassinate Arafat.

Whilst we can understand the bitter frustration and rage of those who have been betrayed by this deal, we say individual terrorism is not the answer! It can only play into the hands of compromisers, the Zionists and even those of the most fascistic Zionists who will be playing a similar if apparently opposite game. They after all are also against the settlement, because it "betrays" their expansionist goal of a Greater Israel. All acts of individual terrorism teach the masses to be passive and await a saviour from above.

The elitist guerrilla warfare strategy has already left the masses too dependent on their leaders or on saviours from the other Arab states. All such Saladins (Nasser, Hussein) have miserably disappointed or betrayed the hopes placed in them. So it will be in the future. Yet the first years of the intifada showed what mass action can achieve. Indeed, it achieved a greater shift in the positions of the Zionists than twenty years of sporadic guerilla war and fruitless diplomacy did or even the 1967 and 1973 wars by the surrounding states.

The narrow space which even this reactionary settlement may open is ultimately the product of the mass action of the intifada. If the Israelis are now obliged by their deal and their imperialist paymasters to grant some extension of democratic rights to Palestinians, both in the micro-autonomous zone, in the occupied territories or even in Israel itself, then the masses must take advantage of this to create mass organisations of the workers, the urban poor and the peasants.

They must use these insecure and hedged-in "rights" to mobilise their own mass strength to the full. New investments may create an enlarged proletariat. In time the class contradiction between Palestinian worker and boss—a contradiction that has been partly smothered for so many years in the name of national liberation—will emerge. This in turn can feed into a rich heritage of trade unions—in the Gaza Strip especially.

The effect of day by day collaboration between Zionists and Palestinian bourgeois and officials to the detriment

of the real needs of the masses will spill over into class hatred. As the Palestinians awaken to a new class consciousness they must also seek to win allies amongst progressive forces in the Israeli working class and intelligentsia. They must make clear that their aim is not to expel Jewish workers, farmers and professionals from Israel but to create a secular workers' Palestine, where Muslims, Jews, Christians, Druze and atheists have equal rights.

The Israeli workers also suffer increasing capitalist exploitation and the majority suffer from privileges given to the Ashkenazi. Palestinian worker and poor peasants should unite with the Israeli worker to fight against imperialism as well as the Israeli and Arab bosses. In this way the Zionist alliance of all classes can be broken up, the armed forces of Zionism can be undermined partly from within.

But the first step must be for the Arab workers to take the initiative in class actions against the settlement and against its inevitable train of reactionary consequences. The Palestinian workers will soon see the reactionary role of "their" bourgeoisies whom Arafat represents and personifies exposed by their actions.

Thus the need for class independence, a class party a revolutionary workers' party is becoming a burning necessity. The PLO popular front with the Palestinian bourgeoisie has born the bitter fruit of this settlement. The PLO must be broken up. The workers' organisations should split with this popular front and fight for a workers' party. All elements of the PLO rank and file, especially those who call themselves Marxists or Leninists must be won to building a workers' party.

12. The Palestinian masses of the west Bank, Gaza and Jordan have a chance to stop this betrayal from going any further. The PLO National Council has yet to confirm the agreement. Its rejection by such a body would throw the whole process into reverse. But this can only occur by the biggest possible show of resistance by the masses in the Occupied Territories. An immediate and indefinite General Strike across the Territories is needed; the closure of all campuses and shops, mass demonstrations and a reaffirmation of the intifada must throw the capitulators back on their heels.

- Renounce the "Declaration of Principles". No to the recognition of the state of Israel's right to oppress 650,000 of its population. For the right of return to all Palestinians to their home and to their property.

- Immediate free elections to all bodies of the PLO; recall and replace the traitors who negotiated and signed and voted for the agreement! Break up the cross class alliance of the PLO; for a workers' party of the Palestinian workers based on the unions. Break with guerrillism. Build a Leninist vanguard party among the Palestinian and Israeli-Jewish proletariats, committed to the destruction of the Zionist state, for a secular workers' state.

- For an unconditional and immediate end to the military occupation in all of the Occupied Territories! Drive the Zionist settlers—front line troops of Zionist expansionism—back to Israel; there can be no self-destruction for the Palestinians while they are there against the will of the Palestinian people. For an end to the closing of the borders between the West Bank and Israel; remove all restrictions on movement. Immediate release of all political prisoners and an end to all repressive and discriminatory legislation.

- Immediate building of popular camp, village and workplace committees of resistance to the occupation. Build mass defence militia. Arms to replace the stones! Broaden the intifada to struggle against all aspects of national oppression and super-exploitation! For an indefinite general strike to smash the agreement.

- The Palestinian masses in the region have played no role in this peace process, yet they are asked to accept the results on faith. The DFLP have raised the demand for a referendum on the agreement. This should be taken up and seriously agitated for an organised in the Occupied Territories and the diaspora. Better, would be to organise mass meetings and elect delegates from the Occupied Territories and diaspora to a sovereign, mass democratic Palestine Assembly in Jericho to deliberate and decide upon the peace agreement and to debate and resolve the future of the national struggle.

- Any financial aid and assistance must be controlled directly by the popular mass committees themselves not by the PLO. For the committees to draw up an emergency programme of public works. This money is not charity but small recompense for decades of plunder of the Palestinian people. The unions and elected committees must plan and execute everything.

- The news of the agreement has polarised Israeli Jews in manner not witnessed since 1982. The most progressive elements are likely to be drawn into support for Labour and Rabin. They must be broken from this support while resisting all attempts by reactionaries and settler groups to expand their influence, extract guarantees and concessions from the government, to further arm themselves. They must campaign for a return of the settlers to Israel and an end to the garrisoning of Jewish enclaves in the Occupied Territories.

- Throughout the Middle East, the masses must fight against their governments' support for the betrayal of the Palestinians. Bourgeois nationalism, in particular in its "anti-imperialist" variant, has repeatedly sold out the needs of the masses. The only solution to decades of oppression and war is the permanent revolution, the overthrow of all the bourgeois governments of the region and the creation of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East.

# Yeltsin's October Counter-Revolution

International Secretariat of the LRCL, 7 October 1993

In the days between 21 of September and 5 October the bloody events in Moscow have transformed the political situation. The result of the storming of the White House and Yeltsin's imposition of draconian emergency powers means that the social counter-revolution has been greatly strengthened. Yeltsin, representing the pro-imperialist, radical restorationist wing of the old bureaucracy and the new bourgeoisie, has taken a giant step towards unifying and concentrating the forces of the state into his hands. Pavel Grachev, Yeltsin's defence minister, claimed; "The people were tired of dual power and illegality". In fact, the people have had no say in events and the bloody assault on the constitutional Russian parliament was a massive act of illegality. But he is right that Yeltsin and the restorationists could not carry on in the state of dual powerlessness where parliament and president obstructed each others' every move.

## Democrats versus Communists?

The conflict between Yeltsin and the parliament was not a battle between democrats and communists as the western media claims. Yeltsin is no democrat. He has violated the constitution, killed or arrested hundreds of his opponents, clamped a near total censorship on the media and dissolved the legislature. This man, who since August 1991 was lionised as the great democratic defender of parliament, has bombarded it with tanks, all but destroying it. Now he boasts that he will rebuild the White House in six months but only to convert it into offices for the Presidency.

Rutskoi and Khasbulatov on the other hand are no communists. Rutskoi stood for election as vice-president on Yeltsin's anti-communist ticket. They both sided with Yeltsin against the Yanayev putsch in 1991, and supported him when he took power. They are openly in favour of the market, privatisation and a western capitalist parliamentary system. The differences they have with Yeltsin are rooted only in the method and the tempo of the restoration process. Rutskoi and Khasbulatov represent a layer of bureaucratic industrial managers afraid of losing their privileges in an imperialist dominated economy. They want to slow the pace of privatisation and allow the opportunity for the managers to become the key elements of the new ruling class. Their strident nationalism arises from their fear, correct in itself, that the neo-liberals like Yegor Gaidar will sell Russia's resources to the imperialist multinationals.

They are also afraid of provoking the working class by a too sudden and too savage attack on their jobs and wages. Yeltsin, on the other hand, has, so far, gone along

with imperialism's demands to accelerate the process. In this sense he is the direct agent of imperialism and the new bourgeoisie.

But the anti-Yeltsin block of parliamentary deputies never had a clear or common alternative programme. Their only point in common was their rejection of Yeltsin's attempt to consolidate his authoritarian rule. The social base of the hardline Stalinist and Russian nationalist opposition to him lies in the displaced bureaucrats and the newly impoverished layers such as pensioners, ex-soldiers and the unemployed. In the opposition various political forces converged; monarchists, Great Russian chauvinists and open fascists rubbed shoulders with hardline Stalinists and social democratised "communists".

## Yeltsin launders his coup

In March Yeltsin tried to by-pass the parliament and take all powers into his hands but he was forced to retreat. In the next six months he was preparing its final dissolution. He succeeded in splitting the Civic Union, (the managers' coalition that dominated the parliament) and won to his side many of their members. Twice Yeltsin vetoed the budget adopted by parliament. The crunch came when the parliament was about to adopt a budget which Yeltsin claimed would prevent the government fulfilling its economic programme. He claimed that this would generate a 25% budget deficit. As part of the preparations for taking control Yeltsin decided to reinstate as deputy prime minister Yegor Gaidar, the author of the neo-liberal shock programme and the minister most hated by the parliament which had forced his sacking at the end of 1992.

Yeltsin's initial moves were not very decisive or effective. In the first 14 days of his presidential coup he did not even declare a state of emergency or send troops into the White House. Because of the dual power situation, in which the parliament had its own armed militia and where it was not clear whether the army would enforce "unconstitutional" measures by the president, he had to tolerate a situation in which the parliament continued to meet. Street demonstrations were held in support of it and Rutskoi was declared president of Russia. For nearly two weeks the vast Russian Federation had two presidents and two armed powers defying one another.

Yeltsin was obliged to tolerate this situation because he could not afford to be seen as the initiator of a bloodbath that would discredit his "democratic" credentials. Nor could he afford to ignore the advice he received from Clinton and Co not to resort to force. But above all

it took enormous efforts to convince the military chiefs to abandon their position of neutrality. To win them over he needed to demonstrate that he had negotiated seriously and that it was Rutskoi and Khasbulatov who were wanton disturbers of the peace.

The crisis revealed the full depth of the "dual powerlessness" which has paralysed Russia for over two years. Yeltsin was not able to persuade the parliament to give in, nor could he immediately coerce it with armed force. The Russian regions, increasingly independent from Moscow, took different positions. Since April with the stand-off between the parliament and the presidency, power was increasingly devolving onto regional bureaucrats and army chiefs.

Throughout the summer Khasbulatov had been touring the regions and republics trying to win them over, claiming that only a strong parliament could protect their autonomy. Yeltsin in turn tried to win them over by offering concessions and promising to create a new upper house parliament to which they would directly elect their representatives. Some of the regions expressed their passive opposition to Yeltsin's coup but they refused to launch any real actions to back either side in the dispute, and pressed for a negotiated settlement. The Orthodox Church started to play a role that it has not played since 1917. This arch-reactionary institution tried to appear as the mediator in favour of a peace agreement between the rival ruling elites. But it failed when parliament's proposed compromise—simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections in December—was rejected by the would-be dictator.

With the army already weakened and demoralised by the financial and political collapse of Russia and deeply reluctant to intervene, the weakness of Yeltsin's position was increasingly obvious. He desperately had to get military support in order to show the West and the rebellious regions that he could hold on to power.

#### Why the putschists failed

The parliamentarians' strategy proved to be a complete fiasco. They ended up playing right into Yeltsin's hands, just as Yanayev and Pugo did in 1991. The deep social and historical reason for this is that they represent no real historic force. Yeltsin represents capitalism and the world bourgeoisie. But Rutskoi and Khasbulatov in no way represent the historic interests of the working class. Indeed, they hate and fear the independent intervention of the workers more than they fear Yeltsin. Their programme for a "controlled" restoration of capitalism offers nothing to solve the problems facing the working class and Rutskoi's belated call for a general strike in support of parliament was ignored by the overwhelming majority of the working class. In fact, neither of the two presidents demonstrated that they had mass support. Only a few thousand turned out to the rival rallies that Yeltsin and Rutskoi called. The overwhelmingly majority of the Russian toilers remained passive and deeply suspicious of both sides.

Why? Over the last two years Yeltsin has lost much of his initial popularity due to the savage effects of his policies on the working population. But, despite this the masses perceive all too well that Khasbulatov and Rutskoi are merely seeking to defend the privileges of the old bureaucracy. A majority of the population still

retain illusions that the market can improve their living standards in the long run. Recent polls show that 60% of the population want more privatisations. Already 20% of the industrial workforce is employed in the private sector. Every month 700-800 firms are undergoing privatisation. In addition real wages for employed industrial workers have roughly kept pace with inflation. This is why working class anger is still not yet focussed primarily on Yeltsin. Apart from threats of action by the powerful miners' unions over subsidies, Russian workers, unlike those of Poland and the Ukraine, have not yet started a fightback.

The rump of three hundred or so parliamentary deputies who defied Yeltsin to the end were in the main totalitarian Stalinists and ultra-nationalists. They are deeply discredited in the eyes of the masses by their association with the old ruling bureaucracy and its dictatorship. Their authoritarian, anti-semitic and chauvinist propaganda alienates the democratic feelings of both the national minorities and indeed the Russian masses. Together with the continued passivity of the working class this explains why no serious forces rallied to the defence of the parliament. The population of Moscow watched Yeltsin and Rutskoi fight it out like gladiators in the arena.

Yeltsin issued the ultimatum for them to quit the parliament building by 30 September or he would use force to eject them. Nevertheless he was obliged to postpone this deadline and resort once more to the negotiations sponsored by the church. But this too failed. Before Saturday, 2 October only a few hundred, or at most thousands, had expressed their support for the parliament on the streets. On this date the first serious clashes took place between demonstrators and Yeltsin's riot police. In the afternoon of Sunday, 3 October the largest demonstration took place with between 10,000-15,000 people. The demonstrators marched to the parliament and smashed through the besieging police forces and Interior Ministry troops. About 200 security troops deserted Yeltsin. Liberal journalists report that at this point there was near total panic in the Kremlin. Yeltsin himself was reported to be in a state of paralysis.

Revolutionaries should have critically supported the demonstration's aim of breaking the siege of parliament. Once it succeeded it was essential to try to regroup more people, to develop much bigger demonstrations and to launch mass actions in the different cities and regions. But, Rutskoi appears to have called for an insurrection. Without any determined effort to involve the masses, above all the working class, this could only prove a total adventure ending in a putsch not a revolution.

The rebels successfully occupied the Moscow mayor's officers, from which the siege of the parliament had been co-ordinated, but they were bloodily repulsed when they tried to take *Ostankino*, the main TV station. This attack gave Yeltsin just the pretext he needed to get the army to act. He could now claim that he was facing an attempt to seize power by the Stalinist-nationalist-fascist block, that they had shed the first blood and that he was the injured party. Thus, after an initial very dangerous reverse, Yeltsin was able to launch a devastating counter-offensive. In the following hours he comprehensively defeated the rebels after nearly destroying the White House in a violent assault in which several hundred people died.



On 3 October the conditions simply did not exist to launch an insurrection. It was an indispensable precondition to draw much greater numbers into mass protests against Yeltsin and not just in Moscow but throughout the country. Faced with the masses on the streets it is very likely that the army would have refused Yeltsin's requests to fire on the masses or that more troops would have deserted to the anti-Yeltsin forces. Instead, the Stalinists and the nationalists showed their fear and contempt for the masses, as well as their total lack of realism, by engaging in an attempt to seize power with a few hundred armed civilians or ex-soldiers. Until now it is not clear who really initiated and led this putsch.

Khasbulatov's actions were completely contradictory. He tried to persuade the parliament to compromise with Yeltsin several times during the siege. After calling for armed action outside the White House he later denied knowledge of who had ordered the armed assault on *Ostankino*. Rutskoi seems to have been swept along by events rather than shaping them. It seems likely that it was the hardline Stalinist and ultra-nationalists who were the real organisers of the abortive insurrection. They were doubtlessly seeking to carry out a rapid coup d'etat in which the broad masses would not get the opportunity to play any significant or independent role. The elitist squads of *Afghantsi*, trained commandos from the Union of Officers, or the brownshirts of Pamyat tried to overthrow Yeltsin with their own puny forces. They clearly hoped that if they could take control of the TV and other important buildings the army chiefs would decide to support them. Their goal was an ultra-nationalist conservative dictatorship. Clearly, revolutionary communists could and can have no political solidarity with this reactionary objective.

#### **The imperialists and the coup**

The most fervent supporters of Yeltsin's coup were Clinton, Major and the other EC leaders. Despite their hypocritical claims to be the champions of democracy, as soon as their economic interests dictate it they sacrifice it without a moment's hesitation. The West's interference in the internal affairs of Russia has been incredibly brazen. All the imperialists backed Yeltsin because they see him as their man in Moscow. They believe that he alone can complete the destruction of the workers' state, restore a free market economy and support their NATO and UN foreign policy. They knew very well that the big majority in the parliament were also pro-market. They knew its democratic credentials were no better and no worse than Yeltsin's. But his fall would create a situation in which the influence of the Stalinists and the nationalists would be much greater and Russia's willingness to do imperialism's bidding in world politics would be diminished.

But some imperialist commentators have been critical of the way in which Yeltsin managed the situation. Several western journalists criticised Yeltsin for issuing authoritarian ultimatums instead of trying to make a deal. Some are even claiming that we are witnessing the end of the Yeltsin era. Just as Gorbachev was useful to the West to reform the totalitarian state and later Yeltsin served them in demolishing the remnants of the Communist Party and the USSR, so now they are talking about finding new figures without a Stalinist background

who could be more easily managed by the the US and the EC.

The outcome of the crisis has not completely satisfied the West. Yeltsin showed that he had little active popular support and that his military backing was far from total and whole hearted. The troops that he used to attack the parliament had to be brought from cities some distance from Moscow and they obviously had problems with their supplies. Several army units clearly resisted being used to repress the parliament. Even the Interior Ministry's Dzerzhinsky Regiment (Yeltsin's main pillar of support and responsible for Moscow security) is rumoured to have split.

But most worrying for the West is the fact that to obtain the support of the army Yeltsin has probably made a series of concessions to the High Command, concessions that could prove irksome to imperialism. Thus he has warned the East European states against joining NATO and claimed an equal say in the security affairs of the region with the West. He has claimed the right to intervene in events in what is called the "near abroad", (ie all the former USSR states), to protect Russian minorities. He has allowed the Russian military to bring about the defeat of pro-US Eduard Shevardnadze in Abkhazia.

The army when it came to the crunch decided to back Yeltsin because they realised that the parliamentary forces had no clear programme, little popular support and would be unable to appease the powerful West. The Russian army wanted above all to avoid any threat to its unity, and desperately feared the prospect of civil war. They preferred to use the events to wring concessions from Yeltsin and to use him for their own purposes. Now Yeltsin has trampled the constitution under the boots of the soldiers. He is henceforth much more vulnerable to blackmail by the military and to any future coup d'etat.

#### **The Revolutionary Alternative**

During these two decisive weeks the key task of Marxists in Russia was to fight for a general strike to smash Yeltsin's grab for total power. Revolutionaries should have agitated for the trade unions and the workplace committees to form strike committees with delegates elected by rank and file workers to organise the struggle. The workers should have tried to arm themselves, calling on the soldiers to disobey Yeltsin's orders and create soldiers' councils. To aid in mobilising the working class it was indispensable to raise demands that workers could feel as vital to their interests and that they would be willing to defend with their own lives. Revolutionary communist should raise these slogans:

- For a minimum living wage and pension with a sliding scale to protect them against inflation. Organise the supply of foodstuffs and basic products at low prices under the control of workers' and farmers' direct exchange committees.

- Defend full employment and job security! No sackings or factory closures! Occupy any factory that management tries to close!

- \* Expel the corrupt bureaucracy from the management of the factories, pits and commercial enterprises! Open all the books! Investigate and expropriate all the mafia businessmen! For workers' control, exercised by the producers, users and consumers, over both produc-

tion and distribution!

- Restoration of cheap housing and the health service under workers' control! Seize the Dachas and the big apartments of the old nomenklatura and those of the new rich. Confiscate all state buildings that are not serving the collective good of the working class and convert them to accommodation for the young, the unemployed, the homeless, and returning soldiers!

- For workers' management in every enterprise! Stop any more privatisations! Re-nationalise the privatised companies and banks!

- Confiscate all the accumulated privileges of the bureaucrats: the special shops and cars, bank accounts, their high and corruption-based incomes! Expropriation of the "new rich" and the foreign multinationals! Renounce all the agreements with the IMF!

- Full restoration of the monopoly of foreign trade and planned economy but under the control of workers' councils.

- Complete freedom for the workers' movement! End

the government's monopoly over the mass media. Put them under the control of the workers' organisations. Repeal all repressive legislation and abolish internal passports and residence permits. Immediate dissolution of the KGB, Interior Ministry troops, the Omov and the other repressive forces!

- For the formation and arming of a workers' militia based on the factories and other workplaces.

- Complete democratisation of the Russian army. Expel all the restorationist and anti-working class officers! The soldiers should create democratic soldiers' councils and have the right to strike, reject anti-working class orders and elect their officers!

- For the right of self-determination, including secession if they wish it, of all the oppressed nationalities!

- For independent and militant trade unions! For workers' councils with delegates elected and recallable by rank and file assemblies! All power to the workers' organisations!

- Instead of currying favour with the Western imperi-

## Is Russia still a degenerate workers' state?

Seventy six years ago Russia became the first workers' state. The failure of the world revolution in the first years after the First World War and the Soviet state's consequent isolation in a backward peasant country created conditions which led to its degeneration.

Stalin took power through a political counter-revolution. This did not re-establish capitalism and a bourgeois ruling class since it was not at the same time a social counter-revolution. On the contrary, Stalin preserved and even expanded the nationalised planned economy while smashing the proletariat's political power. His supporters established a new privileged ruling caste that consciously sought deals with imperialism with the aim of sabotaging revolutionary struggles throughout the world.

For more than sixty years Russia remained a post-capitalist bureaucratically planned society. But, as Trotsky predicted, such a contradictory transitional system could not maintain itself forever. As Trotsky warned, since the working class was not able to eliminate this parasitic oligarchy then the bureaucracy would eventually restore capitalism.

When Gorbachev came to power in the mid-1980s faced with the stagnation of the bureaucratic planned economy he tried to dynamise it with huge concessions to the market and to liberal democracy in the political sphere with the objective of preserving the power of the bureaucracy. But his project failed. The USSR entered into the deepest crisis it had experienced since the war. In August 1991 Gorbachev's rule collapsed under the impact of two coup d'états.

The first one, headed by several of his own ministers, tried to slow down the concessions to capitalism and at the same time to strengthen the state's dictatorial mechanisms. The second one, riding a wave of mass discontent with the old system and democratic illusions, put Yeltsin, Rutskoi, Khasbulatov and the radical marketeers in power.

Yeltsin dissolved the Soviet Union, banned the communist party, replaced the red Soviet flag with the red, white, and blue flag of the Tsars and installed an openly bourgeois and anti-communist regime. He launched economic shock therapy and started to dismantle the planned economy. As a direct result there was a serious increase in social inequality. The mafia, bandits and the new entrepreneurs became ever richer and the poor, especially the pensioners were reduced to beggary. The housing, education health and social security system was increasingly undermined.

But despite the privatisations and despite the freeing of prices, even today the law of value is not the chief directing mechanism of the economy. The overwhelming majority of the means of production do not act as capital. On the contrary, money has functioned to preserve rather than dissolve the old relations of production and distribution by expanding inter-enterprise debt and preserving unprofitable output through huge Central Bank credits.

Russia thus remains a degenerate workers' state, albeit one whose planned economy is shattered and moribund, and one with a bourgeois government seeking to complete this process. To complete the social counter-revolution it is indispensable to break up the last vestiges of the relations of planned economy, to replace them with market relations, to privatise the principal companies and to create a new ruling capitalist class. To impose this it is indispensable to force the factories and pits to produce for the market and to be profitable. This will mean the closure of thousands of "unprofitable" enterprises and the sacking of tens of million of workers. Capitalism will not be imposed peacefully in Russia. Yeltsin needs to force through far harsher measures than he has yet done and for this he needs more and more dictatorial and bonapartist powers. \*

alists we need to appeal to the workers and peasants which they exploit worldwide! The workers need an internationalist policy to replace Yeltsin's support for the USA. Down with secret diplomacy! Publish all the secret agreements made by Yeltsin and Gorbachev with imperialism!

#### **Tactics in the October battle and after**

Since the collapse of Yanayev's coup in August 1991 Boris Yeltsin has been the main enemy of the workers of the Russian Federation. It has been the central task of revolutionaries to work for his overthrow by the class action of the proletariat. In the battle between the parliament and Yeltsin, revolutionaries had to defend the White House and the parliament against Yeltsin's siege and attack but without giving any political support to Khasbulatov, Rutskoi or the hardline Stalinists. We would not have made any sort of "popular front" with the ultra-nationalists and fascists. Indeed, we would demand that the self-proclaimed socialists and communists break with them. The presence of these groups could only discredit the anti-Yeltsin opposition. If they gained any hold on power they could be expected to launch pogroms against Jews, national minorities and genuine communists.

When Yeltsin launched his coup he promised elections for a new powerless parliament in December and, six months later, presidential elections. The parliament sought only to oblige him to convene simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections in December. This squabbling over equally bourgeois constitutional forms could present no real alternative to the population. Revolutionaries should demand the abolition of both the presidency and the parliament in favour of a republic of workers' councils.

But we have to recognise that the masses remain heavily imbued with bourgeois democratic illusions. That is why we have raised and continue to raise the demand for a revolutionary constituent assembly. Elections to it should be conducted under the control of the mass workers' organisations and voting should take place in the workplaces. We should fight to make its representatives accountable to, and recallable by, assemblies of their electors, held both in the workplaces and on working class housing estates. This would give the masses the means of doing away with Yeltsin's bonapartist presidency and with the corrupt caricature of a parliament. A campaign for the convening of such an assembly could be a powerful weapon in awakening the Russian masses from their atomisation, political apathy, and cynicism. This slogan became particularly important with Yeltsin's dissolution of parliament. It could also have exposed Rutskoi for the empty populist demagogue he is.

#### **Yeltsin's next target**

Hard on the heels of the crushing of the White House rebels Yeltsin has imposed a severe state of emergency, a strict curfew and a ban on sixteen parties, and several newspapers. He has called on both local and regional soviets to dissolve themselves and has proclaimed that elections to new councils as well as the Federal State Duma will take place on 16 December. He has remained silent on his earlier promise to bring forward presidential elections to Spring 1994. Hitherto, Yeltsin's writ has

not run in vast areas of the country. In whole regions and autonomous republics the power is still in the hands of the local bureaucrats and nationalist leaders. Many of them want more autonomy and even independence. Thus for Yeltsin to finally and completely end the dual power situation throughout the entire Federation he must crush these parliaments and leaders over the next weeks and months. He must ensure that they elect compliant tools of Moscow in the December elections.

This may well prove a harder task than storming the White House. A majority, forty five out of the eighty eight regions and republics within the Russian Federation, refused to openly support Yeltsin's 21 September dissolution of the parliament. Instead they moved to set up a "Council of the Subjects of the Federation" as an alternative to Yeltsin's Federal Council and they decided to declare the Presidency vacant and to convene simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections in February 1994. Forty three of the regions did not support his state of emergency. As the London *Guardian* commented on 6 October; "the regions have real power. Unlike parliament, which Mr Yeltsin has succeeded in closing, they control Russia's purse strings. Some have already started a tax strike by refusing to send to Moscow the money they raise".

After the storming of parliament Yeltsin ordered the arrest of the head of the Bryansk region and dismissed the governors of Amur and Novosibirsk. The latter had recently declared a temporary suspension of privatisation in his region. Fourteen Siberian leaders had threatened to blockade the trans-Siberian railway. Medvedev, Yeltsin's representative in charge of the regions, has threatened them, saying, "political sanctions should be imposed on councils up to their suspension and the calling of new elections". The autonomous republics of Mordova, Tartarstan, Kalmykia, Chechenia and others have all been threatened.

In contrast to this the presidents of nearly all the independent CIS republics forcefully supported him. They did this both to help get Western dollars but also from fear of ending up with an expansionist Kremlin.

#### **For Political Revolution**

Revolutionaries should oppose each and every repressive measure from Yeltsin against these regions or republics, whether their leaders are old Stalinists or fast track restorationists that merely want to do independent deals with the imperialist multi-nationals. We should, of course, denounce the plots and manoeuvres of these local bureaucrats whose only aim is to maintain their privileges or reach lucrative deals with imperialism. Despite the fact that we were and remain opposed to the fragmentation of the Russian Federation we should, nevertheless, defend the right to self-determination of the republics and regions against the new dictator.

We do not believe that the present regime or its constitution can be democratically reformed. We fight for a political revolution that smashes the bureaucracy, the new rich and their repressive forces, reverses the process of capitalist restoration, expropriates the privatised companies, restores in a new democratic form the planned economy with workers' management, adopts an anti-capitalist foreign policy that stops the selling out of Palestine, Afghanistan, Cuba, Eastern Europe and

Southern Africa to the imperialists and promotes the international socialist revolution. We want a revolution that gives all power to workers' councils. Because the level of concessions already made to capitalism this revolution will have to take on an important social dimension.

We fight for the organisation of democratic local and regional workers' councils that take all the power in these regions and republics. Only a socialist, voluntary, federation of these councils could open the way to a genuine working class solution. We are against a new Great Russian Empire nor do we support the re-establishment of a bureaucratic USSR. We are in favour of a new socialist federation of all the Russian and non-Russian republics and regions of the former USSR, the former Comecon states and beyond.

The working class must now be prepared for new and far worse attacks. It is seventy years since Stalinism started to crush the self-organisation and democracy of the Russian proletariat. So far this colossal working class has been unable to recover its revolutionary traditions. Now, faced with the attacks that Yeltsin will try to launch with the backing of the army, the working class must recover its fighting capacities or it will suffer a truly historic defeat that will effect the entire world working class. The situation is not hopeless. In Poland after four years of a Solidarnosc regime's attacks, the pro-imperialist neo-liberal's are largely discredited and the social democratised ex-Stalinists have massively increased their influence.

In the Ukraine, Lithuania and Albania similar processes are taking place. In the absence of any revolutionary leadership, disillusion with a market that not only failed to bring prosperity but brought hunger and poverty, is turning the working class towards the renovated former Stalinists. But there are doubtless sections of workers who are seeking an alternative to the "social

market economy" or the return to some sort of *nomenklatura* dictatorship. It is to these workers that revolutionaries must urgently address themselves.

Throughout the former USSR and Eastern Europe it is indispensable to lay down the basis of a new Bolshevik, Leninist-Trotskyist party that seeks to organise and promote working class resistance and fight for workers' council power. Only such a party can lead the masses in all their fights against the economic attacks, against the attacks on their democratic rights. Only such a party can unmask the nationalist fomentors of strife and pogroms, the sinister Stalinist plotters and their fascist allies who want a capitalist totalitarian dictatorship. Only such a party can fight the social democrats, centrists and liberals who want to prostrate the workers before the multinationals. Only such a party can lead a proletarian revolution for a socialist federation of workers' councils—east and west.

For decades the bureaucracy falsely said that the USSR had achieved socialism in one country. They identified the "proletarian dictatorship" with the uncontrolled dictatorship of a pampered and privileged bureaucracy. The Trotskyists were killed in their tens of thousands for fighting against the installation and consolidation of this regime. Yet we always defended the USSR and the gains of the planned economy, for all its distortions, against imperialist attack. Now we alone consistently and openly fight against all attempts to transform the country into an openly capitalist dictatorship. We want to smash both the remnants of the old privileged oligarchy and the embryo of the new capitalist class. We want to re-impose a revolutionary proletarian dictatorship such as that which Lenin and Trotsky led. This would in fact represent a huge extension of democracy for the toilers themselves whilst acting as an iron fist against all the new rich, the black marketeers, the mafias, the old bureaucrats and the new capitalists.

# Resolution on Guzmán's capitulation to Fujimori

International Secretariat of the LRCI, 17 October 1993

On the first anniversary of his capture Abimael Guzmán, leader of Sendero Luminoso (SL), has submitted a letter to the Peruvian dictator in which he offers peace talks. He has appeared on TV to elaborate on his letter and although one year of imprisonment and isolation undoubtedly produces disorientation we have to assume that he is responsible for his actions.

On this basis the letter is an astonishing capitulation. The man that was idolised as a semi-god by SL's fighters, that claimed to be the living continuation of Marx, Lenin and Mao, that held the title of "Chairman Gonzalo" of the new Popular Republic of Peru, now sends a letter in which he recognizes Alberto Fujimori as the legitimate president of Peru and asks for peace negotiations to finish the 13 year long war. The arrogant "President Gonzalo" now signs himself as plain "P. Gonzalo".

The LRCI was the only organisation in Peru that consistently characterised SL as an anti-imperialist petit-bourgeois guerrilla movement that should be defended against bourgeois repression but also fought against in the workers' and popular movement as a counter-revolutionary Stalinist organisation.

We always denounced SL's strategy as anti-proletarian because they rejected the socialist and proletarian revolution or the creation of workers' councils and militias. They openly call for the destruction of unions and any popular organisation that they are unable to control. They have killed ten of workers, peasants and shanty town leaders; they alienate the exploiters with their murders, their provocations and their destruction of factories, electricity suppliers.

We have always called on the SL fighters to subordinate their actions to the mass assemblies, to stop their attacks against the left and workers' and popular organisations and to fight for a united front with them. Nevertheless, we always condemned all state repressive measure aimed against them and denounced the adaptation of the "left" to the repression.

When Guzmán was arrested one year ago Poder Obrero adopted a resolution that is now confirmed by events. In that document PO said: "What at one point gave an extraordinary power to Sendero's fundamentalism—the extreme cult of Gonzalo—now, with his capture, this is transformed into a weakness.

This should show to the revolutionaries in Peru and the world the way in which a revolutionary party should not be built . . . Every Senderista was educated to believe that his or her principal task consisted in the defence of their leader, even sacrificing one's own life. But none of the leading Sendero chiefs shot one bullet to defend Guzmán when he was arrested. All of them were captured without resistance. In jail the TV showed the terrible subversive in low morale, docile and obeying the police when they asked him to strip in front of the cameras."

Guzmán, to defend his own life, (before the government could apply the death penalty to him) decided to surrender

to Fujimori. In 13 years of war SL refused to make any united front with any popular or workers' organisations in the name of intransigence. Now he offers to enter into a peace process with his enemy.

The letter to "President Fujimori" was not signed by the PCP-SL Central Committee. The semi-god that believed that he was the party adopted this stance together with his companion. At a stroke he has betrayed thousands of fighters and martyrs.

Now it is possible that SL will split. It is possible that some sectors will denounce Gonzalo as a betrayer and that some loyalists will start to kill their own dissidents. We don't support the continuation of a popular frontist war with an anti-working class strategy. But we also are against SL surrendering to the capitalist state and even becoming part of it.

In Peru more than a decade ago the biggest Maoist party (Patria Roja) transformed themselves from a radical street demonstration organiser into a corrupt parliamentary party. In Colombia the former Maoist guerrilla EPL is now part of the bourgeois parliamentary system. In Cambodia the ferocious Pol Pot now recognises the transformation of the "Workers Republic" into a Monarchy and are trying to negotiate their integration into the state.

Like all Maoist-stalinists SL will abandon the guerrilla strategy to a hunt for votes. The petit bourgeoisie is afraid of the working class. When they are in a war against the ruling regime they try to destroy the working class. They try to destroy its independence and its soviet-type bodies.

The hope that the workers suffer from the polarisation between the army and SL's elitist military apparatus. Now, when they try to make a deal with the state they will offer their services to stop the proletariat's recovery. As Poder Obrero always stated: SL, like the MRTA, will follow the same path of the radical guerrilla squads of the APRA in the 1930's and the MIR-FIR-ELN in the 1960's and will adapt to imperialism.

We say to the thousands of SL and MRTA supporters and sympathisers: don't continue with your guerrilla strategy but don't capitulate to the state either. Change your strategy but continue to resist. Instead of surrendering to the state put your weapons and your militias at the exclusive disposition of the workers and poor peasants, their rank and file assemblies and democratic self-defence committees. Strengthen the unions and the popular organisations. Promote the widest workers' democracy and cease any physical attacks inside the workers' and popular movement. Promote a united front of all the anti-imperialist and workers' organisations with the aim of launching mass demonstrations and actions against Fujimori's neo-liberal offensive. Neither continue a "popular" war without the people and against the working class, nor capitulate to the capitalist state. Abandon all traces of Stalinism. The real alternative is to build a Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist party inside the proletariat, to fight for workers' and peasants' councils and militias and a socialist revolution

# *The current situation in South Africa*

*International Secretariat of the LRCI, 13 June 1993*

1. The prospects for the reactionary settlement in South Africa negotiated between the ANC and National Party leadership have not been permanently altered by the crisis surrounding the assassination of Chris Hanani.

The events highlight a number of obstacles to that settlement. These obstacles namely the impatience and anger of the black masses and the reactionary desperation of the privileged white strata and key elements in the repressive apparatus can still disrupt the rush towards a settlement.

The existing leaderships, De Klerk and Mandela recognise the limited window of opportunity they have for a relatively bloodless settlement which will leave power in the hands of a predominantly white ruling class, but allow the consolidation of a black bourgeoisie and middle class with access to political influence.

A pre-revolutionary situation still exists in South Africa. This is signalled by the deep economic crisis, the divisions in the ruling class as to the extent of the concessions to be made and the unwillingness of the masses to continue in the old way. There is however a lack of the key subjective element a revolutionary leadership. The ANC-SACP are a counter revolutionary leadership albeit one with "revolutionary" prestige amongst the masses which they are using to the full to hold them back.

However this braking power is not limitless. Further assassinations of the masses leaders, or an open conflict and split in the racist regime, an attempted coup etc could easily ignite the spontaneous anger of the masses and rapidly create a revolutionary situation. Providing a revolutionary leadership can be built, i.e. a revolutionary communist party the road to working class power is still open in South Africa. But the present situation must be characterised as one where the leaders of the ANC and Cosatu have thus far been successful in obstructing and sabotaging the revolutionary initiative of the masses. Thus the spectre is looming of a 'democratic' counter-revolutionary settlement.

2. The roots of this democratic counterrevolution lie in the twin failures of the apartheid system and of the leadership of its main opponent, the black proletariat. Apartheid became a fetter on South African imperialism which it was unable to break in the 1980s for political reasons—the reliance of the National Party on white working class and petty-bourgeois support on the one hand, and the growth of working class militancy, along with revolutionary nationalist and socialist ideas on the other.

By the end of the 1980s, important changes had occurred which broke this deadlock: the aftermath of the revolutionary situation of 1986 which left the working class defeated but not smashed, the crisis of Stalinism and accommodation between Moscow and the western imperialists, the weakness of south African imperialism in southern Africa necessitating a change of policy, and the continuing decline of the south African economy.

Those in the ruling class, led by big business, who had long favoured a managed democratic reform, were able to put in place a new leadership of the ruling National Party committed to carrying through a managed transition. Meanwhile the ANC together with its Stalinist partner the SACP had tightened its grip on the mass opposition movement, winning leadership of the trade unions, community and youth organisations, a development made possible by the weakness of syndicalism, left reformism and centrism all of which failed to embark on the urgent task of building an independent workers party under revolutionary leadership.

3. In the three years since Mandela's release these factors have combined to produce a protracted period of transition in which the National Party, on behalf of the South African ruling class has presided over the dismantling of Apartheid and in which the ANC has led its supporters towards accepting a reactionary political settlement.

This will have a number of undemocratic features—continuing many elements of the bonapartism which has characterised the South African political system in the last decade but combined with bourgeois democracy. An Interim Government or some other form of coalition will oversee the calling of elections. It is even possible that the long promised Constituent Assembly will be bypassed. In any event the outcome of these elections will be guaranteed in advance—a power sharing government which will be unable to carry out any serious purges in the civil service or defence forces and which will stamp on any opposition.

4. During this period the ANC has taken a series of steps in its transition from a revolutionary nationalist movement to becoming a bourgeois political party. Organisationally it now has branches, an elected leadership and so forth. Its leadership is able to operate with a fair degree of independence, usually deciding policies and then going through a period of "consultation".

The ANC political programme is one of mild reformism and various vestiges of Stalinist or nationalist influenced

socialism (nationalisation etc) have been dropped. It now commands substantial support from the emerging black bourgeoisie as well as the new middle class which its returning and released leaders have joined. However, it retains elements of the character of a 'party of the popular front' because of the continuing presence of the SACP within both its ranks and its leadership. This presence has not held back the ANC's march to the right (on the contrary, see below) but it does allow for a continuing relationship between the ANC and the organised working class, which is for the most part used to help discipline that class.

5. The major obstacles to the success of the settlement have been Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the 'white right' and black militancy. Each of these has at various times posed a challenge to the managed transition. Nevertheless we have been correct to warn that under the present ANC-Cosatu leadership, carrying out their present strategy, the mass organisations of the black majority will not succeed in preventing a reactionary settlement.

The IFP, with mass support and a material base in the Natal/kwaZulu state machine, has been successfully used by the NP to foment violence and instability, weakening the authority of the ANC and thus its ability to insist on majority rule. Now this has been achieved, the NP has less need of its erstwhile co-conspirators and will want to contain the effectiveness of the IFP.

Furthermore, the IFP has been unable to drive out pro-ANC/COSATU leadership within communities and workplaces even inside its own strongholds as the success of the Hani Stay Away inside Natal/kwaZulu demonstrated. The IFP's remaining strength, and ability to generate disruption, allow it to press for further concessions towards a federal structure in the new constitution or at the very least a power sharing deal which will guarantee it a place in government. However, it is under pressure to remain in the negotiations in order to accomplish this.

6. The forces of the 'white right' now heralded as the main threat to the transition have in fact been considerably weakened over the last year. The referendum which followed the Potchefstroom by election in Spring 1992 gave De Klerk a mandate for the reform programme and marked a watershed for the diehard reactionaries. Since then, the mainstream Conservative Party politicians have accommodated to the constitutional talks while the right wing and fascists of the AWB, together with their mass base in the white petty bourgeoisie (especially the small and medium farmers), have turned towards the utopian aim of a Boer homeland. Nothing could better demonstrate their political weakness.

Nevertheless their influence within the security forces and ex-members of government and security circles means they do pose a real, if defeatable, challenge, graphically illustrated by the assassination of Hani and now by the formation of the "Committee of Generals". This could provide an alternative military rule should their be a complete breakdown of the NP/ANC deal but more likely will simply provide a source of destabilisation and pressure on the talks for more concessions over federalism.

De Klerk and the NP leadership has so far taken only small and cautious steps in purging the security and defence forces and the cabinet but taken together these have now removed the most prominent opponents of reform from positions of authority. The next six months will see further moves on these lines.

7. Mandela's recent visit to Europe aimed to pressurise De Klerk's government and rally support for the ANC's 'name the election date' campaign. This reflects the ANC's urgency to conclude the protracted negotiation process which is being threatened from many sides. Neutralising Inkatha and the so called Concern for South Africa Group (COSAG) by persuading their European backers and allies to force them to abandon their block on the process. Beyond this the ANC is keen to emphasise post-apartheid South African potential as a catalyst for economic development in the region by defusing conflict and instability in the region.

8. Events of the last month have shown the extent of discontent amongst the black majority with the pace of change.

This discontent is expressed in the demands for the bringing forward of elections and also in the need to protect communities against attack. But it is also rooted in the experience of deprivation and discrimination which remain the experience of the overwhelming majority of the black especially black African majority.

The continuing weakness of the South African economy exacerbates this. The economy has remained in recession since 1989. A package put forward by the IMF/World Bank makes loans conditional on measures similar to those of Structural Adjustments Programmes. The model supported by the Finance Ministry envisages a cut in state spending as a proportion of GDP, a wage freeze and further increases in taxation hitting the working class.

Neither the existing ruling class nor the ANC leadership anticipate the freeing of resources for reforms and redistribution in the near future. Thus a post-settlement administration will be left with a massive 'crisis of expectations' which will have to be contained by a combination of political and if necessary military means.

9. The way has been cleared for this betrayal by the success of the ANC and in particular the South African Communist Party (SACP) in further consolidating its hold on the leadership of the mass movement. In the period since legalisation, the ANC has increasingly been afforded 'government in waiting' status and in the last year, has stitched up agreements with the government in bipartisan talks which precede or parallel official multi-party negotiations.

The SACP, which occupies vital positions within the ANC leadership, has led the rest of the movement in divesting itself of commitments to thoroughgoing democracy or to imminent social change. Slovo, Hani and Cronin have been proponents of further compromises including the sunset clauses, and of the most bonapartist elements of transition such as the merger of MK with the security forces and the creation of a power sharing Interim Government before as well as after the convening of a Constituent Assembly.

10. At present no opposition to this leadership exists strong enough to mount any serious challenge and channel the anger felt by workers and youth. The leadership of COSATU and its major affiliates has been able to contain militancy and is now committed to a social contract or 'restructuring accord'. This has been facilitated by a steady increase in bureaucratisation and the political domination of COSATU by a combination of the SACP and social democratic reformists. Debates have occurred around the question of the social contract and other agreements but these are held within certain parameters; only the centrist organisations have challenged the concept of the social contract as a whole.

- The left Stalinists such as Harry Gwala (and the Youth League leadership) together with the left fakers around Winnie Mandela have not mounted a sustained opposition. After each retreat by the ANC leadership they have acquiesced and failed to lead an open opposition.

- The PAC's majority leadership is committed to the process of managed transition and has taken its place at the table of negotiations. It uses left rhetoric which has enabled the PAC to attract some radical youth and retain a base in the workers movement (in Nactu and some community organisations). Its armed wing may be under the control of the external PAC rather than the internal leadership. In any case, its nationalist politics make it incapable of providing a successful revolutionary alternative given that the room for manoeuvre for revolutionary nationalism is now extremely narrow.

11. The Marxist Workers Tendency has remained committed to its strategic orientation to the ANC. It continues to express "support for a majority rule ANC government with power firmly in its hands, offering to accommodate genuine representatives of minority groups" (Congress Militant April 1993). It seeks to act as semi-reformist advisers to ANC. An ANC government would be a bourgeois pro-IMF government. If we add to this as MWT suggests, representatives of the white minority and its bourgeois parties it would be only black majority rule under the capitalist system. The MWT politically identified itself with Chris Hani, after his assassination, despite his Stalinism and his total support for the present sell-out deal. In short the MWT refuses to call for a break with the ANC popular front or to fight openly for the creation of a revolutionary socialist party, at best hinting at the need to unite the forces of the left.

Qina Msebensi, while being clearly to the left of the MWT in its calls for workers' councils and armed defence squads, has not broken from its own adaptation to the ANC. Its call for a 'Revolutionary Interim Government' is an opportunist slogan, eliding the call for a workers' government with the ANC's proposals. QM also continues to place demands on the ANC in an ambiguous and misleading fashion e.g. the call on the ANC to 'organise the masses to take power', and QM's willingness to extend critical electoral support to the ANC.

12. Revolutionary democratic demands centering on the call for a sovereign and revolutionary Constituent assembly remain essential in the present conditions. But the ANC-National Party will also play with the slogan of

elections to a CA or some sort of Convention or parliament.

Therefore we have to oppose (a) entry of the ANC into an interim government where they will remain powerless hostages for the "good behaviour" of the masses, a supplementary instrument for disciplining them both economically and politically. Real power, control of the army and the paramilitary police force will remain where it has always been in the hands of the white racists. (b) the prior agreement by the ANC, the National Party and Inkatha to the outlines of a new constitution that guarantees the "right" to privileges of the whites and their homeland stooges, enshrines a federalism that will entrench these privileges and preserve their control over the land, natural resources and the means of production. (c) the calling of elections to a powerless CA that cannot touch the above conditions.

13. We must fight for the complete dissolution of the Bantustans, the overthrow of their reactionary collaborationist regimes and their re-integration into South Africa. We are opposed to any privileges for any "nationality", white or black. Thus we are opposed to any autonomies or secessions that are designed to preserve or to achieve them.

Above all we are opposed to "self-determination" for or secession by the white racists. However after the total overthrow of white racist power and its Bantustan stooges, i.e. when the black majority has established its unfettered power to decide the future of South Africa then we defend the right of any of the formerly oppressed nationalities to self-determination, to autonomy and even to secession.

But we are far from advocating this course; rather we proclaim this right in order to convince all of South Africa's nationalities that they need have no fear of national oppression such as majorities have imposed on minority peoples in other post-independence states throughout Africa. This recognition of an elementary democratic right should aid the fight for our goal a united socialist South Africa.

14. Against all attempts to frustrate the democratic aspirations of the masses by backstage deals and concessions to the racists we call for immediate elections to a fully sovereign Constituent Assembly with no prior restrictions, elected by the universal direct and secret suffrage of all over the age of 16, with no literacy qualifications and by proportional representation with no "threshold" percentages for representation of parties.

These elections must take place throughout SA and the "homelands". To make such elections truly democratic i.e. expressing the will of the majority, it is essential to break white racist and capitalist monopoly of the armed forces and the media which can be used to intimidate and deceive the masses.

Workers and township organisations must establish control over the media to enable the voice of the workers the unemployed, housewives and the rural poor to be heard. The electoral campaign and the vote should be supervised by the unions and the township organisations. They should support only candidates from the workers organisations who agree to be answerable (i.e. recallable) by their electors.



15. The Constituent Assembly can only carry out a progressive role if it rejects the reform of legal racism a continued white dominated South African capitalism and proclaims instead the revolutionary destruction of the white bourgeoisies monopoly of all the best land, of the mines, the factories and businesses. To accomplish this requires the uprooting of capitalism itself; nationalisation under workers control of large scale industry and the banks, nationalisation of the land under peasants and agricultural workers and control and the development of a democratically planned economy whereby SA's immense natural wealth and human skills can transform the lives of the population.

16. But such a progressive outcome to the century long struggle for democracy for the disfranchised black majority will only be possible if the millions strong black proletariat of the mines and factories and the townships struggles for and achieve their own class power, a revolutionary workers government, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This cannot be achieved by elections to any parliament let alone via interim governments with or without the white racists but in the strait-jacket of their continued armed power (the white racist state).

This state must be smashed and replaced by the power of workers councils. These councils are needed right now to mobilise mass action up to and including an indefinite general strike to force immediate elections to a sovereign CA. They must organise now a mass trained and disciplined workers militia that must seek by all means to arm itself, including by agitation amongst the SADF and the police to break their subordination to the white officer caste and to open the arsenals to the masses. An unarmed working people can never be sovereign.

17. Should elections to a Constituent Assembly take place they will provide the working class with the opportunity to prevent the sell out. The precondition for this is that it can vote for candidates who oppose the sell out. To this end:

- a) revolutionaries should themselves stand as many candidates as they are able to;
- b) they should fight for an electoral bloc of all working class organisations opposed to the sell out and demand that the SACP, Cosatu, at local and national levels break from the ANC and join the bloc.

If the opportunism of the centrist, Stalinist and trade union organisations means that no working class electoral opposition exists to the sell out we should call for a critical vote only for workers' candidates e.g. SACP or Cosatu candidates accountable to their unions.

If the electoral system or the nature of the electoral bloc make even this impossible we should call on workers to actively abstain, to spoil their ballot papers or vote blank.

Should the elections be directly to a new legislature on a common voters' roll then it is equally impossible to call for a vote for the ANC. Again revolutionaries should themselves stand as candidates. We would again call for a vote to the SACP and call on it to break from the ANC.

18. The most pressing task for the working class in South Africa is the building of a revolutionary workers' party. Such a party would take up the pressing economic concerns of the working class and rural poor, fighting against wage freezes, indirect tax hikes and in particular against the new social contract. It would rally opposition to the class collaborationist policies of the Cosatu and SACP leadership and demand that these workers' leaders break from the ANC. Such a revolutionary workers' party would be committed to the programme of permanent revolution, linking the democratic questions facing the working class to the need to seize state power.

19. South Africa is the only imperialist power on the continent. In Namibia, Angola and Mozambique thanks to Pretoria's imperialist policy over decades there is economic devastation, famine and countless numbers of refugees. Racist South Africa armed the reactionary UNITA and RENAMO forces. South African workers must fight now for the withdrawal of all South African troops, advisers and covert operations organisers in the region and for the expropriation of the all the South African European and US multinationals in the region. They should extend critical support to the FRELIMO and MPLA bourgeois regimes as long as they resist the pro-imperialist guerrillas. The working class of the entire region in alliance with the poor peasantry should develop organs of their own class power, both councils and militias. The South African proletariat must aid the workers of the region to create their own revolutionary class parties and fight for a Socialist Federation of Southern Africa.

# ***For a Workers' Party in South Africa!***

*Resolution of the International Secretariat, 23 November 1993*

1. The LRCI first raised the slogan of the workers party during the period of massive growth within the trade unions and revolutionary ferment. We argued that the crisis of leadership needed urgent answers, that the highly politicised and democratic trade union movement had a chance to build a workers party and that in the process revolutionaries could argue with reformist and revolutionary nationalist workers, seeking to win them to the need for a revolutionary programme. The slogan was appropriate despite the situation of illegality, given the rapidly changing political situation.

In the event, the opportunity was missed. The political vacuum was filled - as we predicted - by the forces of Stalinism and petty-bourgeois nationalism. During the crackdown and retreat of 1987/8, the SACP underground recruited key political leaders from the trade unions including, notably, Mayekiso. Meanwhile they also won the debates inside the legal conferences and apparatus of the unions, and within other arms of the MDM. Thus with the opening of the democratisation process, legality and the return of exiles, the SACP was able to appear as the workers party and at the same time tie the workers leaders to the alliance with the ANC - itself in transition from nationalist movement to bourgeois political party. Our slogan in this period was "build a revolutionary workers party" contrasting this to the SACP's reformism

2. The political situation within the working class in South Africa mean that it is necessary for revolutionaries to raise the slogan of the 'workers party' once again. The adoption of a resolution in favour of the building of a workers party at the NUMSA 1993 Conference shows that important sections of working class militants are dissatisfied with the SACP and the Alliance (COSATU-ANC-SACP formal alliance) as representatives for their interests. Rather than this being reflected in a battle for leadership in the existing bourgeois workers party, militants are lending support to the workers party slogan being advanced by socialist and centrist currents (CWG and those inside WOSA).

3. However, both the two main existing formulations of the slogan have a reformist content. The NUMSA resolution - forced through against the wishes of the platform - was watered down from the original proposal from the East Rand Local (where CWG appears to have been the leading movers of the resolution). There is no absolute commitment to the workers party proposal. Furthermore, the Conference also re-committed itself to the Alliance until the formation of a government with

ANC participation. In the event, this means postponing the break until after the elections as no Interim Government has been formed. NUMSA, along with other COSATU affiliates, will be tied to the ANC during the election period.

4. WOSA's proposal for a Workers Party is for an umbrella, coalition organisation to which the SACP and others could affiliate. This reflects the real desire of militants for a united, independent working class organisation and also the pressures of the prevailing reformism to which the centrists inside WOSA have accommodated. It is consistent with the politics of the right wing of the USFI, and is influenced by the experience of the Brazilian PT. This conception of the Workers' Party as a form of "organic unity" of the left is fundamentally liquidationist. Instead we call for a mass workers' party based on the trade unions with full rights for factions to struggle within its ranks. We warn that unless the Workers' Party adopted and fought for a clear programme of transitional demands and the strategy of permanent revolution it could cohere as, at best, a centrist misleadership of the socialist revolution, or, at worst, as a reformist obstacle to it.

5. The existing leadership of the Alliance is clearly worried by the proposals for the Workers Party and is campaigning against them, but has had to react to the pressures. The September COSATU Congress called for a conference of workers organisations. This would be stage managed and would attempt to continue to tie the working class to the new government and to the Reconstruction Accord (Social Contract). Against this, we should line up with the call for a workers party but argue that such a party must have a revolutionary programme and character. Furthermore, the building of such a party cannot be delayed, the critical period is now in the run up to the elections.

5. We confirm our call for the standing of workers' candidates independently of the ANC lists and would seek to link it to agitation for a Workers' Party. If the undemocratic nature of the election process make this impossible then militants have no option but to campaign for an abstention if, as seems certain, the ANC ensures that none of the candidates nominated by other sections of the alliance can be made accountable to anyone but the ANC itself. This will not of course preclude us from campaigning subsequently to call the COSATU nominees to account etc.

# LIAISON COMMITTEE OF COMMUNISTS INTERNATIONAL

CCP/France, RGL/Austria, RFL/USA, RWVP/Sri Lanka, SRABU/Germany, VO/Italy

Postfach 325, 1060 Vienna, Austria



Oakland, May 3, 1993

## An open letter to the members of the LRCI

This is an open call to all members of the LRCI to break from the LRCI's petty bourgeois leadership. The latest call by the LRCI and Workers Power for imperialist military aid to the Muslims in Bosnia is reactionary and a flagrant betrayal of revolutionary proletarian principles. The leadership of the LRCI has declared that "we favour unconditional military aid to the Bosnian Muslims to carry this out [military defense against the Serbs] while resisting all attempts by imperialist or Islamic states to exert control over the conduct of the Bosnian resistance." ("Stop the Annihilation of the Bosnian Muslims!", *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 3, page 17.) Workers Power clarified what this means when it responded to Jack Duretz who visited Bosnia: "Jack argues that the Bosnian fighters do not need our soldiers or expertise, only guns. If by 'our' he means 'our government' or their troops then we wholeheartedly agree." ("A revolutionary answer", *Workers Power*, March 1993, page 11.) Read closely, this deliberately obscure statement can only mean one thing: while Workers Power does not support direct imperialist intervention, it does call for imperialist military aid to the Muslims in Bosnia. The fact that the oily centrist leadership of the LRCI shies away from calling for an all-out imperialist intervention in the Balkans does not change the reality that the LRCI is siding with the imperialist camp and its restorationist allies. No double-talk and noises against the imperialist blockade of Serbia can change this fundamental betrayal. As this opportunistic leadership calls for imperialist military aid for the Muslim bourgeois forces in Bosnia, it also insists that "we demand the immediate withdrawal of all armed forces of the Croat or Serb state and the irregulars from these countries as well as the so-called peace-keeping forces of the UN." ("Stop the annihilation of the Bosnian Muslims!", *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 3, page 17.) But at the same time the traitorous leaders of the LRCI ask the imperialists to arm the bourgeois Muslim forces! In reality this means that the bourgeois Muslim agents of imperialism will have a free hand to continue

the massacre of the Serbs! (Only dupes of the most reactionary bourgeois press believe that the massacres in Bosnia are all being committed by one side.)

The massacre in the Balkans is the logical product of successful capitalist restoration in Croatia and Slovenia — a process that is being carried out in Bosnia by the Muslim government (which in this respect is not fundamentally different from the Chetniks); this process of restoration is backed by imperialism. The leaders of the LRCI do not understand the process and the role of imperialism, nor are they willing or able to understand. While the UN in Bosnia is specifically balancing the interests of German and US imperialism, it also fundamentally represents the interests of both. The imperialists are in a de facto war against Serbia. They are severely isolating it from the rest of the world in order to crush it. The Germans are arming and supporting both the Croats and the Muslims, and the US supports and secretly arms the Muslims. All this is done in order to turn the Balkans into semi-colonies at the mercy of imperialism. The imperialists dominate the skies in Bosnia — as authorized by the so called "no-fly zone" resolution by the UN. The imperialist army brings military airplanes to bear against the Serbs on behalf of the Muslim government. It was not an accident that tons of ammunition were discovered in the wheat delivered to Bosnian Muslim forces by the UN. But the leaders of the LRCI support this and demand more!

The Dave Stockings and Keith Hassels want to be sure that they have a say in the imperialist/restorationist coalition in the Balkans. But their pinkish dot in the reactionary coalition should be denounced by every conscious worker. The leaders of the LRCI are traitors of the working class cause and of Marxist principles. When the social democrats voted for the imperialist military budgets, Lenin denounced them as social patriots on behalf of imperialism. The leaders of the LRCI think that they can escape a similar fate by not calling for direct intervention. But what is the fundamental difference?

Not very much. Marxists as a matter of principle cannot support the delivery of imperialist arms to reactionary pro-capitalist forces who are restoring capitalism on behalf of their imperialist masters. When the imperialists send arms to the Muslim-bourgeois forces they do it because they consider them to be their agents for the reactionary restorationist process. Even if the LRCI's position that the entire ex-Yugoslavia is still a workers' state were correct, it would still be a betrayal to side with imperialism/Bosnia in the conflict against the Serbs, because these reactionary armies would still be fighting for the destruction of the workers' state on behalf of imperialism and its local agents.

The imperialists are engaged in a de facto war against Serbia because they consider it, for now, to be an obstacle to their project of creating subordinated capitalist semi-colonies. The Stalinist bureaucracy in Belgrade would like to restore capitalism too, but it cannot do as long as the war and the imperialist pressure continues. The subjective desires of the Stalinists to restore capitalism would count seriously only when imperialism recognizes them and is willing to collaborate with the Stalinists in the restorationist project. But right now, the Serbs are fighting the capitalist restorationist front of the imperialist Croats and their junior partner, the Bosnian Muslims. In this conflict, the LRCI leadership takes the side of imperialism and its direct restorationist agents (the bourgeois Muslim forces), that is, the side of the reactionary counter-revolution. What is this if not a betrayal of the international revolution and proletarian principles?

In the article "The Stalinophile School of Falsification; the ASt replies to its sectarian critics" (*Trotskyist Bulletin* No 3, pages 40-42), the LRCI leaders claim that the RKL (and by implication the LCC(I)) supports the nationalist Serbian forces in Bosnia (which they refer to as a "Red-Brown block"). The rotten leaders of the LRCI go so far as to say that the RKL is "an accomplice of genocide" in Bosnia. This is a deliberate reactionary lie. The RKL has made it clear in all its articles that it is against crimes and massacres by the Serbs in Bosnia. While we (the LCC(I)) defend Serbia against the imperialist/Croat/Muslim assault, we do not support the nationalist Serbian project in Bosnia and the bourgeois reactionary forces that are trying to carve out a bourgeois state tied to capitalist restoration in Serbia or Bosnia. We have always called for a united workers' Bosnia in the framework of a Yugoslav federation. When the Chetniks engage in massacre and forced transfers of Muslim villages we are in favor of multi-national workers' and peasants' defense guards to stop such acts. But unlike the dishonest leaders of the LRCI, we believe that the proletariat has to investigate when such massacres are alleged. We do not buy the imperialist lies and propaganda that the Serbs are engaged in genocide.

The LRCI's leaders, in contrast, are behaving as a direct transmitter for imperialist propaganda. By now even the "respected" bourgeois press has begun to admit that Bosnia is filled with burned-out Serbian villages alongside of the Muslim villages. When the bourgeois Muslim forces have the opportunity they massacre Serbian villagers; they utilize the same tactics of mass killings and forced transfers that are used by all the bourgeois nationalist forces. The imperialist propaganda grossly exaggerates the acts of the Serbs because it needs to prepare the public for a massive imperialist intervention in case the imperialists have no other options. The leaders of the LRCI and the gutter imperialist press are merely doing the propaganda for possible massive intervention by screaming about "holocaust" and "genocide" against the Muslims while minimizing similar actions of the reactionary Muslim forces. (The imperialist press, generally speaking, also deliberately ignores the massacres done by the Croats.) This is precisely the nature of the bloc between the leadership of the LRCI and imperialism. It is reactionary and counterrevolutionary to the core.

The muddle-headed right wing centrist leaders of the LRCI bounce back and forth — like a hollow ball without content or principles — from one reactionary camp in the Balkans to the other. Today these centrists are in the Muslim/imperialist camp; yesterday they were in the nationalist bourgeois Serbian camp. Indeed, their lies about the RKL's support for genocide are just a cowardly attempt to cover their own counterrevolutionary alliances, which included a united front by the ASt with reactionary Serbian nationalist forces collaborating with fascists. Despite the LRCI leadership's desperate attempts to deny it, the article "The Stalinophile School of Falsification; the ASt replies to its sectarian critics" confirms that the fascist forces of the Chetniks were de facto part of the united front with Drascovic's Serbian Renewal movement in which the ASt participated. The article even admits that Serbian Renewal claims "continuity" with the Chetniks! (*Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 3, page 40). As the LRCI's press describes it, "the end of the demonstration witnessed a reactionary outburst. The Serb Renewal allowed a Chetnik figure to speak from the platform and a Serb speaker of the ASt was nearly beaten up by this fascist scum." (*Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 3, page 41). It is evident that as far as the bourgeois/restorationist Serbian Renewal movement was concerned, the demonstration was a united front between them and the fascists. (This is the logic of a united front that supports capitalist restoration.) When Serbian Renewal's leftist allies (the ASt) were not happy with that, they were beaten up by the fascists with the blessing of the ASt's "friends" — the "democratic" bourgeois nationalists!

Only the incompetent leaders of the ASt and the LRCI are incapable of comprehending that in a nationalist pro-restorationist demonstration led by reactionary bourgeois forces, the bourgeois nationalists naturally prefer the fascists to the timid support of the ASt. After all, the LRCI does not have any social forces in Yugoslavia to back up in the reactionary restorationist project — but the Chetniks do! The leaders of the LRCI have been dazzled by their reactionary theory which claims that it is permissible to support the “democratic” rights of bourgeois restorationist parties in the workers’ states (except fascists) and even form a united front with them. But when concrete actions were on the agenda, the bourgeois “democrats” preferred the fascists, even when the ostensible reason for the demonstration was the defense of Serbia against the blockade.

Apparently the leaders of the LRCI have learned nothing. In 1991 they took the side of Yeltsin and imperialism in the conflict between Yeltsin and the slow-roader restorationists of the coup. At that time, when Yeltsin sought the support of the fascists in the defense of the “White House” (the imperialist/restorationist headquarters), this did not bother the LRCI’s leaders. They were proud to participate in this united front with Yeltsin — no matter that the defenders of the “white house” included fascists. (See summer/fall 1991 correspondence between the RTT (now RTL) and the International Secretariat of the LRCI.) Neither did it matter to these leaders that imperialism was supporting Yeltsin in the conflict. Consistent with this method, the leaders of the LRCI now support the delivery of imperialist arms to the bourgeois Muslim forces of Bosnia — the allies of Clinton and the US White House in the Balkan war.

In order to correct their errors of consistent support to the imperialist side and its agents, the LRCI’s leadership would have to correct their fundamental opportunism on the key questions regarding the workers’ state — something that seems to be out of the question. On two key questions the LRCI’s leaders have made fundamental mistakes that led only to betrayal and support of the counter-revolution: (1) They defend the rights of bourgeois “democratic” parties in the workers’ states to function freely, that is, to have full freedom to organize the bourgeois counter-revolution and smash the workers’ states, and (2) They defend the right of the bourgeois nationalist movements in the workers’ states of the USSR and Eastern Europe to succeed on the basis of restoring capitalism; that is, they defend the right of counter-revolution — disguising itself with legitimate complaints against the Stalinist bureaucracy — to smash the workers’ state and restore capitalism.

On the question of bourgeois democracy in the workers’ state the leadership of the LRCI has a completely Menshevik conception. When the

Revolutionary Trotskyist League (then known as the RTT) had fraternal relations with the LRCI, the LRCI’s leadership defended bourgeois democracy in the workers’ state as following:

“... We wish as far as possible to expose and confront these [bourgeois] parties. The proletarian dictatorship does not wish to narrow [!!!] the field of political conflict and debate [!!!] (as compared with bourgeois democracy). It is an arena in which the masses can and must be educated especially whilst important sections of the masses are still dominated by these ideas.” (Letter from the International Secretariat of the LRCI to the RTT, July 10, 1991)

At the time, the RTT answered the Menshevik leadership:

“Comrades, we are not talking here about an advanced healthy workers’ state (in the process of withering away), in which the working class is in firm control and the bourgeois parties are promising to cooperate and be good boys and girls. No! These are bourgeois parties who are taking power and in some countries already smashed many of the gains from the workers’ state! ...

“For the last six months we have been watching with growing alarm how the IS’s views on Stalinism have degenerated under the gigantic pressure of the historic events. On the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the role of bourgeois democracy and nationalism in the workers’ state ... the IS’s views are, unfortunately, increasingly closer to the views of the United Secretariat than revolutionary Marxism. . .

“... As early as the late 1970’s Usec wrote: ‘freedom of political organization should be granted all those including pro-bourgeois elements, who in actual practice respect the constitution of the workers’ state.’ Usec contends that revolutionaries should support under the dictatorship of the proletariat: ‘... the waging of a relentless struggle against these (bourgeois) ideologies in the field of ideology itself, which can, however, attain its full success only under conditions of open debate and open confrontation, i.e., of freedom for the defenders of reactionary ideologies to defend their ideas, of ideological cultural pluralism.’ (Quoted in The Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat, Darioush Karim (Moreno), p.39).

“Comrades, compare the above quotations to Engels who said that: ‘So long as the proletariat still needs the state, it does not need it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries’ ...

“ . . . [In contrast, according to the LRCI's leaders,] as long as the masses have illusions in bourgeois democracy, it is necessary to respect bourgeois rights under the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and, we guess, even to form united fronts with the Yeltsinites. Don't you see, comrades? In the desire to justify a united front with the Yeltsinites, you are risking Marxist theory itself.” (Letter from the RTT to the LRCI, Sept. 30, 1991)

Indeed! It is the rejection of Marxist theory that brought the LRCI leaders speeding toward the Menshevik camp, i.e., that led them to side with imperialism and restoration. For Marxists and Trotsky in particular the struggle against bourgeois democracy in the workers' states is a fundamental principle that we defend. When Leon Trotsky wrote on this question he was uncompromising and brutal in his struggle with those who wanted to fight for “general” democratic rights in the USSR without a clear proletarian content that defends the dictatorship of the proletariat: “It is necessary to reject and condemn the program of struggle for ‘the freedom to organize’ and all other ‘freedoms’ in the USSR — because this is the program of bourgeois democracy. To this program of bourgeois democracy we must counterpose the slogans and methods of proletarian democracy, whose aim, in the struggle against bureaucratic centrism, is to regenerate and fortify the dictatorship of the proletariat.” (Trotsky, Writings 1929, page 303.)

As the debate between the RTT and the LRCI leadership intensified, the RTT pointed the finger at the class pressure that drives the LRCI leaders into the arms of imperialism:

“Today public opinion is running wild in favor of ‘democracy’ in the Soviet Union. It runs from the gutter press to the ‘progressive’ intelligentsia and the standard centrist organizations. All of them reject the dictatorship of the proletariat and support some sort of a parliamentary system. The more radical segments of this grand coalition (the left intelligentsia) accept ‘workers democracy’ and rights. It is this alien class pressure (the petty bourgeois left intelligentsia) to which the leadership of the LRCI is capitulating.

“The leadership of the LRCI rejects the parliamentary system in the workers' state in principle, but accepts it in practice, under the disguise of the ‘united front’ against Stalinism. In its arguments against us it displays centrist confusion and oscillation and not a firm Bolshevik clarity. . . .

“ . . . It all boils down to the fact that the leadership sneaks into the LRCI the pressure of the petty bourgeoisie, which, to be sure, has capitulated to the pressure of the big bourgeoisie (imperialism).

We have not forgotten: it was the petty bourgeois intelligentsia East and West that sang songs of love to the ‘democratic’ restorationists, maximizing the ‘democracy’ while minimizing the restorationist content. It is this alien class pressure that drove the leadership of the LRCI to revise the fundamental Marxist principle — the dictatorship of the proletariat — and to abandon the defense of the workers' state in the most crucial moment, when the restorationists were fighting to take state power.

“The following incredible statement by the PC of Workers Power summarizes the support of bourgeois democracy in the workers' state by the leadership. [¶] ‘Working class resistance is made [sic in RTT letter] easier by the fact that bourgeois parliaments are not quite the same in a workers' state as they are in a bourgeois capitalist society. In a workers' state they do not rest upon a capitalist class and its armed power, tied to both by a thousand threads and to the economic power of the bourgeoisie. *The existence of parliaments is more a statement of intent, a declaration by the pro-bourgeois forces that they are going to set out on the road to a capitalist society. But there a class struggle lies in the path of bourgeois democratic institutions and their use to effect a restoration.*’ (Workers Power PC's ‘Reply to Sam’ (IB 162), p. 6, our emphasis.)

“The existence of parliaments is a ‘statement of intent’!? Really? The parliament in Russia supports Yeltsin and has already destroyed most (if not all) of the planned economy mechanisms in Russia.” (*In Defense of Trotskyism, An Open Letter to All Members and Supporters of the LRCI, November 30, 1991*)

On the question of support to bourgeois nationalists movement in the workers' state *In Defense of Trotskyism* summarized what is wrong with the opportunist method of the Menshevik leaders of the LRCI as follows:

“ . . . [W]hen the bourgeois nationalists in Lithuania were defending the bourgeois parliament to use it to restore capitalism, that is, when nationalism was being used as a reactionary tool in the hands of the restorationists, the IS rushed to form a united front (popular front, more accurately) with the restorationists. Today the Lithuanian parliament is putting all the nationalized industries up for auction on the market; the restoration of capitalism is at an advanced stage. The same reactionary nationalist parliament also supports the oppression of minorities and the rehabilitation of fascists. . . .

“The problem with the petty bourgeois leadership of the LRCI is that it starts with the subjective factor, that is, the illusions of the masses in

nationalism, and not with the objective reality. If the nationalists win mass support in referendums, the LRCI gives them unconditional support in the struggle for independence, regardless of their overall reactionary political and economic goals. This is exactly how the LRCI supported the nationalists in Slovenia and Croatia. The masses said yes in referendums and that was enough to support them against the Stalinists, even though the nationalists' aims were the destruction of the workers' state and the linkage of the new capitalist states to imperialism." (Ibid.)

Comrades of the LRCI: it is not an accident that the leaders of the LRCI called for imperialist aid to break the blockade of the Stalinists against Lithuania and its bourgeois nationalists in 1990. They also called for imperialist recognition of the independent bourgeois Baltic states. They did it even though the LRCI's leaders considered both Russia and Lithuania to be part of the workers' state of the USSR. Principles of never demanding imperialist aid for those who are about to destroy the workers' state — i.e., the defense of the workers' state against imperialism and its local agents — have no practical consequences for these leaders. The call for military aid to bourgeois Muslim forces in Bosnia is just a continuation of the LRCI leadership's defense of bourgeois nationalism in Lithuania. The LRCI's leaders are willing to accept a bourgeois national state on the ruins of the workers' state if the nationalists have mass support.

But material reality will always expose those who want to play Mickey Mouse games with terminology when it comes to big historical events. The fact that the LRCI leaders call the counterrevolutions of 1989-91 potential political revolutions does not change the reality that the bourgeois forces came to power and destroyed the workers' states with the help of bourgeois democracy and nationalism (once again defended by the leaders of the LRCI). In the context of historical counterrevolutions, Marxists never defend bourgeois democracy and the rights of bourgeois nationalist movements to self-determination on the ruins of the workers' state. What "progressive" results did bourgeois self-determination for the Baltic states and Croatia achieve? Capitalist restoration, bigger nationalist oppression (compared to the Stalinist days) and some of the most destructive wars since the Second World War in Yugoslavia and the ex-USSR — wars for a bigger slice of a new capitalist state on behalf of the bourgeois nationalists and imperialism! But the LRCI leaders remain completely blind. Unable to learn from their past mistakes, the LRCI leaders capitulated to the side of the restorationists and the imperialist masters. Consistent with their method in the past, now the cowardly leaders of the LRCI call for imperialist armament of the

bourgeois reactionary Muslim forces in Bosnia. Like in the case of Yeltsin (when the LRCI leaders sided with "democracy" against "totalitarianism"), the pressure of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia in Western Europe — which is under the influence of imperialist lies about genocide by the Serbs — is pushing the petty bourgeois leaders of the LRCI to the imperialist side. Such Menshevik leaders don't deserve the title of Trotskyists. They transmit imperialist pressure within the movement.

Backing restorationist forces has made the leaders of the LRCI completely blind in regard to the social nature of the new states in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe. To date these leaders still characterize countries like Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Croatia as workers' states — even though the restorationist forces in these countries have clearly succeeded in restoring capitalism. How can one characterize a state as a workers' state when it has a complete bourgeois state apparatus consisting of a capitalist army and capitalist state institutions, including bourgeois parliamentary systems and bourgeois governments? But centrists — who tells us that fundamental instruments of the capitalist state (bourgeois parliaments, government and army) can be part of a workers' state — ignore serious scientific analysis that uses the dialectical method in the historical context. It does not matter for them that countries like Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have already made serious steps in privatizing the economy, thereby creating a small bourgeoisie dominated by imperialism. If the leaders of the LRCI admitted that the above countries are incipient capitalist states they would have to explain to the rank-and-file of the LRCI why they defended the existence of the counterrevolutionary bourgeois parliaments and counterrevolutionary bourgeois parties within these countries. After all, if these unprincipled opportunists admitted that capitalism has been restored in these countries, they would also have to admit that it was the "democratic" bourgeois parties and institutions that took state power and restored capitalism. But instead of making an honest assessment of their past mistakes and admitting that the question of state power is crucial in regard to the criteria for successful restoration, the Menshevik leaders of the LRCI prefer to put their members and Marxism into a deep sleep. They pretend that nothing fundamental has happened!

Unlike the impressionist leaders of the LRCI who tell us that economic criteria (amount of privatization of state property) are decisive, the LCC(I) is the only international Marxist current that understands the crucial role that the state plays in the restorationist process. Which class the state serves (even if this class only exists in an embryonic form) is the most important criterion for the definition of the nature of the state (workers' state

versus capitalist state). For the LCCI, the most important factor for the success of restoration is the *ability* of a restorationist/bourgeois state to dismantle the fundamental mechanisms of the plan and the state monopoly over foreign trade — not the degree of privatization which has *already* taken place. The new ruling class in the new capitalist state must be extremely weak, or barely in existence, for a long time, since the new incipient capitalist states can survive only if they are dominated by imperialism. The new states can survive economically mainly through joint ventures dominated by Western capital. State power held by the restorationists and the creation of an incipient capitalist state prepares objectively for imperialist domination, regardless of whether power is in the hands of the pro-imperialist elements (Yeltsin and company) or the ex-conservative faction of the bureaucracy. Some sectors of the ex-bureaucracy would like to develop a stronger national bourgeoisie on the base of a strong nationalized industry of important sectors of the economy, which they try to defend against imperialist destruction. But they have to achieve this in the real world dominated by imperialism. This is the real reason for the latest conflicts between Yeltsin and Civic Union. In reality, the struggle between Yeltsin and Congress produced the real compromise under which capitalism, including privatization, is developing in Russia. The most recent compromise between these two forces showed very clearly that their basic aims are the same. To establish capitalism in Russia, Civic Union needs to be recognized by imperialism to some degree; it cannot have totally hostile relations with imperialism. For this reason, Civic Union needs to tolerate Yeltsin, for the time being, as a lesser evil alternative to the “red-brown” coalition.

The leaders of the LRCI use the same method in the ex-USSR as in Eastern Europe. In order to admit that Russia is no longer a workers' state, they would have to admit that the seizure of power by Yeltsin and the “democrats” (and the consequent dismantling of fundamental state planning) constituted the success of capitalist restoration. But instead, the LRCI's leaders are sliding into total confusion. As expected from centrists without a firm grip of reality, they swing from one counter-revolutionary camp to another. In the 23 March 1993 resolution of the International Secretariat, “Down with Yeltsin's Coup!”, we are informed that the Russian Parliament can defend the “workers' state” and stop capitalist restoration by Yeltsin. According to the LRCI's leaders, Civic Union, which openly stands for capitalist restoration (even the LRCI admits that Civic Union agrees with Yeltsin on most questions and disagrees with him mainly on the tempo of restoration), can be pushed to restore the workers' state. According to the International Secretariat of the LRCI: “Hyperinflation, a huge budget deficit, a withdrawal of imperialist aid and

credits would rapidly force them [Civic Union] to make fundamental decisions. Either they would have to adopt the very measures over which they brought down Gaidar or they would have to roll the restoration process backwards and restore key elements of the central command economy . . .” (*Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 3, page 57.) In other words, the managers of the state enterprises can change their mind and be Stalinist bureaucrats once again! But the enterprise bosses and their representatives in the parliament are stealing the enterprises and are privatizing them one by one, that is, in a gradual way. That is why they do not want a strong pro-imperialist president! Civic Union has illusions that they can build a strong capitalist economy that can compete with imperialist countries.

Apparently the “red professors” from London do not comprehend that the historical process that brought about the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy is irreversible for the ex-bureaucracy. But the Stalinists in the ex-USSR have concluded correctly that the utopian project of “socialism in one country” has collapsed under the pressure of imperialism. That is why they adopted a program that calls for capitalism in which the industrial managers would be converted into a new ruling capitalist class. That is why they did not lift a finger when Yeltsin took power. Their only argument with Yeltsin is that they want capitalism to be restored in a guarded way that preserves their privileges in the new capitalist society. Was it an accident that Civic Union supported the destruction of the Communist Party and the decisive influence of the Communist Party in the army? Can a real Marxist forget for a minute that the Communist Party was once the political and military instrument that defended the deformed workers' state and the privileges of the Stalinist bureaucracy? No! Only muddled-headed right centrists can forget this when they do not want to admit reality.

According to the confused Mensheviks from the LRCI, Civic Unity — a minority within Civic Union and a partner in a coalition with the fascists — wants to restore central planning. But the only analysis that these centrists provide is a similar one to Shachtman's third campism. The LRCI's leaders tell us that the Stalinists in Civic Unity are also fascists and monarchists at the same time! Trotsky had to go overboard to explain to Shachtman and the petty bourgeois opposition in the SWP that while the bureaucracy can have similar features to fascists with respect to oppression and brutality, the social base for the fascists and the Stalinists is radically different: while the Stalinist bureaucracy rests on the workers' state, fascists rest on a capitalist state. Therefore, the fascist elements in Civic Unity want to restore capitalism with the fascist fist combined with extreme chauvinism and anti-semitism; that is why they are in a united front with the rest of the fascists in Russia.



In summary: according to the LRCI, the capitalist government of Yeltsin governs a workers' state and the restorationists in parliament can be pressured to save the workers' state and return to their Stalinist traditions. And finally, the "red professors" discovered the *paramount* reason why Russia is still a workers' state with collective property relations: fascists can be Stalinists and defend the workers' state! It is not surprising that with such third campist confusion on the state and the social base of fascism and Stalinism, the leaders of the LRCI, like Shachtman, refused to defend the workers' state at the crucial moment, when it was attacked by imperialism and its agents (Yeltsin and company).

A year and a half after the LRCI's leaders sided with Yeltsin against the slow-roaders, they said that Yeltsin is a greater evil compared to the slow restorationists. This time the LRCI's leaders say that we "must defend, therefore, the parliamentary bodies against any moves by Yeltsin to disperse them." (*Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 3, page 58). That is, in this round, the centrist leaders of the LRCI are siding with the slow-roaders against the fast-roaders once again in the name of "democracy"! According to those leaders, in 1991 when Yeltsin was the "democrat," the Stalinists were enemies of democracy. But today even the LRCI leadership can see that Yeltsin is not a good bourgeois democrat (he never was). Since these centrists do not have a revolutionary working class perspective *in practice* — a perspective to mobilize the workers *independently* from all camps of restorationists and *against* all camps of restoration — they have now discovered that the "great democrats" who form Civic Union can defend bourgeois democracy! And as an added insult to serious Marxism, the leaders of the LRCI claim that together with the fascists from Civic Unity (under the appropriate pressure!), Civic Union can even re-establish the centralized economy and therefore defend the workers' state!

In reality, the managers from Civic Union were never interested in bourgeois democracy. Nor do they claim now that if parliament defeats Yeltsin they will establish meaningful norms of bourgeois democracy. The top elite from Civic Union wants the new capitalist property to be

transferred to itself. Because of the antagonism of the masses, even minimum measures of control by bourgeois democracy and a bourgeois Constitution, which would regulate how property is to be transferred from the state to the new owners, are too dangerous for them! But the poor leaders of the LRCI, who cannot resist any opportunity to promote illusions in bourgeois democracy, put their weight behind the Russian Parliament against Yeltsin. *Independent workers' mobilizations, with workers' organs and demands, are once again a matter for occasional decoration in the LRCI press; in practice these petty bourgeois muddle-heads swing between one reactionary restorationist camp to the other* — it all depends on who these centrists conceive to be the best defender of bourgeois democracy and with good luck the workers' state!

Comrades of the LRCI: your leadership has betrayed the working class by siding consistently with capitalist restorationists and their imperialist backers. It is a petty-bourgeois leadership which trades the principles of Marxism and proletarian revolutionary action for pious support for the imperialist actions in Bosnia. Such backing of pro-imperialist forces happens regularly, every time the imperialist centers hypnotize the LRCI's leaders with propaganda about atrocities committed by the dark forces against the "lesser evil" backers of imperialism (Bosnia), or about attacks against the champions of "democracy" (Yeltsin in 1991; his opponents in 1993). The LRCI's leadership has repeatedly capitulated to imperialist pressure and showed its true anti-Trotskyist and anti-revolutionary colors. You deserve better than a leadership that supports counterrevolutions. The LCC(I) has consistently fought against the restoration of capitalism with a clear program that clearly demands independent mobilization of the working class for revolutionary action in its own name.

**Break with the right centrist leadership of  
the LRCI!**

**Join the Liaison Committee of Communists  
(International)!**

# Reply to the Liaison Committee of Communists (International)

International Secretariat of the LRCI, 22 August 1993

During May this year we received an "Open letter to the members of the LRCI", issued from Oakland, USA. We were not sure at first if the letter represented the position of the whole of the LCCI or if it was only the production of its new USA affiliate.

Under questioning, at the Lutte Ouvrière Fete in June, a leading comrade from Voce Operaia said that whilst they agreed with the basic political criticisms they disagreed with the some of its expressions. He further said the LCCI would clarify this publicly.

We have waited over two months to receive this "clarification". None has been received by us so the LCCI as a whole must now be held publicly responsible for the Spartacist polemical method of its US fraternal group. We would hazard a guess that their new recruit is going to cause them more than one such embarrassment before their rotten bloc falls apart.

The author of the letter is the RTL, a group that probably would not exist today without the considerable initial assistance of the LRCI which maintained fraternal relations with it until November 1991. The letter is highly subjective and reveals both their political weakness and an attempt to disguise major changes of position by the RTL without accounting for them.

For the LCCI the leaders of the LRCI are "red professors", "rotten", "impressionists", "right centrists", "mensheviks", "traitors of (sic) the working class cause and of marxist principles", and moreover they "have betrayed the working class by siding consistently with capitalist restorationists and their imperialist backers. It is a petit bourgeois leadership which trades the principles of Marxism and proletarian revolutionary action for pious support for the imperialists actions in Bosnia".

It also turns out that there is "not very much" difference between this leadership and the "social patriots" of 1914, but presumably just enough to make us worthy of the tag right centrists.

To try to prove these awful crimes the "open letter" has to resort to wholesale distortions of our positions thus creating the basis of a false polemic.

## Revolutionaries, imperialism and Bosnia

The first "big lie" is that the LRCI demands that the imperialist powers give military assistance to Bosnia against Serbia. It is not difficult to show that this charge is completely false. Indeed the evidence used by the RTL falls apart at even the most casual inspection.

The position of the LRCI, which has been expressed many times in our publications, is that the Bosnian war

began as a reactionary war on all sides. All the leaders of the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian governments were pro-capitalist, were engaged in destroying the Yugoslavian degenerated workers' state and had the aim of creating nationalist, purely bourgeois, mini-republics All of them engaged to a greater or lesser degree in "ethnic cleansing".

But since the late Autumn of 1992 the character of the war (but certainly not the reactionary character of the leadership) started to change. The Croats (both the Bosnian Croats and behind them Tudjman) with the covert support of German and Austrian imperialism and the Serbs decided to carve up Bosnia between them.

The majority of the population of Bosnia (not only "ethnic Muslims", but also Yugoslavs, Gypsies, Albanians and non-sectarian Serbs and Croats and other nationalities) were sandwiched between two heavily armed nationalist armies supported by fascistic paramilitary forces. The regular armies, especially the Bosnian Serbs, had hundreds of tanks and heavy artillery.

The Bosnian government forces and the defenders of Sarajevo and other towns and cities had only light and medium weaponry. Once the Bosnian government's alliance with the Croats, who were far better armed, broke down—and indeed was replaced by a de facto alliance between the Serbs and the Croats—the situation of the "Muslims" and their allies became critical. The largest ethnic community in of Bosnia, over 40% of the population, found themselves facing acute national oppression, and even total expulsion from their homelands. Now they have been driven into territory comprising about 12% of Bosnia!

The comrades of the LCCI take a radically different view of things. Not for them any sympathy for oppressed nationalities. They comment; "We do not buy the imperialist lies and propaganda that the Serbs are engaged in a genocide". On the contrary, we are told that "the imperialists are in a de facto war against Serbia."

For the sectarian it is easy to arrive at a "revolutionary" answer to such questions. ALL that is needed is to assert the exact opposite of the bourgeoisie's propaganda and even to see in its present bogeyman one's own ally. It is true that the media of the imperialist countries weeps crocodile tears over the mass expulsions and pogroms that the Bosnians are suffering.

It is also a fact that generally speaking it is the liberal journalists which denounce most strongly their governments for failing to intervene militarily. But actions speak louder than words. A Marxist should be able to see the reality of imperialist policy behind the smokescreen

of propaganda. It is a strange war against Serbia where it is the Serbs who are allowed to prosecute their war aims unchallenged except by impotent "threats" that are shrugged off by the Serbian army with disdain. It is a strange war against Serbia in which the imperialists use the UN Security Council to embargo weapons supplies to their opponents the Bosnians.

The Serbs and Croats not only have far more powerful armies, but the former have their own armaments factories and the latter receive arms supplies across the extensive frontiers. But, the "Muslims" have none of these advantages and are totally surrounded by enemies.

There are in fact differences between the US and the European imperialists over what action to take to bring the Serbian war machine to the conference table to sign a carve up of Bosnia. The US are at the moment in the vanguard of those threatening air strikes.

Does this amount to a war against Serbia? Not at all; war is a continuation of politics by other means; thus we can tell from what military measures are being proposed what political goals their proponents seek to achieve. Air strikes, everybody admits would be militarily ineffective; they cannot do anything to reverse Serbian gains still less do damage to Serbia itself.

They are for domestic consumption, to strengthen the position of their stooges in the Islamic world and to show that the US can still force the Europeans to act. The US will not sanction the use of ground troops and that tells you everything about the limited political objectives of the US in its "war" against Serbia.

Was it the "de facto war against Serbia" that led the US State Department's Bosnia expert, Marshall Harris, to resign in early August? If so why did he denounce the pro-Serbian results of the US government's abstentionist policy, saying, "The Administration is driving the Bosnian government to surrender its territory and its sovereignty to the victors in a war of aggression."? Even bourgeois politicians see the gap between public rhetoric and reality better than the LCC(I).

This two-faced attitude is nothing new in the history of imperialism. In Palestine, East Timor and Kurdistan the imperialist media denounced the genocidal attacks and said that they supported the human rights of the oppressed peoples. But, at the same time, they were against arming these peoples against their oppressors.

Instead, they used them as tools with the aim of pressurising the Iraqi, Indonesian or Israeli states to make concessions to them and in this way increase imperialism's authority as a world policeman.

In the strange world of the RTL the LRCI is guilty of actually supporting imperialism in the Balkans. True, they cannot quote anything we say to prove this; on the contrary, we are told that we are very clever and as oily centrists, fall short of "calling for direct intervention" by imperialism. Yet in all the documents and articles the LRCI has published we repeat that we are opposed to the anti-working class blockade of Serbia and also that if imperialism launched a military invasion of Serbia we would side with the Serbs against the imperialists. We have always demanded the expulsion of the imperialists and UNO from former Yugoslavia.

We have never demanded that the imperialists send weapons to the Bosnians. Indeed, we make it abundantly clear that if the imperialists send serious military forces

to fight alongside the "Muslims" and against the Serbs in Bosnia this would almost certainly change the whole character of the war. When such a war turned into a restorationist onslaught on Serbia then we would make good our pledge to support Serbia. But this was not the situation 12 months ago, is not the situation at the time of writing and indeed it is the least probable outcome.

The imperialists are seeking a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina strongly favourable to the Serbs and the Croats. Their threats against the Serbs are in the main gestures aimed at forcing the Serbs to give the minimum amount of territory back so that a bantustan, like the projected Palestinian West Bank/Gaza statelet, can be set up.

This will be a prison camp for the Bosnians, to which they will doubtlessly deport the hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled the fighting. Like Jerusalem in 1948 Sarejevo too will be divided if the Serbs get their way.

It is however just possible that if the chauvinist butcher Mladic and the fascist Seselj carry on their genocidal campaign, destabilising all possibility of such a deal, then the imperialists will use air strikes to try to force the Serbs to negotiate so that their "new world order" is not held up to total ridicule. But even this would not transform the Bosnian Serb army and militia into a progressive force.

Whilst the Serbs have the right to defend themselves against such isolated imperialist attacks against their positions these will not alter our position on the present Bosnian war. They would not be fighting to defend the remains of the planned economy but their ill-gotten territorial gains, the driving from their homes of hundreds of thousands of Bosnian workers and small farmers who would not consent to be part of an ethnically "pure" Greater Serbian state.

The imperialist attack would of course be utterly reactionary and we would oppose it. Serb resistance to it, ie shooting down the warplanes, would be justified. But we would remain defencists vis a vis the Bosnian forces and defeatist vis a vis the Serb ones until and unless the imperialist attack turned into an all out war on the Serbian workers state.

However this latter outcome is in our view the least likely one. In reality the UN the EC and the US are trying their best to get a division of Bosnia highly favourable to the pogrom mongers, Mladic and Karadjic. Our position in the present conditions is to fight to remove the arms embargo and to give critical military support to the Bosnians in their self-defence against the genocide that is organised by the Serbian and Croat restorationist regimes. This means that we are in favour of the Bosnians arming themselves from whatever source they can get arms. Of course, they should give no undertakings to outside powers which injure the democratic or class interests of the Bosnian workers and small farmers and indeed those of any of the nationalities of former Yugoslavia.

#### Infantile Stalinophilia

The LCC(I) unfortunately has a totally false strategic analysis of the situation in former Yugoslavia. Starting out from the view that Serbia is probably the last work-

ers' state in Europe they reduce everything to its defence against imperialism which is seen as the puppet master behind the events.

Why is Serbia a workers state for the LCC(I)? Not because it has (even in a disintegrating condition) planned property relations. Evidently only the "impressionist leaders of the LRCI" believe that "economic criteria (amount of privatisation of state property) are decisive".

The LRCI leaders keep good company on this question; none other than Leon Trotsky! Leaving aside the shady polemicist's attempt to rig the terms by reducing planned and statified property and the monopoly of foreign trade (proletarian property forms) to "privatisation" (in itself in no way decisive as we recognised in 1990) we can see the anti-Marxist method of the LCC(I) at work.

We are told that a state is defined by the class character of its state machinery, parliamentary system, capitalist army and bourgeois governments. The comrades are completely wrong. As Trotsky pointed out the form of the state machinery, which he called a totalitarian dictatorship, bureaucratic absolutism, etc, is politically indistinguishable from a bourgeois, and even in the conditions of the late 1930s a fascist one. That is it had nothing in common with the political structure of a workers' state. Thus this apparatus could never be the determining factor as to the class character of the state. Without the proletarian property relations, that is, with capitalist ones, we—alongside Trotsky should have to call such a state bourgeois.

Moreover, outside of Eastern Germany the parliaments, the armies and the judiciary that now serve the restorationist governments, which are themselves composed (except in Poland) largely of former top Stalinist apparatchiks are largely unchanged from those that ran the Stalinist dictatorship. Do the comrades think there were no parliaments in Eastern Europe? This is as true in Tudjman's Croatia as it is in Milosevic's Serbia.

Even according to imperialist sources in rump Yugoslavia there have been more concessions to capitalism than in Croatia (see Misha Glenny and other sources). Is it because the ruling parties? In Croatia the head of state is a former Stalinist military figure with a pro-imperialist and capitalist "democratic" demagoguery. In Yugoslavia the president was until very recently a US-Serb multi-millionaire.

Milosevic is a former Stalinist who is promoting the worst government sponsored campaign of national chauvinism in Europe. He is the architect of a Greater Serbia and he actively promotes the oppression of the Albanians and other minorities. It is true that in the Croatian camp there are open Ustashe fascists. But, in the Serb camp there are also open Chetnik-fascists. Indeed, the European country with the largest fascistic organisations is . . . Serbia.

The Serbian Radical Party obtained about one third of the votes in the last elections. It was an initially a creation of the Serbian secret police and was in a de facto government coalition with Milosevic. The programme of this fascistic party is to smash the minorities and create a Greater Serbian Kingdom. They have fascist militias and they terrorise national minorities and Serbian leftists, oppositionists and striking workers.

Even more absurdly the RTL have hit upon the idea of

buttressing their arguments on the class character of Serbia with a truly original insight. The RTL believes that "if the bureaucracy in Belgrade reaches an agreement with imperialism on the borders of a new Serbian capitalist state, the workers' state in Serbia cannot prevail without an immediate political revolution." (IT, *ibid*, pg. 11).

Why this bizarre condition for the existence of a workers state? Presumably, because the RTL (unlike VO) have to recognise that the Milosevic regime has no principled political objections to restoring capitalism; hence it is only Milosevic's actions (genocidal war) that prevents him from realising his subjective desires.

Thus for the RTL the reason why Serbia is the only remaining workers' state in Europe is because it is at war. But if the war finishes and Serbia make a deal with the UN over national frontiers then Serbia will cease to be a workers' state. Serbia at peace will become a capitalist state. So, this reactionary nationalist and genocidal war has the progressive aim for the RTL of maintaining Serbia as the only workers' state in Europe. Maybe the historic gains of the Serbian workers can be preserved if only Milosevic starts another war over Macedonia or Kosovo!

The LCC(I) can throw the Marxist analysis of the class character of a state onto the rubbish heap if it wishes but their political, superstructural and diplomatic criteria will not help them distinguish between those restorationists they want to support and those they do not. It is as useless a guide to action as is going by whom the imperialist media demonise and whom they praise.

#### Restoring capitalism?

For the LCC(I) imperialism's key objective is to restore capitalism in Serbia, following on from a successful restoration in Croatia and Slovenia. For this aim it is exerting pressure by means of the war and the blockade.

"The massacre in the Balkans is the logical product of a successful capitalist restoration in Croatia and Slovenia—a process that is being carried out in Bosnia by the Muslim government . . .".

The Stalinists, subjectively, would like to sell out and restore capitalism but cannot do so as long as the war continues. Thus the Bosnian war is propping up the last worker's state in Europe.

For the LCC(I) the "the massacre in the Balkans" is simply the product of imperialism's restoration drive. They thus ignore or totally downplay the fact that the nationalist nightmare is in the immediate sense the product of the terminal crisis of the Stalinist bureaucracy, of its fragmentation along ethnic/nationalist lines and its various components desperate attempts to divert the masses' wrath onto "foreign" enemies. In the face of a crisis of economy in the latter half of the 1980s the Yugoslav bureaucracy faced a strong challenge from its working class. Faced with this the nomenklatura, first of all in Serbia, embarked upon a policy of reactionary nationalist demagoguery against its neighbours in order to divide the working class and to enable it to hold onto political power. If the war is simply the "logical" product of capitalist restoration then why have we not seen this process repeated in all the East European states? The truth is that it flows quite as much from the failure of a precarious bonapartist balancing act within the Yugo-

slav federation that fell apart step by step after Tito's death as from the imperialist restoration policy. US imperialism as well as the British and the French tried for a whole period to keep Yugoslavia together and achieve restoration in it as a totality.

The initial impetus for the war as well as the continuing impulse for its continuation is the internal crisis of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Milosevic turned to ferocious Greater Serbian chauvinism as early as 1988. The bureaucracy's fear of the Serbian workers has driven them to reactionary nationalist war in Croatia and then again in Bosnia.

It may drive them to provoking another bloodbath in Kosovo. Imperialism is not directly the driving force in these events. Its role was first to deny the right of the Slovenes, Croats and Macedonians to secede just as they now deny such a right to the Kosovo Albanians. Thus they sanctioned and colluded in the Yugoslav army and governments coercive actions for a whole period. Then faced with the fact of secession and under German pressure they switched track and promoted the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Once started of course imperialism continually meddled in the process to try to contain and stabilise those parts of former Yugoslavia which can in their view be the most easily integrated into the US/EC sphere of influence.

The overthrow of the planned economy in Serbia, though desirable for the USA, the ousting of Milosevic though devoutly to be wished by all the imperialists, are not the immediate objectives of the west. Their prime objective is to contain the disruptive effects of Serbian expansionism on the whole Balkans. Their aim is to preserve or restore an order that they believe will aid the on-going restoration process. That is why they are so loath to intervene.

Secondly, it is not true that Serbia figures as any sort of priority in imperialism's hit list for restoration. It has too many other restorationist regimes holding out the begging bowl as it is. Nor is Serbia such a shining example to the poor and exploited of Europe and beyond that it has to be snuffed out. Imperialism—despite the fact that clearly it would prefer a US millionaire like Panic to be in control—is not going to war to restore capitalism.

A serious study of the results of the last 12 months blockade against Serbia indicates that in many ways the imperialist preferred method of capitalist restoration in Serbia has been set back by it. Throughout the whole of Eastern Europe imperialism has favoured, wherever possible, restorationist forces outside of the nomenklatura, or those that have broken politically with it even if they originate from within it—like Yeltsin.

In Serbia there was—due to many years of pro-market reforms—a large middle class which could act as a transmission belt for pro-capitalist ideas and an entrepreneurial class for the first stage of restoration. The blockade of the last year has weakened if not crushed this class and strengthened in the short term the bureaucracy around Milosevic. The latter will move towards the restoration of capitalism in due course having expanded, through war, the arena of exploitation for a future Serbian ruling class.

If EC and US imperialism can stop obstructing one another for five minutes, if Milosevic gives them firm

guarantees that he has no further territorial ambitions—indeed is willing to act as a policeman of the new deal—then imperialism will withdraw its embargo and blockade.

### Whose side are you on?

The LCC(I) refuses to defend the Bosnians against the systematic and strategic policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide. But the different groups within the LCC(I) have different positions. The RTL recognize this when they say; "The RTL also thinks that the restorationist process in Serbia is further advanced than what the rest of the LCC(I) is willing to admit." (IT, *ibid*, p11).

Indeed, Voce Operaia (VO) has illusions in the Serbian regime and they are more consistent than the RTL. For VO the Bosnian Muslims and their allies should support the Serbian army. The RTL prefers to accumulate contradictory positions, however.

On the one hand, they say in the "open letter": "we [the LCC(I)] defend Serbia against the imperialist/Croat/Muslim assault".

With this position they should side with the Serbians, defend the areas from which they have expelled hundred of thousands of Bosnian toilers and support them in the battle for Sarajevo. There are no other fronts, no other battles and no other objectives in which they can "defend Serbia against the Croat-Muslim assault".

Utterly inconsistent, the RTL also say "The workers and the peasants must form temporary military united fronts with the Muslims to defend their villages against mass killings, rapes and forced transfers" (IT, *ibid*, p7).

Are we talking about the same war? The RTL support at one and the same time the two opposing sides in the Bosnian war. They give overall support to the Serbs against the Muslims inside Bosnia but at the same time they call for a military united front with the Muslims to defend them against the Serbs!

Incidentally, how can the comrades from the LCC(I) accuse us of being pro-imperialists and betrayers of the working class when we, like the RTL, call for a military bloc with the "Muslims" (despite their reactionary leadership) against Serbian ethnic cleansing?

Given their position the RTL are in the same military camp with Izetbegovic (despite opposition to his pro-imperialist regime) defending Sarajevo and all the Bosnian "Muslim" areas. If that is the case they should support the Bosnian "Muslims" in trying to break the Serbian blockade and in trying to obtain food, fuel, medicine and weapons to survive and protect themselves against the Serbian genocidal offensive. So, how can the RTL criticise the LRCI for defending that position?

The RTL recognize that: "In the daily battles in Bosnia, the pro-bourgeois Serbs compete with the Ustashi as to who will finish carving out a nationalist capitalist state at the expense of other nationalities." (*ibid*, p6).

If that is the case, why should we side with the Serbian pro-capitalists in the Bosnian war? If the Croatian and Serbian regimes share the same reactionary aim ("carving out a capitalist state at the expense of other nationalities") why should we side with the Serbs against the Croats? If we continue with the logic of the RTL we should say we need to side with all the oppressed nationalities and peoples against the threat that the

Serbian and Croatian regimes pose. If we need to smash these reactionary and genocidal regimes we should start by defending the oppressed victims. For any revolutionary in Yugoslavia it is indispensable to defend the Muslims, (including their Serbian, Croatian and Jewish allies) and Albanians against great Serbian and Croatian chauvinism just as we need to defend the Serbs in Croatia against ethnic cleansing.

#### **Anti-imperialist struggles**

The LCC(I) accuse us of helping imperialism defeat a state that is fighting against it. As we show this is not the case. In reality, it is the different sections of the LCC(I) that have a record of demanding the defeat of semi-colonial nations when they fight against imperialism.

In 1982 VO made a common declaration with the RWP from Sri Lanka. In that document VO favoured a defeatist position on both sides when an oppressed semi-colony fights against imperialism or one of its puppets. As Leninists we know that we always have to side with the oppressed nation against the oppressor. To be defeatist on both sides means that we think that the defeat of the semi-colony at the hands of the imperialists could have a progressive content—a truly reactionary pro-imperialist position.

In the same declaration VO state that they stood for the defeat of both sides “during the first phase of the Anglo-Argentinian dispute”, in “the Arab-Israeli wars” in “1967 and 1973” and throughout the Iran-Iraq war. The position of VO in fact helps imperialism. In the Malvinas war it was imperative to side with the Argentina from the beginning (despite our opposition to the dictatorship) and to fight along side of it to defeat the British troops.

In the Middle East we should not lump together Nasser, the Ba'athists from Syria and Iraq, the Palestinians and the Arab semi-colonies with the main imperialist fortress in the region (Israel). We stood for the victory of the Palestinians and Arabs against the USA and the Zionist state in all its wars of expansion.

Yet, incredibly, VO was defeatist with regard to the Palestinians and Arab semi-colonies, both in 1967 and 1973; reactionary victories which put the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza under terrible Israeli army oppression and strengthened imperialism throughout the region and the world.

In the Iran-Iraq war revolutionaries initially had a clear duty to defend the Iranian revolution when Iraq invaded Iran with the military and financial support of all the petro-monarchies and the imperialist powers. Thanks to this war against Khomeini the imperialist weakened the real proletarian and petit bourgeois democratic forces who had made the anti-Shah revolution and actually strengthened the mullahs' theocracy. Khomeini took advantage of this war to launch a terrible attack against the left, the unions and the oppressed nationalities.

More or less one decade later VO adopted a completely different position in the Gulf war. If in the anti-zionist wars VO was for the defeat of the Arab nationalists, in this war VO made an opportunist adaptation to Arab nationalism. The LRCI and the LCC(I) agreed that it was necessary to call for the victory of Iraq over imperi-

alism. But we said that if Iraq wanted to win it was necessary to give to the Kurds and to all the people that lived and worked in Kuwait the right to self-determination.

VO was opposed to that. Indeed when the Kurdish mass insurrection started their first response was to side with the genocidal forces of Hussein. Later, under the lash of the RKL and the LRCI's criticism, they were obliged to admit their error. Now they admit that they should not have sided with Hussein when he massacred the Kurds.

But their repentance is a squalid half measure. Their Spartacist-style Islamophobia, which is doubtless a factor in VO's Bosnian position too, meant that when Hussein massacred the Shi'ite population of southern Iraq they supported him.

Thus for VO whenever a bloody fake “leftist” dictatorship comes into conflict with imperialism and at the same time and massacres oppressed peoples within its borders they believe that this is all part of the fight against imperialism. The LRCI has a Trotskyist approach. We will side with these dictatorships when they are attacked by imperialist armies, but at the same time this does not stop us from supporting uprisings by oppressed peoples or by the working class.

#### **LCC(I): a rotten bloc with no future**

The problem with the LCC(I) is that they do not have any clear principles in relation to confrontations with imperialism. The different component organisations have adopted diametrically opposite positions and all of them repeatedly vacillate between a sectarian and opportunist stance. It is no wonder that the LCC(I) cannot draw up any sort of programmatic document to link their principles to key tactics and demands. They would fall apart the moment they attempted to do it.

The RTL and the RKL agree with the use of the anti-imperialist united front (AIUF) tactic while VO rejects it. The RTL and the RKL supported Argentina and the Arab semi-colonies in their conflicts with imperialism and Zionism. They also supported the Kurdish and southern Shi'ite uprisings at the end of the Gulf war. In all of these battles they would have been on different sides of the barricades to their VO comrades. Maybe that should read “reactionaries”, “centrists”, “mensheviks” if they applied the same polemical standards they use in their differences with the LRCI?

#### **More accusations**

In the “Open Letter” the RTL castigates the LRCI's 23 March 1993 resolution “Down with the Yeltsin coup!”. The RTL say that “We are informed that the Russian parliament can defend the workers' state and stop capitalist restoration by Yeltsin.”

We have “informed” the LCC(I) of no such thing. What we did say was that the clash between the forces grouped around Yeltsin's government and those opposed to him in and around the Congress was a clash between those who were trying and those who wanted to prevent Yeltsin from turning himself into a real bonapartist dictator. Our position was entirely consistent with the position we took against the abortive Yanayev coup of August 1991

that the RTL set up such a hullabaloo about. We seek, now as then, to defend the democratic liberties of the workers, the trade unions and political parties.

Why? So that the workers can create class organisations, test and reject false leaders, and create a revolutionary leadership that can, if there is time, save the remnants of the planned property relations and overthrow Yeltsin. To defend the political space for this we will combine our forces in action with any forces that have the support of the working class or sections of it, that defend the freedom to organise, assemble, form parties and unions. At the same time we give no political support whatsoever to those whom we are fighting alongside.

As the RTL itself in September 1991 correctly realised, for the three or four days when Yanayev's coup stood a chance of success, it was the greater danger:

"The Stalinist bureaucracy was the main danger only for three days. During those three days it was necessary to focus working class resistance against the coup" (International Trotskyist Fall-Winter 1991 p 3)

This in our view entirely justified participating in actions aimed at obstruction of the coup makers troop mobilisations, up to and including a general strike. So far we were in agreement with the then RTT comrades. But the difference with them that emerged was that we clearly understood that because the masses resisting Yanayev had enormous illusions in Yeltsin it would in practice be necessary to coordinate these actions with the Yeltsin and the "democratic" restorationist leaders;

"In three days of the coup attempt it was essential for all proletarian forces to have blocked with all those forces actively resisting the coup. . . . But in these coup days there were strict limits to the bloc with the "democratic restorationists" and all such blocs had to be carried out within the context of no political support to Yeltsin at all . . . . The greatest danger now that the coup has collapsed is Yeltsin" (LRCI International Secretariat Statement 22 August 1992) Trotskyist International no7 p7)

Thus we never supported for one minute—indeed we called for a struggle against—Yeltsin's subsequent seizure of power and his restorationist measures. Thus only someone who not only cannot grasp the dialectic but also lacks the rudiments of ordinary logic could find any inconsistency of this with our position of opposing Yeltsin's 1993 "coup".

We knew then and we know now the role of democratic freedoms for the workers and we defend them against Stalinists and capitalist restorationists alike. The hopeless sectarian muddleheads of the LCC(I) start not from the objective needs of the workers in the class struggle but from a fear of finding themselves in the company of reactionaries and imagining this will politically compromise them.

Today the RTL have retrospectively changed their estimation of August 1991 and say that this smashing of the Yanayev coup led directly to a new capitalist state. Yeltsin was thus always the greater evil. If the RTL could only manage to advocate a tactic consistent with their new analysis they would pluck up the courage and adopt the position of the organisation from which they originated (the Bolshevik Tendency) and retrospectively side with Yanayev's coup against Yeltsin. But their ability to unite operative tactics to analysis is no better when

they think Yeltsin is the main danger than when they thought Yanayev was. They are not active revolutionaries but sterile sectarian commentators.

### Defenders of the Trotskyist Manifesto

When the RTL started its attack on the LRCI leadership they deceitfully donned the mask the best defenders of the "TM" against the centrist revision of it. But, after more than one year of this fruitless campaign the RTL has as the result of its unprincipled combination with the VO and the RKL completely dropped the defense of the TM but with no accounting for their former positions whatsoever.

In their "Open Letter" and in the long "Declaration of Affiliation with the LCC(I)" the RTL don't so much as mention the TM. Do they still consider it "their programme", that is, a revolutionary programme? If so they should have demanded that previous to their affiliation the LCC(I) should discuss and adopt it. If not they should have criticised their own adherence to a "centrist" document. Instead we have a shifty silence.

In reality, the one that is abandoning the revolutionary positions of the TM is the RTL. They agreed up to one year ago with the TM and the LRCI about the origins of the Degenerated Workers States. First, they adapted to the IC-tradition when they characterised EE, China, Indo-China and Cuba as deformed and not degenerated workers' states. In their "declaration" they say:

"The transformation of the capitalists states in eastern Europe and China into deformed workers states was a similar process to the restoration of capitalism today—but in reverse. Between 1947 and 1948 the Stalinists in Eastern Europe destroyed the political coalition and dual power (i.e sharing power) with the bourgeoisie and took total control of the state. The overturn of the capitalists states and the establishment of the incipient bureaucratized workers states was thus concluded when the state apparatus was committed to defending a planned economy. As is the case today, state power in the hands of those who are committed to overturning property relations proved to be decisive. The newly established workers' states, govern however for the first few years over private property. The expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of planned economy took place later."

This is a completely opposite position to the one which they once agreed with the LRCI on. When they had fraternal relations with the LRCI and when they accepted the TM they held that the decisive moment in the creation of the DWS was the creation of a planned economy. Not before. They have now picked up the Vern/Ryan position.

It is true that the RTL never agreed with the LRCI's methodology vis a vis the decisive moment of restoration. They had their own theory. They argued that a degenerated workers' state would become a capitalist state only when it had adopted a hard currency. They have unceremoniously dropped this position.

Now they say that if in the degenerated workers' state a pro-capitalist regime comes to power then it becomes capitalist despite the the old social relations of production continuing to exist for a whole period. If that is the case then the Stalinist ruled states were always capitalist

because they were always ruled by "agents of the world bourgeoisie" (Trotsky).

With the appropriate modesty for the authors of such a shallow and eclectic "theory" of the restoration process the RTL presses on to try to deal with the question of the property relations:

"Most importantly, today the LCC(I) is the only international marxist current that understands the crucial role that the state plays in the restorationist process. Which classes the state serves (even if they only exist in embryonic form) is the most important criterion for the definition of the state (workers' state versus capitalist state). For the LCC(I) the most important factor for the success of the restoration is the ability of a restorationist/bourgeois state to dismantle the fundamental mechanism of the plan and the state monopoly of foreign trade—not the degree of privatisation which has taken place. The new ruling class in the new capitalist state must be extremely weak (or barely in existence for a long time) since the new incipient capitalist states can only survive if they are dominated by imperialism."

What indeed for the RTL are the "fundamental mechanisms" of the plan that we should take as decisive? Are they so self-evident that it needs no explanation or exploration? The LRCI has in fact produced, not a few paragraphs like the RTL, but a whole series of methodological and analytical articles on the restoration process in the former USSR and other East European states, the former DDR, China.

Amidst all the Open Letter's hysterical abuse there is not a single attempt to come to terms with and criticise this analysis. Indeed, the snide remarks about "red professors" show a deep contempt for Marxist theory as well as doubtlessly indicating a painful inferiority complex.

#### **An opportunist turn**

When the LRCI established contact with the RTL (then RTT) this was a group of comrades whose principle leader had come from Healyism, through Morenoism and was in the process of fusing with the BT. After a long

debate we persuaded the comrades, so we thought, to break with the barren Spartacist method of the IBT.

We sent a comrade to work with them to help build the group and recruit comrades. We encouraged them to launch their first journal and gave them hope and counsel against demoralisation. But the comrades did not break completely with their sectarian tradition. Now they have turned back decisively to it.

In one year the comrades not only abandoned our common analysis on the origins of the degenerated workers' states and nature of the political upsurges in EE but also, released from the pressure of the LRCI, they have rapidly adopted a sectarian stance towards social democracy.

When they established fraternal relations with the LRCI the RTL adopted the position that the whole Fourth International collapsed into centrism in 1948-51 and they then rejected the myth of anti-Pabloism. Now they have united with a current, VO, that defends the IC heritage.

In only two years the RTL have dramatically changed a series of their positions. Now they have become apologists for several positions of VO. Combining the zeal of new converts with the bitterness of jilted lovers the RTL has vented all its spleen on the LRCI. But setting aside all the venomous expressions which the comrades obviously think is the good red meat of rrrrevolutionary polemic the honest reader will be left with the impression of utter inconsistency, a mixture of contradictions and bizarre political novelties.

The RTL came under the gravitational pull of the LRCI. Thus they attained a measure of political stability. But they never completely overcame their Stalinophilia. This is a trait that is all too common on the US left, (the Spartacists, the IBT, the Castroite SWP), probably because of the political weakness of the US proletariat and the world counter-revolutionary strength of their own bourgeoisie. This drove the RTL to place far too much and reliance on world Stalinism. Its implosion had more than enough force to drive the RTL out of our orbit. Now they are gyrating wildly among the asteroids of the LCC(I) Prepare for future explosions, or implosions!



# ***Bolivia; privatisation, elections and the workers***

*Document passed by the Fourth Conference of Poder Obrero (Bolivia)  
August 1993*

Since the 1985 CPSU Congress when Gorbachev announced perestroika's arrival, we have seen the collapse of the "socialist states" of Eastern Europe. After Lenin's death in 1923, the bureaucracy headed by Stalin began to strangle the socialist revolution opened up in 1917. Stalin sealed the national frontiers to prevent the spread of socialist revolution ("socialism in one country") and denied the possibility of making revolutions in backward countries without industrialisation and peaceful coexistence with the bourgeoisie. The government of workers' councils (soviets) was replaced by the dictatorship of bureaucratic terror allied with imperialism against world revolution. Thus, immediately after the Second World War Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin divided up the world in the name of "peaceful coexistence". The same bureaucracy that obstructed the construction of socialism has collapsed and delivered itself into the arms of capitalism. In the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe openly bourgeois governments are already in place (e.g. Poland and Russia) which are fostering nationalism at the same time as restoring capitalism, bringing with it unemployment, colossal price rises and privatisation. One dramatic example is Yeltsin who is trying to push Russia towards capitalism along a fast-track and taking total power as president to do it. Another tragic example is the inter-ethnic war in ex-Yugoslavia: the bloody confrontation between Bosnians, Croats and Muslims to keep existing territory or occupy new ground. The collapse of Stalinism has provoked the growth of reactionary forces—racism, fascism, inter-ethnic struggles. This does not lead us to fight for the re-establishment of Stalinist regimes. While we clearly defend unconditionally the workers' states from imperialist aggression and other reactionary forces, at the same time we call for political revolution and for workers to take power into their own hands through workers' councils, led by a revolutionary party.

## ***Breathing space for imperialism.***

Workers all over the world, but mainly in the semi-colonies, had many illusions in the degenerate workers' states. The disintegration of the USSR, the transition of other countries of Eastern Europe to the market economy, at the same time as the defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the defeat of the guerrillas in El Salvador, has had a negative influence on the consciousness of the workers' movement worldwide, as well as giving imperialism renewed political strength. This is why imperialism smashed Iraq and later invaded Somalia. The aim is to install themselves with all their military

power in these regions and increase the oppression of the semi-colonies. Now, it is doing everything possible to destroy the degenerate workers' states that still exist and impose bourgeois regimes: Cuba, Vietnam, China and North Korea. One example is the Torricelli Law, the economic blockade of Cuba. Our struggle must include the defence of these degenerate workers' states against imperialist attack and against their repressive governments and forces, we fight for political revolution in these states. We fight for workers councils to take power and decide everything. Castro announced the opening of Cuba towards a market economy which means a further defeat for the Stalinist bureaucracy. This rupture in Stalinist policy gives imperialism more force and breathing space in the midst of its own crisis. It will not wait for a second before attacking the workers' movement of these countries and semi-colonies. However, imperialism is not able to impose its new world order, it is deepening the contradictions between the imperialist countries and the workers' movement of the world is resisting in some regions more than others.

## ***How imperialism aims to save itself***

The major industrial capitalist countries (USA, Japan, EC) have imposed neo-liberal policies since the end of the 1970s in order to reverse their excessive budget and balance of payments deficits (USA is losing more than \$150 million a year in the world market). First Thatcher then Reagan started implementing neoliberal policies in their respective countries, public spending was reduced and major state companies were privatised (e.g. transport in England). They are fiercely attacking workers' gains in their own countries.

The USA is facing grave problems due to its economic decline when compared with Europe and Japan. The North American fiscal deficit has reached more than \$400,000 million and for this an adjustment programme is needed to correct the deficit. The implementation of neoliberal policies, in an attempt to solve the crisis, has stagnated the economy, inflation has risen from 2.9% in 1992 to 4.3% today. The economies of backward countries, that are subject to imperialism, are increasingly more unstable, as the USA offloads all its problems on to them.

In this context the capitalist "new world order" has not been established because of the inter-imperialist contradictions (USA v. EC and Japan) and because there are still degenerated workers' states (China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea). Every day the economic power of the USA is being relegated unlike their military power. Clearly it is still the guard-dog of the capitalist

world. The European Community and Japan are taking shape as the next hegemonic imperialist powers. So as not to be left behind Bush has launched the *The Initiative for the Americas*, which is, in Clinton's words, the American Common Market. It will aim to build a single market. This is part of neo-liberal policy: the freeing up of the supply and demand in the semi-colonies (such as Bolivia) in order to invade our markets with their own products. It is the law of the market. Backward countries have become bit by bit merely the source of raw materials and cheap labour. New policies are imposed, changing the judicial and economic structures of these countries, putting "their states" at their disposal. According to Bush, this plan includes the creation of a multinational armed force under imperialist hegemony that would allow the imposition of neo-liberalism and the militarisation of Latin America. Today they have not changed their intention in spite of the "pacifism" of Clinton.

#### **Obstacles to the imposition of neo-liberalism**

The smooth application of neo-liberal policies is not viable in backward capitalist countries because the social cost is too high. Venezuela, a much richer country than Bolivia, has already retreated from its application. In the majority of backward capitalist countries where they are trying to take neo-liberalism forward its application has provoked all kinds of responses: state coups in Haiti, Venezuela, and Guatemala; mass mobilisations; a referendum in Uruguay (in which the proposed privatisation was repudiated); brutal repression by the national bourgeoisie. It is because of having to impose this policy that it is necessary to defeat the organisations of the workers and the people and it is there that they met their first stumbling block. There are still regions where the struggles of the movement of workers and the exploited continue. While private property continues to exist, and above all poverty and hunger, the class struggle asserts itself daily, thus reaffirming the need and possibility of socialism.

Governments swore that neoliberal policies would reduce the external debt. It grew by more than \$443,000 million in 1993, at the same time that \$200,000 million left Latin America. The incipient national bourgeoisies were hardly able to recoup 20% of the amount that left these countries. This means that capital is leaving the countries of the south for the imperialist countries.

#### **The renewed strength of the workers' movement in Latin America**

The workers' movement in general in Latin America fought back. In the majority of countries the bourgeoisie tried to smash it. The main obstacle for the implementation of neoliberal policies is the reaction and resistance that it provoked in the popular and workers' movements. Being on the sharp end of unemployment, poverty and low wages, the exploited and oppressed masses have risen up against those who implemented the model. Thanks to the enormous mobilisation of the masses in Brazil first Collor was sacked and now Perez in Venezuela. However, there is not enough force nor a revolutionary leadership to guide these events along the path of revolution. The reaction of the popular and workers' movements is wasted because of the absence of a political leadership. This is what is happening in

general in Latin America. Venezuela, Peru, Uruguay and Bolivia are the clearest examples of resistance to the implementation of the neoliberal model. For this reason they are seeking to eliminate the vanguard of the workers' movement. Faced with these obstacles, together with corruption, coups are their only solution, e.g. Venezuela and Guatemala and Peru where the coup has been consolidated. In these countries, in order to impose neoliberal policies, especially in Peru, the force of the military was needed. In Chile, neoliberal measures were imposed through the bloody regime of Pinochet. Today, as in other countries, poverty and unemployment has increased in Chile.

#### **The years of neo-liberalism.**

After more than a decade of neoliberal policies they have not been the success that the World Bank, the IDB and the IMF wanted. Imperialism failed to recover from the crisis, although the partial implementation of neoliberal policies in Latin America is bearing certain fruits for imperialism. The president of the IDB, Enrique Iglesias, showed his discontent when he said "the increase in the number of poor in Latin America—183 million in 1989—would lead to the collapse of neo-liberalism". Also ECLA announced in their analysis that "only 5% of the population increased their income while 75% had theirs reduced". In general, poverty has increased in Latin America by 37 to 53% in the 80's. Throughout this period a tiny group of the richest bourgeoisie (particularly in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela) has exported investment out of Latin America to the tune of \$7,461 million between 1988 and 1990. While the governing classes make themselves rich through business (Collor in Brazil and Perez in Venezuela) they are fought by the legalist sectors of the bourgeoisie backed by the popular and workers' movements.

Another problem they are facing in Latin America is rising inflation. Last year Brazil had inflation of more than 40%. In Colombia—the miracle economy of the 1980's—had an inflation rate of 1.9% in March this year. This is an alarming annual rate of 30%. This economic scenario frightens world imperialism's economic agencies and shatters their hopes in the neoliberal miracle. The demands to privatise face these obstacles in the countries of the southern hemisphere.

We can conclude that Latin America is seeing the resurgence of the forces of the workers' movement compared to the end of the 1980's and that the economy is not showing the growth so anxiously hoped for by the neo-liberals. Furthermore, the external debt is growing, unemployment has risen alarmingly, poverty is a reality in all the cities and villages of Latin America, inflation is rising dangerously and imperialism is unable to achieve its' objectives.

#### **The Crisis of Statism in Bolivia**

In the 1952 revolution the masses imposed bourgeois democratic gains on the MNR government such as the nationalisation of the mines, agrarian reform, free education, universal vote etc. As a result of the revolution the bourgeoisie, supported by imperialism, found itself obliged to adopt the statist economic model to stop the revolutionary advance of the masses and the wrath of imperialism. It was a way to stop the socialist revolu-

tions of the world. This statist method was strengthened by the EDER plan, imposed by Siles Zuazo in 1956 by bloodletting and fire.

Until the 1970's this was the model. It was impossible to take the gains away from the masses that had cost them so much in 1952. Unemployment was low and the state still regulated the economy. Yet despite the economic boom of the 1970's the bourgeoisie was incapable of renewing plant and equipment. With these disadvantages the Bolivian economy entered into crisis in 1978. The crisis was accompanied by the revolutionary upsurge of the masses and a generalised level of discontent at the corruption in business of the Banzer government. These features caused a shift in the policy of imperialism towards support for democratic processes in Latin America. The Banzer dictatorship crumbled and consequently the statist model entered into full crisis opening up a revolutionary period after the 1980-82 García Meza-ist dictatorship.

During the following UDP government there was an upsurge in the masses that was not transformed into a socialist revolution because of the lack of a revolutionary leadership. After this there was demoralisation which was expressed in the 1985 elections and the crises of the left parties. The UDP government was dogged by hyperinflation and a haemorrhaging of foreign exchange; the statist model had entered its death agony. After the revolutionary period of 1982-86 that ended with the "March for Life" the bourgeoisie stabilised the government but still faced the same obstacle as in the 1920's—the organised popular and workers' movements.

#### **The resistance of the popular and workers' movements**

After only a month of the new MNR-ADN government ministers launched the New Economic Policy (Decree DS21060). The response was a general strike that lasted more than a month, together with a massive hunger strike in September 1985. The government was forced to impose a state of siege and embarked upon a period of repression. The bourgeoisie placed its hopes in the neo-liberal recipes of the IMF and supported all the measures of force against the popular and workers' movements. In 1986 they relaunched their NEP offensive, in response to a general wave of discontent originating in Oruro and Potosi. The mining proletariat focussed this anger in the "March for Life". Once again the response was a state of siege and massive sackings of workers, particularly in the mines (more than 23,000) and the factories under the name of "relocation".

The government's justification for these measures was, firstly, to stop the crisis brought about by the UDP and to deal with the collapse in the price of tin. In truth there was a worldwide collapse of commodity prices which plunged the statist model of development into a crisis, deprived of traditional revenues. Traditionally, our economy was based on the export of minerals, particularly tin. In the 1950's the country depended for 96% of its export earnings on the sale of tin by the state mining company (COMIBOL). In 1984 gas and mineral exports were still 95% of the total. In 1992 exports were the following: minerals, 49.5%, non-traditional products, 26.2%, hydrocarbons, 16.5% and reexports, 7.8%.

We cannot ignore that today's economy is also based on the economy of coca-cocaine. Taking into account that

the foreign exchange does not circulate in the productive sector but in the goods and services sector (chalets, luxury cars etc.) it is yet to be proved that this money supports industry.

#### **The bourgeoisie sells out**

In this context the bourgeoisie managed to impose the first part of their neoliberal plan—the drastic reduction of hyperinflation at a very high social cost: alarmingly high unemployment, growth of the informal sector in the economy to embrace more than half of the economically active population (not covered by social security), wage cuts, cuts in all public expenditure and especially the budget for education and health, the growth of poverty. The economy of the country went into recession which the bourgeoisie labelled "economic stabilisation". The productive sector of the country is still stagnant and agriculture has not recovered from the crisis of the 1980's due to drought and the lack of machinery.

Another important development is the reform of the tax system. Thanks to this reform they have managed to defraud the people on a massive scale. Even worse is the increase in VAT from 10% to 13%. However, the governments that tried to impose neo-liberalism (MNR-ADN and MIR-ADN) have encountered resistance and struggle against these tax hikes, double taxation, VAT, from large layers of the people such as the trade unions. The governments have been forced to be more flexible, for example, with land taxes in the countryside.

The result of eight years of neo-liberalism is that our country is among the five poorest in Latin America and the 44th poorest in the world, with a rate of infant mortality of 110 deaths for every 1000 births and with a per capita income of \$650 (Switzerland has \$32,689 and Brazil more than \$7000).

These attacks were all savage blows to the popular and workers' movements. The vanguard of the proletariat, the miners, are reduced in numbers. The same goes for the factory workers which unconditionally supported all the miners' struggles of the past 60 years.

#### **Privatisation. The vital step for the consolidation of neoliberalism**

In order to "reactivate" the country's economy the bourgeoisie must follow up with the second part of their neoliberal plan: privatisation of the state owned companies, with the aim of attracting new capital to try and jump start the productive sector. However, there are serious obstacles in the path. The bourgeoisie still has not defeated the popular and workers' movements. Bolivia is still considered to be a politically unstable country. This means that capitalists are frightened to invest in the country not just for economic reasons.

Imperialism is forcing the bourgeoisie to use the law against those who oppose their plans. New legislation is being passed by parliament to change the legal framework of the country, overhauling the 1967 Constitution which embodies the old bourgeois nationalisation ideals. The clearest example of this is the restructuring of the present administration of COMIBOL through the introduction of independent management of companies. The first step is the transformation of Huanuni, Sante Fe, Viloco into "co-operatives". These steps prepare the terrain ahead for the most important goal: the privatisation of COMIBOL.

The objectives of imperialism, via the government are:

1. Depoliticise the proletariat, above all the miners (because it is still the vanguard and its responses are politically advanced). If possible, defeat it through sackings, non-recognition of trade unions, cuts in wages and social security, ending of the right to strike. This means using cheap labour that is politically unorganised.

2. Finish the stage of reactivation, by means of the injection of foreign capital protected by the laws against nationalisation. For this the government needs new laws. This they will achieve gradually through the bourgeois parliament (electoral reform and privatisation). The extraction of raw materials will be done without any economic risk to imperialism. The case of the Ito and Catavi quarries is a clear example of the enormous riches that have been plundered by capitalist companies. In Bolivia the investment of \$13 million in COMSUR gave in one year \$15 million. In 4 years more than \$40 million.

3. Privatisate the main state companies, YPFB, COMIBOL, LAB (airline), ENDE (electricity), ENFE (rail), ENTEL (phones) y AASANA (customs).

Until now privatisation has not been imposed because of the resistance of the workers' movement. Capitalists are frightened to invest in Bolivia. It is also for this reason that the contract signed for the exploitation of the vast wealth of the Bolivar Mine is in the hands of the pro-imperialist Sanchez Lozada and his company COMSUR. Of the 23 companies that have signed joint-ventures with COMIBOL only 2 went on to function. However, these are also susceptible to disruption because of legal action taken by the miners' union (FSTMB).

#### **The ebb of the workers' movement comes to an end**

By January last year the end of the ebb of the workers' movement was evident: 500 miners in La Paz forced the government to sign an agreement after the government used repression and their old ally the trade union bureaucracy. The agreement accepted the privatisation of state companies.

In March this year our country was put to the test by a wave of strikes and mobilisations of the masses that forced the government to militarise the country so as not to declare a state of siege. This mobilisation is characterised by the radical response of the urban and rural teachers and miners, which once again came to play the role of the vanguard of the Bolivian proletariat. The hunger strikes which broke out at the same time had negative effects because, as a result of the grave state of health of many hunger strikers—they were taking only water—it was not possible to plan a long-term struggle. The conflict began when the COB put demands on the government, insisting on a wage rise based on a minimum family expenditure of Bs.1462 (about \$300). In the struggle that followed the betrayal by the leaders of the CSUTCB (peasants' union) was a serious blow which left the peasants demobilised. The regional mobilisations were subdued except in Potosi where the people and the workers' went over the heads of the Civic Committee and was almost insurrectionary.

The mobilisations meant that the government agreed not to privatise COMIBOL, although it would continue with the contracts of Shared Risk which, for the government, is not privatisation. A miserable wage increase was won as well as some other demands that for

the leadership of COB were important advances. The truth is they got very little compared with the level of mobilisation. March of this year was marked by an advance in the class consciousness of the workers' movement. What was needed was a Revolutionary Party to lead these grassroots mobilisations. It is our task to push these struggles forward at the grassroots with alternative politics that are capable of bringing the majority of the working class and their allies together. This means going over the heads of the current leadership of these sectors, which rather than unify the struggle seeks the support of the bourgeoisie. It is necessary to build a party with class independence.

#### **What do bourgeois elections mean?**

The elections are characterised by the absence of candidates from the working class and the exploited, which reaffirms the crisis of revolutionary leadership. Candidates of the workers and the exploited sectors would make the consciousness of the class grow.

None of the popular parties have distanced themselves from neo-liberal positions. The ASD (Euro-Stalinists), MBL (bourgeois leftists), EJE (Castroites) and IU (United Left), which are supposedly with the people, are praised by private businessmen for having abandoned Marxist orthodoxy. These parties preach the virtues of a mixed economy; public companies should operate alongside private ones in order to promote economic growth.

The winners are, without doubt, the neoliberals and even though the Banzer lost the elections, the bourgeoisie has again opted for the neo-liberal model. President Goni (MNR) and his government allies will try again to privatise. All parties employed the same arguments about protecting jobs. Faced with so much pre-election demagoguery the World Bank reminded them that if YPFB (the state petrol company) was not privatised the Bolivian economy would be ruined.

After the elections everything will stay the same; poverty, wages, unemployment. The exploited do not have many illusions in bourgeois democracy. We must struggle and with our own hands seize power from the bourgeoisie through armed insurrection. If we have to use the electoral arena it is only to raise the consciousness of the class or when a revolutionary party can present its own candidates in order to make propaganda and agitate around the programme.

The results show that the majority of the exploited who do vote (in some places like Huanuni the majority abstained) have not resisted the UDP allure. The right has won again in some mining centres and in the countryside.

#### **The new government of MNR-MRTKL-UCS-MBL**

The new government is protected by the UCS (Party of beer magnate Max Fernandez) and the MBL. Their intention is to impose privatisation. They need allies within the workers' movement (the MBL have 17 members in the Executive of the COB), the peasants' movement and other sectors (MRTKL—indigenists) brings support from the peasants of La Paz, the MBL from the peasants of the South and the UCS from popular sectors such as trade unions). This will be a strong government.

However, Goni himself knows that he cannot fulfill his electoral promises. Already the economist Jeremy

Sachs (now advisor to Yeltsin), the architect of the 1985 decree 21060, "advised" against Goni's promise to reduce VAT from 13% to 10%, even advising that it be raised to 15%. It is more likely that he will increase the general rate of tax on rural land and on trade unions. He will be unable to carry out the "Plan de Todos" (Plan for All) unless he takes strong measures against the workers' movement and popular organisations; unless he controls the COB, for example. For this reason he is protected by the MBL-UCS alliance. He will be unable to fulfill the following promises:

1. Invest Bs 8,900 million in 4 years by raising new capital. This would mean the privatisation of major companies in the next two years (according to his own declarations). However, investments flee the country and the most they have achieved since 19485 is Bs 500 million.

2. 11% economic growth over four years to 1997. The potential growth rate in Bolivia is 6% according to ECLA (during the best years 1975-76 growth was 5.3%). Growth from 1989 to 1992 was 3.5% in total.

3. The creation of 500,000 jobs, 287,000 new ones. Triple the projected investment in YPFB alone is needed to create 10,000 new jobs. It must be taken into account that in 1992 5,013 workers in total were relocated.

For all these reasons a greater response from the workers' movement than over the past two years is expected. At the same time a deepening of the economic crisis, part of the general crisis of capitalism, is expected over the next four years. The recession will deepen and unemployment and poverty will increase, factors which show that this year and the next will produce fierce struggles between the workers' and popular movements, and the government.

#### **The new upsurge is near**

The conflicts of January last year and March this year were important steps towards raising consciousness. The government had managed to sow the idea in certain sectors that privatisation was the best measure and beneficial to the workers. Now the same workers are rejecting privatisation. It seemed that after March this year we had entered a dangerous stage of passivity, a slumber induced by the electoral process. However, July was a month of conflict: health workers, petrol workers and railworkers went into struggle, the peasants tried to destroy the traitorous and conciliatory leadership, the majority of the FUL (student unions) branches in the country are ignoring the CUB (Student National Confederation) where the MBL and MNR are established. The Patriotic Accord government has shattered. This shows the weakness of the bourgeoisie.

The previous analysis has shown the inability of the bourgeoisie government to resolve the most fundamental problems faced by the population. This situation has

led to a resurgence of the class which if it found a revolutionary leadership would significantly accelerate this upturn.

#### **The tasks of the workers' and popular movements**

The working class and its allies have begun the offensive: the signs are that on the day of the handing over of presidential power the the "relocated" (those made unemployed under the decree) crucified themselves in protest and the health workers began a new stoppage. However, the absence of a revolutionary leadership is a clear danger and the development of class consciousness could easily degenerate. For this reason, the struggle must be generalised and united. What remains is to prepare the battle against the new and well protected government. To succeed in their neoliberal plan the bourgeoisie needs a divided trade union movement. They have already begun with the peasants, through their agents in the MBL and the MRTKL. They need a trade unionism that is not revolutionary. For this reason our task is to strengthen the unity of the exploited through the COB, while expelling the agents of the government. We need to strengthen the coca-growing peasants movement.

Faced with joint ventures or any other form of privatisation the exploited must never present alternative plans to the bosses for reactivating the companies (self-management or cooperatives). This would be a conciliation to the bourgeoisie and class collaboration. If today we accept privatisation tomorrow we will have to accept massive redundancies. We must struggle against privatisation to the bitter end.

The struggle against joint ventures is vital for the preservation of sources of employment for workers. Against the attempts at privatisation workers' control collectives must take over the mines and demand the opening of the books. Our response to the joint ventures should be the occupation of the mines. Already changes in the consciousness of the miners can be seen in the results of the Miners' Congress. Now that the Congress decided to take over the mines and, in the last instance, agreed to armed defence we must generalise this slogan and make it a reality.

- Death to privatisation!
- Impose workers' control collectives !
- Prepare for the occupation of the mines!
- Organise defence committees of the nationalised mines!
- Build the international revolutionary leadership!
- Long live the international proletariat!
- Long live the new revolutionary communist international!
- Long live workers' power!
- Workers of the world unite!

# What road for regroupment in France?

*An exchange of letters between the ITO and a supporter of the LRCI in the JCR-Egalité*

The last two issues of Trotskyist Bulletin have traced the development of both the JCR-Egalité, a French youth organisation which split with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), and of the International Trotskyist Opposition (ITO), an international grouping of comrades inside and outside the USFI, composed of the Faction for a Trotskyist International (FTI) and of a number of other tendencies, including leading members of the JCR-Egalité.

For nearly 15 years, we have argued with the leadership of the ITO around Franco Grisolia of the Italian USFI that their conception of the struggle for international regroupment is doomed to failure. They have consistently preferred diplomatic agreements to programmatic clarity, and semi-federal non-aggression pacts to genuine international democratic centralism.

The relationship between the ITO and the JCR-Egalité has only proved our point yet again. The creation of the ITO was in large part the result of the convergence between the FTI, which had just made a resoundingly unsuccessful intervention into the 13th World Congress of the USFI, and a number of members of the French LCR, including David, a Central Committee member, and Damien, the leader of the LCR's youth section, the JCR-Egalité. These comrades were attempting to break politically from the right-wing LCR opposition around Matti.

The 150 or so members of the JCR-Egalité could have represented an important opportunity for the recreation of a healthy revolutionary organisation in France. However, this opportunity has been systematically squandered by all those involved, to the extent that today the organisation has fewer than 50 members.

Following the split with the LCR, it rapidly became apparent that the Damien leadership intended to stifle all internal opposition. There was no attempt to explain the split with the USFI, or to educate the young members in the nature of centrism. Attempts to criticise the leadership were met with bureaucratic manoeuvres and—totally false—accusations of being “agents of the LRCI”.

Perhaps encouraged by these attacks, in the midst of the growing right-wing evolution of the JCR-Egalité, some militants tried to find the road to revolutionary politics by discussing with Pouvoir Ouvrier, the French section of the LRCI. Complaints against the manoeuvres of the JCR-Egalité leadership, against their refusal to politically account for their changing orientation were systematically rejected by the ITO leadership, on the basis that they did not want to rock the boat, and that maintaining the JCR-Egalité leadership was the most important thing.

The Damien/David axis ended up treating both the ITO leadership and the JCR-Egalité membership with contempt. In April 1993 they bulldozed the JCR-Egalité conference into joining the ITO without any discussion, and without

any subsequent public explanation. So cynical was the leadership that three months later they proposed opening discussions with the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), an organisation composed of satellites of the British Militant!

In September 1993 this headlong flight to the right was sealed by the fusion of the rump of the JCR-Egalité with the five members of the CWI in France. Preferring to play the buffoon rather than being serious revolutionaries, the Damien-David leadership's fusion resolution with the CWI did not even explain that they were breaking with the ITO, and no public explanation whatsoever has been forthcoming!

The ITO have been left looking remarkably foolish. Because of their opportunist political method, they systematically refused to pay attention to the political criticisms raised by their own comrades within the JCR-Egalité. They have not only lost all their members in France, they have also been in no small part responsible for the waste of potential represented by the decline and degeneration of the JCR-Egalité.

To prove our point, we reprint here an exchange of letters from the beginning of 1993 between a leader of the Trotskyist League, US section of the ITO, and JCR-Egalité member Stéphane, a founding member of the ITO and member of the International Executive Committee of the FTI who has since joined Pouvoir Ouvrier, French section of the LRCI.

In January 1993, comrade A had written to all members of the FTI, whose activity had been “suspended” following the creation of the ITO in July 1992. He had explained the increasing collapse of the JCR-Egalité and had outlined the key political reasons for it, attacking the leadership as having an opportunist method which would lead to splits. He also criticised the JCR-Egalité for their opportunist election platform, for their trade union work and for their position on the gay and lesbian question.

Pleading with his ex-comrades of the FTI for support, he called for an Emergency Meeting of the IEC of the FTI in order to draw up a balance sheet of the work with the JCR-Egalité. His request was rejected. In consequence, he resigned from the ITO and the FTI and resolved to carry on fighting inside the JCR-Egalité.

In an attempt to convince him of the correctness of the ITO's position, the TL wrote him a long letter which we reproduce here, together with A's reply.

Today, following the Damien-David's fusion with Militant, their manoeuvres and their lack of political seriousness, there are two questions the ITO have to answer. Firstly, who was right about the nature of this leadership - the ITO or A? Secondly, what political conclusions should be drawn as to the ITO's method of international regroupment? Yet again, the ITO have been found wanting. It is about time that the comrades realised that their wrong method must change.

# Letter from Trotskyist League (USA)

USA, February 1993

Dear A,

I was saddened by your letter of 27 January 1993 resigning from the Trotskyist Opposition (TO) and International Trotskyist Opposition (ITO), and the "suspended" faction for the Trotskyist International (FTI). You are an intelligent, perceptive comrade, with the courage to act on your views, whatever the risks. In resigning from the TO, ITO and FTI, I think that you have reacted impressionistically to a difficult and complex situation, blaming your comrades for secondary mistakes of a kind that are inevitable in such a situation and weaknesses that are mainly beyond their control. But you have acted impulsively in the past and later corrected your course. I hope you will do that again now. You are much loved and will be missed.

I have read all the materials sent by you and David, including your TO/ITO discussion documents of 16 and 23 November 1992 (both published in the TL Internal Bulletin), and now your resignation letter. That letter, this response from me, and any future documents or correspondence from or to you will be published in the TL Internal Bulletin, if they are not already published by the ITO . . .

Your discussion documents from November arrived at a time when the TL was absorbed in internal discussion of problems that had arisen over the course of our first year as an independent organisation. As you may know from the TL Internal Bulletin, a harmful gap had developed between the central leadership and the ranks. The leadership was primarily involved in international and national regroupment efforts, while the ranks were primarily involved in international and national interventions only indirectly related to regroupment efforts. The leadership got too much "out in front" of the ranks and the membership "rebelled", a much healthier response than allowing passive resentment to build. The TL had to slow down and take the time for the thorough internal discussion we had not had over the previous months.

When your November documents arrived, I discussed them with R and then called David. I knew it would be very difficult for any TL comrade to reply adequately, because of our absorption in our internal discussion. My conversation with David reassured me that he was responding to your concerns carefully and patiently on the telephone and in writing. He told me he had asked M to write about Workers Power (WP) and the LRCL. I also talked with C, who told me that he too was writing and sending you materials on the WP/LRCL. I reported to the 19 December 1992 meeting of the TL Central Committee that, despite the TL's delay in responding, the ITO discussion of your concerns was proceeding.

In my opinion, David's "Some remarks on the Texts of Jerome" is a good response to your November documents. I do not see any "slipping away" or "bad faith" as you

assert in your 16 January letter. I disagree with only one point in David's "Remarks"; his statement that "Overall, democratic centralism is appropriate for intervening in the class struggle but not for conducting an internal fight." Even this may just be a question of wording—of understanding what we each mean—not a disagreement. If I had had time to write in December, I would have responded along the following lines.

1. Yes, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) and the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL-France) are centrist—"Trotskyist-centrists". Their politics and policies include elements of revolutionary Trotskyism and elements of opportunism. This contradiction makes the USFI and the other "Trotskyist-centrist" currents strategically important to our central task today: the political regeneration and organisational reconstruction of the Fourth International. These currents attract militants who can be won from "Trotskyist-centrism" to consistent Trotskyism through the political intervention of tendencies like the ITO. There are differences in the ITO over characterising the other tendencies that identify themselves as Trotskyist, but I see the International Workers League (LIT), the International Militant Tendency (IMT), and the other larger international tendencies as qualitatively the same as the USFI. The USFI is central to the ITO's struggle today for tactical not strategic reasons: it is the biggest, most open, and most international tendency in the world Trotskyist movement, and we are there.

2. Yes, the ITO and the TO should function as factions. All the forces coming together to form the ITO except the TO were prepared to form the ITO as a faction last summer. The TO argued (a) we did not have enough experience with each other to form a faction, and (b) we would be more effective pedagogically if we formed a tendency, not a faction. The rest of us deferred to the TO, seeing the transformation of the ITO into a faction as a future development. Point 7 of the FTI's proposed "Draft Organisational Resolution of the ITO" stated, "The ITO will deepen the discussion in our ranks on the political questions related to our struggle in the USFI in general, with the aim of transforming ourselves as rapidly as possible from a tendency into a faction." The TO maintained its position at the November 1992 ITO International Co-ordinating Committee (ICC) meeting, so the point was not included in the "Organisational Resolution" adopted by the meeting. I still think the point is correct, however. More than that, a prolonged failure of the ITO to move forward in practice from a tendency to a faction would indicate a serious political problem. But I think that you drawing a premature conclusion to see the problem as critical now. As for the TO it already functions as a faction, although it calls itself a tendency.

I think reticence to use the term "faction" is an unfortunate USFI tradition apparently followed by all the LCR factions, but it is not in itself a serious problem.

3. The JCR undoubtedly has weaknesses, and its leaders, including the TO comrades, undoubtedly make mistakes. We all do. You are undoubtedly right that the JCR needs to pay more attention to internal education and cadre development, needs a higher level of organisational functioning and democracy, and needs to sharpen its external intervention. But these questions are very difficult to evaluate concretely from outside France, and there are limits to what our international tendency or faction can or should do. The ITO is not yet democratic centralist, and even if it were, it should intervene in the internal life of its national constituents only when there is a clear political problem to which the national leadership is not responding. Nonetheless, all the questions you raise are subject to discussion by the ITO as well as the TO. If you had not resigned, I would have proposed your coming to the ICC meeting in March, to take part in the discussion of the French situation. Unfortunately, the discussion will now take place without you.

4. The ITO should not treat WP, its satellites (including the French Workers Power [PO]), or the LRCI in a sectarian manner. The ITO has many agreements with the WP/LRCI on paper and in practical work in Britain—with which I am familiar—and probably in France as well. We should respond in a comradely way to the LRCI's letter of 16 September 1992, as we decided at the November 1992 ICC meeting, and we should welcome opportunities for united front work with them in Britain and France. However, a unification between the ITO and the LRCI is highly unlikely in the foreseeable future. This is not because of our political differences, although we have some important differences. It is because of the LRCI's fundamental sectarianism. WP come from a state-capitalist tradition and has never overcome the state capitalists' moralistic approach to politics. The WP/LRCI regards all left-of-Stalinist tendencies other than itself as an essentially undifferentiated centrist mass. A WP/LRCI true believer would even regard the WP/LRCI itself as still centrist but on its way to becoming the true vanguard party much the way a Calvinist true believer would regard himself as sinful and deserving damnation but predestined to be saved. The WP/LRCI will go nowhere unless it overcomes this mentality.

Your 16 January letter to comrades of the FTI has a very different tone from your November texts. It effectively demands that the FTI split from the ITO since this is what it would mean to "call an emergency meeting of the IEC of the FTI to put an end to the suspension of our activities as the FTI." without discussion and struggle in the ITO first. I oppose an emergency meeting of the FTI IEC but strongly support discussion in the ITO. I regret your resignation from the TO and the ITO all the more because it makes the discussion much more difficult. I would have preferred to wait to respond to your specific charges until after a discussion at the ICC meeting in March with you present. Since your resignation means such a discussion will not happen, however, I want to respond to some points in your 16 January letter here.

1. You say that the JCR has exploded because "First, Damien has always refused to explain the nature of the LCR, the struggle which is necessary etc" and "secondly, it is very difficult to explain and convince people of the centrality of the struggle inside the USFI when . . .

Damien has left the LCR (and so the USFI) since about one year [ago]" and wants to include in the JCR small groups hostile to the USFI and the LCR, such as GSI and RCU youth. In my opinion, if there is a weakness in the TO policy toward the LCR, it is having maintained too strict a separation between the JCR and LCR. As long as I have known them—since April 1992—Damien and David have argued that only a few highly developed JCR comrades should join the LCR, since the rest would find the LCR too demoralising. I have questioned this, since defending TO politics inside the LCR would help JCR comrades develop, and having them there would strengthen the TO. But I have also understood Damien and David's concern about demoralising the JCR comrades. I do not understand your argument, however. Do you think that Damien has been "too soft" on the LCR, refusing to characterise it negatively enough? If so, that is the opposite of my impression. Or do you think he has been "too hard" on the LCR, too contemptuous of it? If this is your criticism—and if it is true that Damien has refused to attend cell meetings or pay dues, which I do not accept without hearing from him—I would agree that he had made a mistake. But I would find the criticism difficult to reconcile with your apparent overall view that the TO and the ITO should turn our backs on the "centrist" LCR and USFI.

2. You say that "Damien wants to invalidate me and my town for the next (April) Congress . . . because I have begun to fight against his politics." If this is true, it is a very serious matter. ITO comrades, both those from the FTI and those not from the FTI, would not tolerate it. However, I suspect that the situation around your dues is more ambiguous than you indicate and could be resolved. I would not accuse Damien or any other ITO comrade of "bureaucratism" without hearing his or her side first.

3. You say on trade union work that "Damien has a very serious opportunist [policy] on this question: he refuses to form factions, tendencies on our politics inside the unions" and on the struggle for the liberation of lesbians and gay men that "Damien has in fact a separatist [policy] that I won't tolerate a day more." If you are right about this, you would have found considerable support within the ITO. The "Declaration of Principles of the International Trotskyist Opposition" says, "In order to achieve their aims within the unions, Trotskyists should attempt to organise revolutionary trade union caucuses under their political leadership. The programme of these caucuses must be based on the general strategic and tactical lines of the Transitional Programme" and "Trotskyists must intervene [in the struggles of the specifically oppressed] with a method analogous to that adopted in intervening in proletarian struggles: that is, they base their action on the Transitional Programme." We will discuss trade union and lesbian and gay work in France and elsewhere at the March ICC meeting. But your resignation creates big problems. It is unfair to Damien because it denies him a chance to defend himself against your charges in the ITO. It is unfair to other comrades in the ITO, because it denies them a chance to hear the confrontation of views. It is unfair to the TO and the JCR, because it makes it less likely that any valid criticisms you have will be heard and acted on. And it is unfair to you, because it makes you appear afraid to prove your charges with evidence or to retract them if you do not have evidence.

4. You criticise the slogan in the 1993 JCR electoral



platform for "Purging and reorganising the police from top to bottom", which you interpret as a call for "reforming the police." I think the slogan is problematic and would prefer "Abolish the police. Organise worker-community defence guards." But I do not think the JCR slogan could be misinterpreted as meaning we want to reform the existing police, since "Purging and reorganising the police from top to bottom" would mean destroying them. In my opinion this is as secondary problem of an unclear tactical slogan, not a principled problem. I also think you are reading too much into the apparent contradiction in Damien's "Theses" for the JCR Congress between the formulation that the LCR is "necessarily liquidationist" and the formulation that it has abandoned the perspective of building the revolutionary party only in conjunctural manner". I do not have the text, but I would bet that the apparent contradiction is a drafting problem that could be cleared up through amendments. Again, if these problems are deeper than I realise you have done us all a disservice by resigning rather than fighting.

5. You describe David's "Some remarks on the texts of Jerome" as "slipping away" and answering in "bad faith". As indicated above, I do not agree. David says very clearly that the USFI and the LCR are centrist and correctly defines the tasks of the ITO in confronting that reality: developing our own analysis and orientation as an international current and our exemplary work in the class struggle. He agrees that the JCR needs more political education and the TO and ITO need more bulletins, pamphlets, leaflets etc and correctly points to the real problems that need to be overcome: the lack of human and material resources, overextended leadership, and the difficulties of the "hybrid situation". He agrees that the ITO should pursue discussions with the LRCI to see if we have real convergence in our analysis and political activity. You may be right that Damien has moved quickly to incorporate Morenoist and ex-Lambertist youth into the JCR and has blocked PO youth. But this may make sense, since the Morenoist and ex-Lambertist youth may be in political flux, while the WP/LRCI is notorious for Spart-like raids against other organisations in which they take out—and subsequently lose—a few demoralised elements and ruin their chances for a principled regroupment.

Finally, I want to respond to your 27 January letter resigning from the ITO, the TO and the "suspended" FTI. You say that you are resigning "Not because [of] political differences except on Yugoslavia and on the importance to give to the centrist nature of the LCR/USFI but because the determining element is . . . 'safeguard[ing] the JCR'." I want to reply to each of your points.

1. The former Yugoslavia. You do not explain your position in your resignation statement, but in your JCR faction statement "It is Necessary to Break with the Current Line", you write, "The journal [Egalité] was right in affirming the strategic importance of a socialist federation of the Balkans and denouncing the possibility of imperialist military intervention. But the central question today is to position ourselves in favour of the military defence of the Bosnians against the aggression of the Serbian nationalist bureaucracy". The problem is which "Bosnians" you mean. If you mean defence of the Bosnian "Muslim" communities against slaughter and "ethnic cleansing", I agree Trotskyists should support that—and defence of all the other national communities under attack, including the Bosnian Serb communities. But if you mean defence of the Bosnian republic against

dismemberment, I disagree. The republic of Bosnia is an artificial creation in which the Serbs and Croats are the majority. This majority clearly wants not just the "cantonisation" of the republic but its break up, with the Serbian areas joining Croatia. Under these circumstances, defending the territorial integrity of the Bosnian state against the majority of the Bosnian population is no more correct than defending the territorial integrity of the former Yugoslav state against its population.

2. The LCR and the USFI. In your resignation statement you refer to a difference over "The importance to give to the centrist nature of the LCR/USFI." I have stated my views on this above. Most of the world Trotskyist movement, including the LCR and the USFI, is centrist—"Trotskyist-centrist"—and this is of strategic importance in our fight for the political regeneration and organisational reorganisation of the Fourth International. You agreed with this when you voted for "The Crisis of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Consistent Trotskyists" at the Copenhagen conference last January. Do you still agree?

3. Your resignation. In your resignation statement you say that you are resigning because "the determining element is . . . 'safeguard[ing] the JCR'" You say, Franco has said to me: either accept Damien's politics or you join the LRCI . . . it seems as if I have well understood Franco, that I have put myself outside the ITO in choosing to struggle against the politics of Damien." To me this is the most disappointing aspect of your resignation. I have known Franco politically for nearly fourteen years. I know he did not say those things. That means that either (a) you are deliberately misrepresenting what he said, which I do not want to believe, or (b) you have tragically misunderstood what he said. On the assumption that the problem is confusion rather than bad faith on your part, I want to state my views. The determining element for me, for Franco, and for the other comrades of the ITO is not "safeguarding the JCR" but the fight to rebuild the Fourth International. You and all other ITO comrades have a right to "struggle against the politics of Damien" or anyone else in the ITO, although if you make charges as damning as those you have made against Damien, you should be expected to be challenged to prove them. Apart from these charges I agree with David that many of your criticisms are correct, but I think you should have struggled over them in the framework of the TO and the ITO.

The TL has been dealing with some of the same problems of internal functioning and democracy as the TO has. The discussion has not been easy, and at times tempers have flared. Despite this, the TL has been making progress, because the leadership at all levels and the ranks have been committed to defining the real problems and dealing with them concretely within the limits of our resources. . . .

. . . I do not ask you to stop fighting. But I do hope you will put your fight in perspective, reconsider your decision to resign and rejoin us. If you decide that the problems in the TO and ITO can be corrected, internal struggle is the best way to correct them. If you decide the problems cannot be corrected, internal struggle is the best way to persuade other comrades that it is time to move on.

Fraternally,  
P

# Reply to Trotskyist League (USA)

Letter from a supporter of POF, August 1993

Dear P,

Thankyou for your letter. I am sorry to have taken so long to reply, but I have been very involved in trying to convince the JCR-Egalité of my positions, and then, when that failed, working as a member of Pouvoir Ouvrier, the French section of the LRCI, writing for the journal. Secondly, I found it very difficult to write in English. In the end, I had to get one of my comrades to go over this letter and correct the English so that I could be sure that I would make myself understood. Finally, it took me a while to decide how to reply to you, whether to write a long letter taking up all your points, or what. In the end, I have decided to write a shortish letter, taking up the main points you raise and trying to explain to you why I have taken the steps I have.

In general, you have chosen to support Damien, the leader of the JCR-Egalité, and to disagree with me. Your reasons are either that the questions I have raised are "very difficult to evaluate correctly from external intervention", or that I am making a mountain out of a molehill. Despite the respect I have for you, I think you have made a very serious mistake: you are sacrificing political principles in the name of "winning" a sizeable number of youth.

As events over the last few months have shown, this approach will get the ITO nowhere. Thanks to Damien's politics, the JCR-Egalité has already lost nearly half its membership (there were 15 delegates at the Congress, on the basis of 6 members per delegate; in Autumn 1992 the leadership were claiming 150 members . . . do the sum yourself). Furthermore, the JCR appears to be fast leaving the orbit of the ITO: they are currently discussing with the British Militant organisation with a view to fusion! Perhaps, however, this is the position of the ITO? Perhaps Damien spoke from the platform to a 1500 strong rally in London to launch the new Militant organisation as a member of the ITO? What do you think about this?

You and the whole of the ITO need to think carefully about what kind of political operator Damien is, and who was right: me or him.

Far from "acting impressionistically" as you suggest, I think I have acted in an absolutely principled way at every step. I fought for my positions in the TO, was defeated, and resigned, preferring to be able to fight for my ideas. The same thing in the JCR. I will show that on the key points I fought around: the nature of the revolutionary organisation, the question of the state, work around gays and lesbians and the nature of the League

for a Revolutionary Communist International and Pouvoir Ouvrier, I have acted honestly and in a principled and considered way throughout.

**The attitude of the French TO towards the nature of the LCR and the USFI.**

As you know, in Autumn 1992 I put a resolution to the French TO arguing that we should clearly describe the USFI and the LCR as centrist. This was rejected by the Damien leadership of the TO. I felt this was an important point, not because we should provoke the LCR leadership, but because we needed to be clear on the nature of the beast we were fighting—the LCR leadership—and the reasons for its method.

Like you, I read David's reply and the points in which he says clearly that the LCR are centrist. But this is purely for internal ITO consumption, in response to my criticisms. Neither the JCR-Egalité nor the public "Trotskyist Bulletin" of the TO say anything of the sort. This is an unprincipled method, "forgetting" to call a centrist leadership by its name. It doesn't educate comrades and will inevitably lead to bad results.

The truth of this is shown by what happened in the JCR. Damien consistently refused to educate the members of the JCR in the nature of the LCR, or even to carry out a consistent faction fight inside the LCR. The inevitable consequence was that, a few months after the LCR had expelled us all, around 30% of the JCR-Egalité split, to "return to the fold". The political argument had not been had with them. Damien and the other comrades had simply run away from the struggle.

When I tried to raise these criticisms, my positions were systematically distorted, in a way which also shows that Damien, Florence and the rest of the JCR leadership do not agree with you, Peter. You know that when the ITO was formed, Damien did not agree with our text on "The FI and the tasks of consistent Trotskyists". The differences are real, there is no point in trying to hide them for diplomatic reasons.

During the debate in the JCR, a "factional fable" was put about by the Damien leadership. They argued that I thought that the USFI was "at best centrist", thus insinuating that I might think that the USFI was reformist (which is what the Spartacists think), thus trying in a dishonest fashion to distance the membership from my "sectarian" views. This distortion was compounded by the suggestion that I thought the TO and the ITO should split with the USFI as quickly as possible.

This is just not true, as all of my documents show. I argued, however, that we needed to carry out a principled political fight within the USFI. The reason why the ITO would not do this is because of the political differences which were at the heart of its foundation. In this respect, the article of Workers Power is very convincing.

As the French comrades of the LRCI, Pouvoir Ouvrier, pointed out in an article at the beginning of this year (I enclose the translation from the LRCI's "Trotskyist Bulletin"), this is the second time that the Damien-David leadership has behaved this way. They split from the Matti faction within the LCR without explanation, without drawing any political conclusion as to the nature of the Matti grouping. Then they did the same with the LCR. This is not serious.

There has been not one serious word of explanation in the pages of *Egalité*, just a short paragraph. The members of the JCR-*Egalité* are encouraged to disdain the LCR rather than understand the nature and origins of their centrist errors. Can you imagine if the TL had split with the RWL without drawing any conclusions as to the nature and direction of the RWL leadership? But that is exactly what the Damien group has done twice in the space of 18 months - and perhaps what they are preparing to do again in turning away from the ITO and towards the Militant?

In response to your question: I do not think that Damien has been "too hard" or "too soft" with the LCR leadership. I think he has acted in an unprincipled manner. He is a manoeuvrer and he has not fought for his positions. At the LCR Central Committee meeting which discussed the expulsion of the JCR he did not even speak! The "campaign" to be readmitted into the LCR has been completely non-existent. No documents explaining the split have been produced. The recent Congress documents did not even mention it! How can you build an organisation like that? Or rather, what kind of organisation can you build like that? Only one that is composed of people who follow the latest whim of the leader. You cannot educate and train cadre in this way.

Another example: the JCR-*Egalité* decided at their Congress to join the ITO. You might imagine that such an important step would have been the subject of a pre-Congress discussion, that the members would have debated the issue, the nature of the ITO, as against, say, the International Militant Tendency or even the LRCI. Far from it. The resolution deciding to join the ITO was only put on the agenda in the middle of the meeting, after the speakers' list on the previous item had been closed. The only comrades able to discuss the question were those who had previously indicated to speak on another issue! This is not serious. Unfortunately, it is the method of Damien and his group. Would you sanction such behaviour Peter? I hope not.

#### The gay and lesbian question

A point of difference at the JCR Congress was that "our" comrades in the JCR/TO acted as if the struggle for the liberation of lesbians and gay men was a separate struggle to the struggles of other layers against capitalist society. As if only black workers should struggle against

racism,, as if only working women should fight for free abortion on demand.

When I pointed out at the Congress that there was no balance sheet of work done around the question, and that I and my section had been the only people to take up the issue, the reply was that it was "a secondary question" and that the group could not do everything. Of course, this was a verbal remark. Nothing was written down. You could even suggest I am exaggerating, "making a mountain out of a molehill". Where then is the balance sheet of the group's work on the issue? In the 30 months since the JCR adopted a position—at my instigation—the only work was done on my initiative.

Arguing the case for sexual liberation with youth is a fundamental part of our tasks. It is not an "additional", "supplementary" or "secondary" question as I was told in the JCR Congress. In the same way, arguing with gays and lesbians about the need to take their future in their own hands and to organise themselves within the working class, is not "secondary". It is a way of creating the maximum unity inside the working class, against all the oppression that divides us.

What was the result of your March ICC discussion on this issue? Did you seriously discuss the gay and lesbian work of the JCR? What was your balance sheet? What conclusions do you draw, or do you think that, on this question too, "it is difficult to tell from a distance"?

Finally, on this question, the JCR-*Egalité* are to the right of the comrades who split to form an LCR-loyal "JCR-*Egalité* sociale". The comrades in Nantes who joined this group got it to adopt a motion on gay and lesbian liberation. It is a very weak resolution, and in their paper the comrades have shown that they adapt to ActUp. However, they are more likely to become an obstacle to the struggle for gay and lesbian liberation than the JCR-*Egalité* who are not interested in intervening around this question (they have failed even to participate in demonstrations etc). In this respect, I prefer humanists in favour of an abstract version of liberation than a tendency like the French TO with its non-consistent Trotskyism on this issue.

#### The JCR-*Egalité* on the state—and the British Militant

You seem to agree with me that the JCR's position is wrong in calling for a "purging and a reorganisation from top to bottom" of the police. However, you don't want to say so. You say it is "problematic", but you also insist that "I do not think (it) could be misinterpreted as meaning we want to reform the existing police." Fair enough. What then is the "problem" which concerns you?!

You say you would rather see "Abolish the police. Organize workers' defence guards". I agree. Damien and the JCR do not. This is not a minor tactical difference! Ask yourself: why did the JCR not put forward such a line? Because they were "unclear"? I give them more credit than that!

The point about the JCR electoral platform is that this was the ONLY thing about the state. There was not one mention of the real role of parliament, there was not one warning of the danger of the armed forces of the state (not one mention of the army!), not one mention of the

need for workers' democracy (only the call for a truly democratic constituent assembly!) the implication of the document was reformist. This is a real "problem"!

I know that Damien does not think that the state can be reformed. But he did not say what he really thought. Why not? So as not to "frighten" his electors? But the point of a revolutionary election campaign is not to win votes but to put forward revolutionary propaganda. The JCR did neither. Despite consciously adapting their programme (I don't believe it is an "accident" that all these ABC points - including the revolutionary party! - were left out) the voters, of course, preferred the real reformists.

What conclusions do I draw from this? That the JCR, rather than using an "unclear tactical slogan", is using an opportunist method. This is not how revolutionaries should intervene in election campaigns. What conclusions do you draw?

The question of the Militant became important during the Congress because of the JCR's desire to build "Youth Against Racism in Europe", a Militant front organisation, in France. This could be a good thing if YRE adopted a clear position on the two key questions of the day: "no platform for fascists" and "no to all immigration controls". But the JCR have already said they do not necessarily agree with this, and decided at the Congress that antifascists should wait for the fascists to attack them, so as to win public sympathy! Read the documents! I am not inventing this! I would be interested to hear Matt S on this! Furthermore, it is now clear that no one from other groups will be allowed in JRE. They want to build it as a JCR front, on a minimal political basis, including so-called "anti-capitalism". This is sectarianism and opportunism!

At the JCR Congress I was also concerned that given Militant's position on the state (basically the same opportunist method as shown by the JCR's election campaign - pretend to the workers that there can be a peaceful transformation of capitalist society) that YRE could be hampered by unclear positions on the police.

Now, Peter, be honest. am I making "a mountain out of a molehill" here? Do you think Trotsky - whom you quote - would say that the question of the state was a mere "molehill"? I do not think so. Only opportunists like Damien or the Militant could say such a thing.

#### Bosnia

You do not seem to have the same line as Damien. You say "if you mean defense of the Bosnian 'Muslim' communities against slaughter and 'ethnic cleansing', I agree". That is what I mean, so we agree. I do not "defend the territorial integrity of the Bosnian state". The problem is that, for the JCR-Egalité, the key question is the supposed aggression of imperialism against the Serbs! They want to put all the emphasis on defence of the Serbs (which would certainly be necessary if imperialism were attacking them, but that is clearly not the case at the moment. The imperialist embargo against Serbia should be opposed, but now that Serbia and Croatia have become the principle aggressors (because the Moslim nationalists have lost the war, although they can still launch offensives, as we have recently seen), we should fight for

a workers' boycott of arms to Serbia. You will see none of this in the pages of Egalité. You should ask Damien about this.

#### Relations with the LRCI and the politics of Workers Power

You say you asked Mike to write to me; unfortunately I never received a letter from him. If I see him I would like to ask him how he gets on with Damien on gay questions. Last winter Chris sent me a long letter, with documents, particularly dealing with Workers Power, the British section of the LRCI. I appreciated his letter, even though it was mainly about Workers Power, with only a short section on what he thought about the Damien group's politics (he said that "the way the JCR leaders are reaction (to the split with the LCR) is a little worrying". The problem was that I was more interested to know what my comrades in the ITO thought about the situation in the French TO rather than reading pages of criticism of Workers Power.

By behaving in this way, you left me alone facing the crisis of the JCR, leading me to think that my comrades from the FTI were more interested in criticising the LRCI than in saying something about the situation inside the LCR and the JCR. In this respect, the attempt to "put me off" the LRCI had the opposite effect. Because the comrade of Pouvoir Ouvrier in Nantes was very keen to discuss the situation inside the JCR, to discuss what I should do. I began to appreciate his method and his suggestions: for me the LRCI does not have an opportunist or a sectarian method.

You say that you do not think that there is any "bad faith" by the ITO secretariat. But what does the following sentence mean? We are told in the same document that "There is no particularly emergency to discuss with this trend" (unlike the Militant, the LIT, the WRP and PO of Argentina) but that "We must adopt with them the same method as with everyone". There is surely a formal contradiction here, no? You say that they are "sectarian to the USFI". But David himself at the December meeting admitted that the articles of the LRCI on the USFI have been very effective. In Britain and in France they have won comrades from the USFI. But perhaps you think they are sectarian because they insist on "saying what is", that they think that the USFI is centrist, and explaining why. That is not sectarianism, it is good politics

I received several letters from Ron. In one of them he warned me about the position of Workers' Power on lesbian and gay issues, citing their behaviour in a meeting in Leicester during the 1984 Miners' Strike. As you know Peter, this kind of allegation "you did this is such and such a meeting" is very difficult to deal with. I was concerned by what Ron said, but I only had his view of what happened. So I asked WP what happened. I got a letter from Paul, who was at the meeting in question. Here are some excerpts from his letter:

"The difference with the comrades who were to become the RIL took place in a meeting of a Miners Support Committee, in which WP took a leading role, with the aim of making it a delegate action committee, an embryo 'council of action'. This was the context of the vote, which was on the content of a leaflet to be given out at hosiery factories in which Asian women predominate, aimed at

building support for a national women's demonstration called by the NUM. WP, along with almost every other left wing group, and the core of the Committee's activists, advocated a mass agitational leaflet aimed at working class women. Others had a different conception - they saw the bulletin as developing into a newsletter for the already committed activists about what was happening in the Support Committee milieu. These forces wanted to include in the bulletin a report of the first ever Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners contingent on a miners' demonstration. This was not a proposal for a piece of propaganda about gay and lesbian liberation, or for an argument with 'backward' sections of the working class about the question of homosexuality. It was a simple report. WP opposed the inclusion of this report because a) the leaflet needed to be a focussed piece of agitation about one issue aimed at the widest possible working class audience; b) the report assumed working class women would automatically see the connection between lesbians/gays and themselves; c) it was all part of a tendency to turn the Miners' Support Committee into a self-congratulatory milieu of left activists. Finally, I have a very different memory of the result of the vote from Ron. The miners most certainly did not vote to include the report. What you need to decide, Stephane, is whether, even if Ron is right and I am wrong, this incident shows that we have a wrong line on the gay and lesbian question. You can't go around rubbishing a group's positions on the basis of one meeting nearly 10 years ago."

What do you and Ron think of that, Peter? It seems to me a convincing explanation. WP did not oppose "a motion calling for lesbian and gay community involvement". I do not think their behaviour was scandalous. And I think Paul's last point is correct. For example, what do you think of the comrades' work around Clause 28 in Britain, or their brochure on Lesbian and Gay liberation, which I think is very good? Have you read this material? I would be very interested in hearing your criticisms.

Finally, you say that "the WP/LRCI is notorious for Spart-like raids against other organizations in which they take out - and subsequently lose - a few demoralised elements and ruin their chances for a principled regroupment." This worried me, because I had never heard such a remark in France. So I asked a comrade on the LRCI leadership what he thought. This is what he replied:

"We are apparently 'notorious' for a certain type of intervention. Amongst which tendencies? When? Where? Who? Why? Furthermore we carry out "Spart-like raids". This implies that we are a) sectarians b) unprincipled. What is a "raid"? It suggests that we are afraid of a political fight. As you know, that is not the case! Why are we 'Spart-like'? Are we a Stalinophile cult? This is not a political characterisation, it is not even an allegation: in the absence of any examples, it is an amalgam. What does Peter mean by this remark? I suspect the truth is that he is referring to one event, when we disagreed with the comrades who came to be the TILC over how to intervene in the crisis of the WSL, a British organisation.

WP won two comrades, who fought at the WSL Congress and then left. The RWL comrades carried on fighting, and finally set up a small organisation, the WIL (not the same as the current WIL) which rapidly collapsed, with some of the comrades forming the RIL. (I may have got some of these details wrong; it was a relatively minor footnote in the history of British Trotskyism.) If this is what Peter has in mind, he should justify his description of it as a "Spart-like raid". More recently, what evidence is there? Did we win you through a "Spart-like raid"? Or Matt L, who has recently left the British ITO to join Workers Power. Are either of you "demoralised elements"? Have we thus 'ruined ou chances for a principled agreement'? It's up to you to judge."

What do you say to that, Peter?

Finally, was I right to split? The problem, Peter, is that I did not agree with the JCR leadership. I wrote to you and got no help, either. You were very friendly, but on every political point, you sided with the JCR leadership. I fought for my positions in the French TO. I lost. The leadership was extremely hostile to me. I felt I would be better off outside the TO. And so it has proved.

When I tried to fight in the JCR-Egalité, all sorts of difficulties were raised. My documents were not circulated for months, until the leadership had time to write a reply! Do you think that is a proper way to run an organisation? The myth of my "non-payment" of subs was raised, so we had to pay our subs a second time! Finally, at the Congress, no one agreed with me. I had a choice: carry on building the JCR on a basis I am convinced is wrong and leads nowhere, or leave and build an organisation which I agree with. Is that "impressionistic", "impulsive" or "making a mountain out of a molehill"? I hope you will reply to these points. I want to engage you in a dialogue because I admire you and want to convince you that I am right.

The attitude of the TL militants towards the events in France - and the recent turn by the JCR towards Militant - will be fundamental for the future of the ITO. If you say nothing, I will conclude that you agree with them, or that you think that the basis of the ITO is "do what you want in your country". If this latter position is the case, it would confirm the reserves I expressed during the FTI caucus during the conference. Limited compromises were possible, we accepted certain compromises (it was an important opportunity), but you also have to know when to break the compromise.

Peter, what do you think of the points I have raised? You cannot say you are too far away or that you cannot judge - you often come to Europe, you have all the documents. I hope that the recent turn of events will lead you and the comrades of the TL to enter in contact with the LRCI, to read its publications in English and to discuss with their International Secretariat on the key political issues which separate us. I really believe that this would be the best step for you all.

With comradely best wishes  
A (PO-F)

# Smash the BNP!

Leaflet distributed by Workers Power on an anti-fascist demonstration, London, 16 October 1993

THE ELECTION of Derek Beackon in Millwall was the biggest victory for the fascists in Britain since the 1970s.

Anti-fascists in the East End have hit back by driving the BNP from its paper-selling pitch on Brick Lane for the last month. Today's demo can strike a massive blow against the BNP. Only the police can save the Nazi bunker from the anger of tens of thousands of working class people.

But to stop the rise of the BNP decisively we need a single, anti-fascist united front designed to deny the fascists any platform for their poisonous ideas. That means:

- Stop Beackon operating as a councillor
- Stop all BNP demonstrations, rallies, paper sales and canvassing
- Close down the BNP HQ
- Organise self-defence against BNP attacks.

United action must not be limited to today's demo. The main anti-racist, labour movement, socialist and black organisations must now meet together at all levels. The leaders of the anti-racist and anti-fascist groups should issue an immediate joint statement calling for a united anti-fascist movement. National anti-fascist demonstrations and rallies should be co-ordinated.

In every town there should be a UNITY committee drawing in all existing anti-fascist organisations and committed clearly to No Platform for Fascists.

The ANL and YRE and the IWA must be forced to continue meeting after today's demo to co-ordinate unity in action. Workers Power has initiated Unity Committees to mobilise for the demo involving ANL and YRE in Manchester and Sheffield. These are just a hint of what could be achieved if the main campaigns made a call for unity.

## For workers' action!

500 council staff at the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Centre walked out in a protest strike against the election of Derek Beackon and BNP intimidation at the polling stations. This must be extended to a boycott of all work with Beackon. Beackon must be prevented from getting in to meetings: if he does, then the council proceedings must be brought to a standstill.

Such action will bring the staff into conflict with the council management and the law. To maintain a boycott in the face of this pressure they will need active solidarity, including a commitment from UNISON and other unions to strike in their support if they are victimised.

The trade union bureaucrats have actively tried to sabotage today's demo by supporting the pathetic split-

demonstration organised by the middle class careerists who lead the Anti Racist Alliance. Union HQs should be bombarded with resolutions demanding support for a genuine anti-fascist united front committed to destroying the BNP. If the police succeed in denying our right to march there must be a campaign in the Labour and trade union movement to assert that right.

## No Platform for Fascists!

The BNP are not just another political party. They are out and out Nazis. Fascism is distinct from other forms of right wing politics not just because of the virulence of its racism, its anti-semitism and opposition to democratic rights.

It is different because it mobilises fighting gangs to conquer the streets and terrorise its opponents. The BNP is a party of thugs and killers.

That is why the working class needs to organise to deny them any platform for their views, any meetings where they spread their vile doctrines, any pitches where they sell their putrid literature, any marches, press conferences or election canvasses.

That can't be done by polite persuasion. The BNP has organised teams to mete out violence against its opponents. That is why we need to be ready to stop them physically, by any means necessary.

## Build defence squads!

To smash the BNP and deny them a platform, we need mass mobilisations against their every move. But that is not all. It is criminal to send an unorganised mass against well-disciplined and organised fascist fighting detachments or their police guards. That is why we need to build our own well-organised defence squads. They should be built out of groups of workers and youth that know and trust each other, that can train together and prepare effective actions. And they should be linked as closely as possible to the community and the working class organisations.

Defence Squads should not simply be built out of small groups of people disconnected from any mass movement and substitute themselves for a mass campaign. They should be part of the mass movement, an auxiliary arm of it. We need a campaign across the working class movement and black communities for the building of anti-fascist defence squads. That way we can repeat the success of 19 September when the BNP were driven from their regular sales pitch. They were driven into a corner by 500 protestors and then seen off by a squad of under 30 organised anti-fascist fighters.

### Don't rely on the state

The leaders of the labour movement and middle class "anti-fascists" are terrified of the direct action that we need to rout the fascist gangs. Instead they plead for the police to act or for the state to ban the Nazis' marches and meetings.

This brand of anti-fascism is worse than useless. It is dangerous. Every serious attempt in the last twenty years to demonstrate against the fascists has seen the police attack the anti-fascists or, like today, ban our marches from confronting the fascists.

The police are the perpetrators of racist violence. To ask Bangladeshi youth in East London to rely on the police to protect them is a sick joke.

Since the Public Order Act was brought in "against" Mosley's Fascists in the 1930s, the state has mainly directed its powers to ban marches and meetings against the working class movement.

The answer is direct working class action, not reliance on the racist state.

### Role of ANL leaders

The Anti Nazi League has thousands of supporters and has been centrally involved in building this demonstration. But the leaders of the ANL are opposing the building of united committees. They are telling their members that such committees would be "just another layer of bureaucracy". They argue "why do we need to talk about unity, why not just get out there and build?".

But the ANL is far from being the only campaign against racism and fascism, as is shown by the very need for a *Unity* Demonstration today. To get existing anti-racist organisations to unite in action, we need clear agreement at every level and, yes, full debate and discussion. This is not bureaucracy, it is *organisation*.

Unfortunately the Socialist Workers Party, which controls the ANL, allows it to have no regular membership meetings or internal democracy. And by refusing to build joint committees it is fostering disunity - as it did when it deliberately organised a separate demonstration in Welling one week after the YRE on 8 May.

Worse still, the ANL and the SWP oppose the building of defence squads in the anti-fascist struggle. Whilst arguing for today's demonstration to defy the police ban on marching to the Nazi HQ, they rejected efforts to organise effective joint stewarding of the march. This is sheer irresponsibility. We need the best possible organisation to defend ourselves from police attack and to deal with the Nazi gangs.

The SWP leaders claim that "military-style" organisation will frighten away ordinary workers. They claim that "strength of numbers" makes violence unnecessary.

But the police will hit the anti-fascist movement with "military style" organisation. So will the BNP. In the face of that "strength of numbers" alone is not enough. There were tens of thousands at mass pickets at Orgreave and Wapping in the 1980s. But the police won those battles. What the workers' movement lacked was organised self defence.

Hundreds of thousands of black people - as well as steelworkers, miners, printers - have learned this the hard way under the Tories. At the end of the day

disciplined workers' self-defence is the best way of guaranteeing the safety of our marches and our movement, and of stopping the violence of the police and Nazis from really "putting people off".

### Answer the Lies!

The BNP, as well as the Liberals and Tories, argue that black people are responsible for bad housing. This is rubbish. They do not cause bad housing, they are forced to live in it. The idea that Asians are being put up in five star hotels or have all the housing is a classic racist myth. In Tower Hamlets as a whole 26% of the population are Asian and the same proportion of council property used to rehouse families goes to Asians. Under the racist "Sons and Daughters" policy they have less access to decent housing than even poor whites. The answer is not for working class people to fight over who should get the crumbs that the bosses throw in our direction, but to fight together for decent homes for all.

### Fight the system!

Capitalism - production for private profit rather than the needs of millions - is the source of all the ills in society: racism, unemployment, bad housing, poverty and crime.

In Britain today, the discrediting of the major political parties and institutions, and the mood of increasing discontent in the country as a whole, has led to a relative strengthening of the extreme poles of the political spectrum. The sudden rise of the BNP to national prominence is one sign of what this can lead to if socialists do not step into the vacuum.

But there is an alternative, an alternative which must base itself not on the least socially cohesive, least class conscious and least solidaristic sections of the population as the fascists do, but on the most determined, most political, most militant fighters for the interests of the whole of the working class, black and white.

Out of those layers a political party can and must be built, around a programme that links the fight for the immediate needs of the working class to the fight for the revolutionary overthrow of the profit system. That way we will not just destroy the fascist bands.

We will ensure that fascism is wiped out for good, together with the system that spawns it.

That is what Workers Power is fighting for. If you agree with us - join us today as part of the YRE contingent. •

**WHAT TO DO TODAY:** The police have banned today's demo from approaching the BNP HQ. The organisers of today's demo have decided to defy that ban. Every demonstrator should support that decision by getting organised to defend our right to march. Workers Power has organised with other anti-fascists a **No Platform Contingent**, to unite those who are clearly committed to No Platform for Fascists. Since the YRE is committed to proper stewarding and to No Platform, we will be marching together with them on the demo. We urge every delegation to come on the YRE contingent, and bring their banners. Every delegation should elect a stewards' team to liaise with the YRE chief steward on arrival. •

# No to "Asian Invasion" Racism

From Workers Power, New Zealand/Aotearoa, #94 (June/July 1993)

While Pat Booth and Yvonne Martin's intentions may have been to write a couple of items for the local newspaper, there are a few sinister messages underlying their "Asian Invasion" articles (*Harbour News, North Shore Times Advertiser*, 16 & 23 April 1993).

For example, the assumption that most Asians are, if not millionaires, relatively wealthy. Certainly, the historical desire to migrate is driven by material forces. Most people don't up and move country, leaving behind family, friends and all things familiar, unless their continued economic survival is threatened. To a lesser or greater degree, all inhabitants of Aotearoa arrived under this premise.

The recent influx of Asians is no different. Asians are not intrinsically rich. Instead, they have been the pawns of imperialist policy since the Opium Wars of the last century. Those who have survived generations of slave wages have learned the lessons of the struggle for survival in capitalist society. They know that survival means taking every opportunity available, including education, to advance themselves economically. Some Asians as a result have become successful capitalists.

Is this so very different from any other "self-made" capitalists of any nationality? Wasn't Bob Jones being portrayed as the model for all, just a few years back? What's different? The answer is that there are now few self-made kiwi capitalists. Many have been victims of the restructuring of the last 10 years. The important point is that those who survived did so by investing offshore in Australia, Asia and North and South America. Perhaps not in as large numbers as Asian investors, but outside NZ they too are "foreign" investors and part of some "alien invasion".

For Asians who took advantage of the booming Asian economies to successfully overcome their working class origins, migration to Aotearoa's "free market" is a necessary part of their expansion as capitalists. For some migrants from Hong Kong, it is an escape from the threat of controls on their profitability when Hong Kong returns to China in 1997. Capitalists in China are still operating within a bureaucratically controlled state which puts limits on profits. Obviously, NZ's "free market" places no such restrictions on profits.

Here we come to the heart of the matter regarding the migration of relatively affluent Asians. While working class migrants (particularly previously Chinese migrants) are subject to national barriers, in the form of immigration controls, capitalists have no such barricades. Under NZ state's Business Immigration Policy "points" system, independence—in the form of money or specific skills—allows rich "foreigners" to enter the country with comparative ease.

Why then this fuss about a mere 3% of our population who are ethnically labelled Asian? Possibly our local

capitalists are fearful of the threat of competition from people who have perfected their commercial expertise to a level which frightens the competition. But isn't this "the level playing field" which capitalist ideology insists upon? Are our local capitalists now crying "foul" because their monopolies may be challenged.

Whatever the reasoning behind the timing of this particular xenophobia, the myth of Aotearoa's "racial harmony" is again exposed. On one side of the fence, we have workers being told that their jobs will be taken by migrants; on the other, the ruling class is fearful of Asian competition!

At the same time our intellectuals are telling us that the rapid introduction of too many "multi-ethnic migrants is likely to spark off sectarian explosions which will threaten the welfare of ethnic migrants already in the country." (Director of Asian Studies, Otago University, *The Independent* 21 May). Is this another way of saying that entry into New Zealand is dependent on migrants' ability to become Pakeha? Or does it simply mean that because New Zealand is a racist country it can't allow "foreigners" to come here out of fear that its racism will be exposed!

In similar vein, Ranganui Walker would have Asian migrants defer to Maori culture before plying their capitalist trade. This attitude also exhibits the threat that covert racism may rapidly become overt, if pushed by the "too rapid" introduction of large numbers of Asians.

Either way the assumption that capitalism can be "controlled" exhibits an ignorance of the capitalist system. Despite the ethnic origins of individual capitalists, despite their cultural conditioning, despite some of their "good" intentions—all must operate within an economic system which produces "profit" by extracting surplus value from the productive efforts of the working class. When Bolger tells us that wealthy migrants will create jobs for New Zealanders, he's right. Some jobs.

With capitalism in a state of crisis, the outbursts of racism in our own country are no different from those in the rest of the world. Violence between people of different ethnic backgrounds is evidence of economic crisis at the same time as it is cynically used by the ruling class in an attempt to protect itself from "outside" competition while dividing the working class.

That is why we are for the freedom of workers to migrate as easily as the capitalists. It is not the ethnic origin of the capitalist that bothers us but the fact that we are exploited by them all. That is why when we workers of the world unite regardless of their countries, we will not discriminate against capitalists. We will appropriate all capitalists whatever their nationality, race or creed!

- Abolish racist immigration laws!
- No deportations!



# ***New Zealand and the elections***

*Extracts from the press of Workers Power (New Zealand/ Aotearoa)*

Below we reproduce extracts from the pre-poll coverage of the Workers Power (NZ/ Aotearoa) paper in the run up to the 6 November election. The first piece deals with the section's attitude to the proposed change to the New Zealand electoral system from a British-style "first-past-the-post" contest to one based on a form of proportional representation. The people of New Zealand were asked to vote on this on the same day as they voted for their new government. On the day a majority voted to change the system. New elections after 1995 will be based on the Mixed Member Proportional system. The article explains why Workers Power argued for workers to back the change.

The outcome of the General Election on 6 November was a one seat majority for the outgoing National Party government under Jim Bolger. His party gained 50 seats in a 99 seat parliament. They lost 19 seats compared to the 1990 election. During 1993, as National's support ebbed, one of the main factors in their decline was the defection of sections of National's base in the middle class towards the maverick ex-National MP, Winston Peters. His party, New Zealand First (NZF) captured 12% of the vote in its first outing and their two seats could be important in giving Bolger a working majority or not. They may come to play a critical role in future elections based on proportional representation as their number of seats increase. In the second article Workers Power exposes the dangerous rhetoric of Peters' new party.

## ***Vote for MMP!***

Most people accept that our political system is democratic. The basis of democracy is people's right to vote in parliamentary elections. By voting people choose both their Member of Parliament and the party programme they prefer. The fact that the system is based on the exploitation of workers by capitalists is masked by a veneer of formal equality in the system of one person one vote. Any "choice" workers have is only about how to lessen their exploitation by capitalists but not to get rid of it, because the system keeps the system of exploitation going.

People do not normally question the limitations of the "choice" vote. The experience of governments blatantly betraying their promises over the last eight years if widely seen as the result of parliament being unrepresentative; of the Cabinet of the Treasury high-jacking parliament. This has made many begin to question some more obviously unfair aspects of the parliamentary system. It is the growing anger and disgust with politics that has made it necessary for the bosses to respond with proposals for electoral reform.

Parliamentary elections in the capitalists system are a democratic "front" for the real decision making that goes on in the main centres of power—the bureaucracy and the organisations of big business such as the Business Roundtable. But to maintain this pretence, parliament has to be seen to be representative of citizens. But there are ways of limiting the say of voters. Holding elections every three years in New Zealand means people have no say between elections.

There are a whole number of other ways of putting up barriers to participation such as making candidates put up large amounts of money, putting age, gender, property,

literacy and other limits on voting. But the most common method is the simple majority" system or the "First Past the Post" (FPP) which effectively gives the "minority" no representation at all. Governments can be elected by a minority of total votes. It also means that minority interests, in particular those of sections of the working class do not get represented.

FPP favours big established parties and a two party system, which distorts support in favour of incumbant parties so representation is unfair. In 1990 National got 47.8% of the vote and 69 seats. Labour got 35% of the vote and 30 seats. Greens got 6.8% of the vote and no seats, and the New Labour Party got 5.2% of the vote and 1 seat.

As well as being unrepresentative the FPP two party system lends itself to blatant misrepresentation. Traditionally, the vote for a party manifesto was accepted by the party as an obligation to stick to the manifesto if they became the government. But both Labour and National governments have changed the rules to suit themselves, reneged on election promises and trashed the point of voting.

In the 1987 election, Labour promised it would not privatise profitable state enterprises. But as the new government changed the Post Office into Telecom, NZ Post and Postbank. In 1990 National promised to increase superannuation and keep Area Health Boards. It did neither in office. As a result people have got fed up with the way both National and Labour governments have made their votes count for nothing. Feelings of disillusionment and cynicism about politics and politicians have grown.

Although the distrust was associated with free market policies and the deregulation of the economy, most people

are not yet recognising these as symptoms of a capitalist system in crisis, and the basis of the problem. They are still looking for a way to get their voice heard within the present system. The proposals to reform the electoral system, and bring in a system of proportional representation seems to be the answer. The Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system is the option that got popular support in the referendum last year because it was seen as a way of dealing with what was wrong with the system, getting round the two party monopoly and letting ordinary people have a voice.

Under MMP people will have two votes—one for a local MP like in the present system; another as a nationwide vote for a party. The parties would publish lists of potential MPs and get a proportion of these according to the level of support from the nationwide vote. This would reflect popular choice more than the current FFP system.

This system gives smaller parties more of a chance. But this is undermined by the National Electoral Reform Act's imposition of a 5% threshold—any small party getting less than 5% of the vote misses out. But Maori parties can get less than 5% under the special provisions retained for Maori representation. The number of Maori seats will be tied to the number of Maori on the electoral roll.

Workers Power supports MMP as a move to democratise the political system. It will allow a more accurate expression of the variety of political opinions within the mass of the population. For this reason we are against any threshold because that eliminates small, including communist, groups expressing their political opinions.

In general revolutionary socialists argue for, and support, democratic reforms of the capitalist parliament; (proportional representation, abolition of second chambers—such as Bolger's short-lived proposal for a new "upper house", abolition of monarchy, parliamentary control of cabinet and Prime Minister's department etc). Such reforms can never make parliament a vehicle for winning socialism but the experience of the bosses' attempts to oppose "democratisation", and the inability of a reformed parliament to challenge the real power of the state, are important methods of struggle to break the working class from its illusions in parliamentary democracy.

Although we know that MMP will not deliver real democracy, as a challenge to the present system it exposes the facade of the present "democracy" as the ruling classes move to resist any change that might erode the political power base. And our big capitalists are opposing MMP with their virulent dirty tricks campaign.

#### **Dirty Tricks**

In setting the terms of the referenda last year the National government put obstacles in the way of change. In the first referendum the voters decided between several systems. Although MMP got the most support and FPP was rejected, we vote against this year between MMP and FFP.

The reform case was also blatantly damaged by the government tying MMP to a 120 member parliament

and the abolition of Maori seats, exploiting people's hostility to MPs and Maori fear of losing representation. The government's close ally, the Campaign for Better Government (CBG) has continued this tactic this year by trying to get the vote for MMP based on a majority of all electors rather than those who vote. In this way the government was able to turn the broad recommendations of the Royal Commission in support of MMP to their advantage by adding detail when it suited them.

The CBG reveals capitalist support for the status quo. MPs and Peter Shirtcliffe of the CBG claim that proportional representation would make the system unstable. Shirtcliffe misused the current problems in the Italian system to "prove" his point. He asserted that the Italians were rejecting MMP when in fact they are moving towards it. Vigorous attempts are made to discredit the German MMP system by saying that several government changes have occurred without elections taking place. This reinforces the main thrust of the anti-MMP dirty tricks campaign that the MMP is undemocratic. It raises the fear that the "list system" means that anonymous MPs will not represent any constituency and not be accountable to the voters.

The CBG draws on big money and National for its support and has run a well financed advertising campaign which has been effectively muddying the waters since last year's referendum. Because of the way the government has handled the debate over reform, many people are not clear on the basic difference between the two systems. The CBG advertises deliberately exploit this uncertainty. Polls show MMP is losing support.

Capitalists are fearful that endorsement of MMP will affect government's iron hand over free market policies. Right wing economist Rufus Dawes (in *National Business Review*, 1/10/93) terms MMP an "idiot's delight" and argues that "weak popular coalition government [would] dance to the bleat of the welfare lobby to meet popular demand for 'more equity and fairness'". According to Dawes what is good for the electorate is what is good for the capitalist—a "tourniquet" on public spending.

On the other side is the Council of Trade Unions which endorses MMP and is assisting the Electoral reform Coalition to promote MMP. This campaign claims they are disadvantaged because they cannot match the level of the CBG campaign which has now launched a series of TV adverts. Calls for the government to review and restrict spending to match guidelines for campaign spending in the rest of the election campaign have been emphatically rejected by Justice Minister Doug Graham. There is too much at stake—the National government will use its power to maintain its advantage.

It is necessary for all those who support the introduction of MMP to campaign strongly in the weeks before the referendum on 6 November. A defeat for MMP will see the bosses able to continue their drive to complete the destruction of the welfare state with little or no opposition in parliament. A victory for MMP should be followed by an immediate campaign to dissolve parliament and to hold another General Election.

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October/November 1993**

# ***New Zealand First and the rise of populism***

*Reprinted from Workers Power #95, August/September 1993*

The immediate response to Winston Peter's NZ First Party by media commentators has been to minimise its appeal. He is portrayed as a spiv, a cult leader, has the 'x' factor, which is to condemn his supporters as naive and gullible. Not surprising for a media which is part of the political establishment as Peters correctly claims. This is despite poll figures which show that Peters' following cuts into the support of all other parties and comes a close third after Labour (NRB-Consultus Poll, National Business Review 22/7/93). The media hacks recognise the anger and cynicism in the electorate but cannot envisage the political shift that it implies. What the bourgeois commentators fail to understand is the extremely de-stabilising electoral effects of the massive economic and social changes of the last ten years.

The radical economic changes have had very destructive social effects. On top of the 250,000 official unemployed, 100,000's of workers laid off have used redundancy cheques to become owner-operators. They have tried to escape the working class only to end up trapped in the self-employed, but also self-exploiting, middle classes. The impact of ECA has been to partly destroy the unions, driving down membership for the days of compulsory unionism to now, when just 40% of workers are still in a union. A Victoria University study of Employment contracts published this month shows that 60% of workers surveyed have ditched their unions. Few of these workers were able to maintain across industry awards, most workers having accepted, if not agreed with, single workplace awards. As a result the collective strength of organised labour has been severely weakened, as many workers are fragmented and isolated in the struggle for economic independence or survival. Increasingly where workers once relied upon the unions and their own "Labour" party, they now look for individual solutions not in strike action, but in a populist leader who will solve all their problems for them.

It is Peters' attempt to "please everyone" that makes his 15 point Plan totally contradictory and unworkable. First he condemns the media as biased but depends on it to get his message across. Then he wants to spend more on employment pensions, health and education, at the same time as buying back state assets, cutting taxes and reducing debt! He doesn't say who is going to pay for this except that everyone must make sacrifices. Despite the veiled threat in this he has huge appeal for those most badly affected by the last 10 years. The NRB-Consultus Poll of 23 July showed that 45% of those earning under \$15,000 supported Peters compared with 20% for each of National and Labour and 14% for the Alliance.

This is the social base of Peters' appeal. He is outside the established parties. He is not associated with their betrayals. On the contrary he is seen to be an honest fighter against the corrupt politicians. As a strong charismatic leader he can mobilise the widespread anger against the "rich elite" and their political and media stooges and at the same time promise to restore direct democracy to the ordinary person. This appeal is crystallised for example in Peters' instant promise to buy back NZ Rail at its selling price within 5 months of becoming government.

These are the social factors which explain the decline in class politics and the rising appeal of Peters' populism to the middle class today. But what is the electoral significance of a rising populism?

## **What is Populism?**

Populism is a political response of the middle class to a growing social crisis when both the ruling class and the working class are unable to offer a clear leadership and a way out of the crisis. The organised labour movement has suffered 10 years of defeats and workers in general are in retreat. Despite isolated fightbacks there is no generalised fightback capable of putting demands on Labour or New Labour to roll back these attacks. There is no working class leadership able to mobilise and unite militant struggles. At the same time widespread opposition to further cuts in social spending on health, housing, education and benefits has put a stop to the National Government's plans to balance the budget. The growth achieved by 10 years of restructuring is weak and fragile. Yet no sustained return to profitability is possible without massive further attacks on social spending and the welfare state.

Neither Labour nor National seems capable of breaking this present class stalemate. This is where Winston Peters comes in. He is able to exploit this unstable balance of class forces by appealing to national unity against the enemy within and without. Populism unites people around appeals to equal citizenship rights. The question then becomes who is a citizen? All New Zealanders should unite against aliens and foreigners. But who are the aliens and foreigners? Populism diverts workers away from united class struggle to overthrow the ruling class. Instead it divides workers along national lines by offering as the solution to social crisis, the exclusion of non-citizens from sharing in the national wealth. The logic of this begins with deporting migrant workers but it develops into excluding other people from "citizenship - namely any social group which appears to

threaten the economic security of the middle classes!

A populist party under Peters could break the class deadlock and open the way for a solution to the crisis for the bosses. It would not be capable of solving the basic problems of the economy - economic nationalism is a barrier to further capitalist growth - but it could mobilise middle class support to justify cutting welfare rights to aliens, a clampdown on migration, at the expense of further dividing and weakening the working class. Under MMP a Peters NZ First party could at least hold the balance of power and ensure that the middle class was a force in politics.

### Stop Pop!

For Marxists it is necessary to understand reality correctly in order to attempt to change it. The long term threat of populism is that it shifts the electoral balance in favour of the middle classes and prepared then for more extreme measures against the working class if they become necessary.

So the threat of a Peters Party to the working class is not just in its initial guise as in favour of more and better social welfare.

If the working class resists attacks on the rights of migrant workers for example, then populism could lead to open attacks on an "alien" influence in the working class including unionists, intellectuals, communists, artists, lesbians and gays. This is why it is vital for all workers and oppressed people to resist the reactionary nationalist appeals of populism. Populism is sooner or later a threat to all democratic rights and the existence of organised labour, therefore we must mobilise workers around the most basic defensive class demands and the measures necessary to achieve them.

Of course, the first priority must be to organise and fight for rank and file control of the unions to turn them into fighting, democratic unions. However, because the elections are looming and workers may respond to the

calls of the CTU and TUF to vote Labour on the basis that it will repeal the ECA, we should be prepared to unite with them in a united front against Peters.

But we wouldn't leave it at the ECA. We would fight to put other demands on Labour to expose its failure to defend workers interests. We would say to Labour, "This is what the working class needs to survive. You claim to be a Labour Party, let us see you prove it!". We would say to workers, "This is what we need to survive, we demand that Labour prove that it is a workers' party. When it fails to fulfil these demands, you will know then that workers need to fight for their own Workers' Government."

- Repeal the ECA! Restore 40 hour week, overtime rated and right of union coverage!
- Jobs for all on living wage set by workers' committees. Immediate state job creation programme!
- No deportations! Open entry for migrant workers and refugees!
- Equal rights for women, Maori, lesbians and gays and all other oppressed groups!
- Defend and extend free, universal health education, housing and welfare benefits! Tax the rich!
- Stop the sale of state assets! Repudiate the national debt!
- Re-nationalise strategic state assets, without compensation and under workers' control!
- Nationalise the major banks and corporations without compensation and under workers' control!

# ***For an all-out strike of public sector workers!***

*Pouvoir Ouvrier (France) leaflet distributed during the day of action in the public sector, 18 November 1993*

Air France, Chausson and the students have forced the government to retreat.

Balladur and the right wanted to put their programme into practice quietly, in order to deceive the workers. With their massive parliamentary majority, they aimed to carry out their attacks one at a time, trying to create a "consensus" and not to rock the boat too much.

Today, thanks in large part to the workers of Air France, this strategy is in shreds.

When the government decided to slash 4000 jobs at Air France and to cut wages by 30%, it knew that the stakes were high: failure would put into question its whole policy of attacks against the public sector (wage cuts, reductions in working conditions, privatisations).

The struggle of the Air France workers threatened this policy; that's why the government decided to withdraw Attali's austerity plan and to sack the author.

The government has also partially retreated in the face of the student movement, because above all it fears the convergence of workers' and students' struggles, as happened in May 1968.

And the determined combat waged by the Chausson workers has led to an initial victory: the suspension of the programme of sackings.

## **The attacks remain real**

But we shouldn't fool ourselves: the government has not decisively given in over Air France. Bosson and Balladur intend to push through the 4000 job losses and to put forward a new "fairer" plan after several months of demobilising negotiations with the unions.

So, at the end of the day, the workers will still have to pay for the "restabilisation" of the company!

The rest of the public sector is going to be attacked in the same way; one after another, the various companies will have to submit to an Attali-style plan, in order to become more profitable and attractive to potential buyers.

## **For a new wave of workers struggles!**

We should all draw the lesson of the Air France strikers, of their determination and their refusal to give in faced with the government and the batons of the CRS riot police. Future struggles must involve all those

workers who face the same threats.

The government has already sold the BNP at cut price; today it's doing the same thing with Rhine-Poulenc. Soon it will be the turn of the Post Office and of Air France to pay for the government's neo-liberal policy. The 4,000 job losses proposed at Air France need to be put in the context of the 2,850 proposed at Bull, the 1,669 at Thomson and the thousands of other job losses announced by the government on "Black Wednesday" in September.

The workers throughout the public sector face the same attacks. The same attacks, the same answer: the "days of action" must lead to an all out strike in the public sector. It's the only way to get real results and to make the government give in.

The demands of the strike should be: the withdrawal of all "stabilisation" plans and of all threats of sacking, an across-the-board pay increase of 1,500f and the immediate introduction of the 35 hour week with no loss of pay and with equivalent job-sharing!

On this basis there can be a united fightback against Balladur's anti-working class policies. But in order to win, we will have to change how we fight.

## **The responsibility of the union leaders**

The main union federations have not been at the head of recent struggles. In the case of Air France, they were generally overtaken by the combativity of the workers whom they vainly tried to hold back. Many union leaders preferred, and prefer, negotiations and compromises, even symbolic ones.

These same union federations have waited until today before calling a day of action.

Why so late? An all-out strike of the whole of the public sector should have been called during the Air France strike.

Why was the Paris metro on strike on 9 and 10 November, Air Inter the 10 November, the social security the 15 November, the electricity workers on the 23 November and the rail workers on the 25 November?

Everyone can see the power and the inspiration that a united strike of all these workers would have had. The strategy of separate strikes is a demobilising one; its real aim is to prevent at all costs an explosion of workers' anger.

It's up to us to ensure that today's day of action is not just another short-lived symbolic protest which poses no threat to the bosses.

### **The lessons of Roissy and Orly**

What are the lessons of the Air France strike?

There has been a lot of talk of the role of the rank and file in the strike, notably because most of the strikers were not union members.

And yet no strike committee was elected, at either of the Paris airports, Roissy and Orly.

Despite the very real distrust shown by the strikers towards the union leaders, they did not create the kind of alternative structures which would have enabled them to pull in the vast majority of strikers and to oblige the union leaders to follow the decisions of the rank and file.

To do this we need the greatest amount of democracy: a strike committee for each company must be elected from mass meetings, with a single national strike committee.

These committees must be immediately recallable by the mass meetings. Any negotiation must be open, any proposal from the bosses must be discussed and decided upon in mass meetings.

We must also ensure that workers join unions en masse, that they reclaim the unions, and that union unity is forged by workers in struggle.

Finally, as the confrontations of Roissy and Orly showed, the government will not hesitate to attack strikers and to use the forces of "law and order" to break strikes.

Faced with Balladur's violence, we have to protect

ourselves! To defend the movement, we must organise defence squads, able to defend pickets and strike action against the CRS, the gendarmes and the gardes mobiles.

### **The stakes are high**

A large part of the working population is fed up and ready to fight back.

Unemployment is soaring, wages are declining, and the government has lost its confidence. The courage and the strength of the Air France strikers have raised the morale of the whole of the working class.

This key strike shows us how to fight back against the government's attacks. The students have taken up the fight. If we follow the lead of these audacious struggles, we could produce a total change in the political situation.

For years, we have been on the retreat. Today, we can take the initiative, change the social climate, put Balladur on the defensive and deal a massive blow to his profit-based system which puts money before the needs of people.

The government is afraid of the perspective of a generalised fightback. That's exactly what we need. It was the threat of such a movement that enabled Air France and the students to make the government retreat.

In this struggle, neither the union leaders, nor the two main workers' parties, and even less Mitterrand will be reliable allies.

Workers should only put their trust in their own force. They should seize the initiative and ensure that strikes are strengthened and extended to other sectors.

It's the road to victory for everyone!

# After Shankill and Greysteel . . .

Irish Workers Group leaflet, 3 November 1993

The murder gangs of Ulster Loyalism have struck again in Greysteel. This latest episode in what these monsters dub 'ethnic cleaning' creates a sense of mounting peril and beleaguerment among the anti-unionist masses in town and country. For it is no accident, as every anti-unionist knows, that the death squads are able to act with such murderous efficiency and impunity whenever they strike.

Not only are whole sections of the so-called 'security forces' complicit in providing them with both the means and opportunity of striking where they will; but it is to the immediate political advantage of British Army, RUC and British government leaders that they can do so.

Why? Because since British troops first arrived on the streets of Ulster, whatever tactical reforms Britain may have made, it has remained the central plank of capitalist imperialist policy to break the back of the anti-unionist resistance to the prisonhouse of the Northern state.

For the past two decades or more, wide sections of anti-unionist workers and youth have been at the mercy of the unrelenting and systematic terror of the war policy of British imperialism—lifting, framing, brutalising, torture, mass terror and mass murder. Throughout all of it, indeed even before it, loyalist murder gangs—from the Malvern Street killers of 1966, through the Shankill Butchers of the '70s, to the present day—have acted, with varying measures of support from the forces of the Northern Ireland state, to further terrorise and demoralise the anti-unionist masses.

Therefore the current round of hand wringing, regret and sorrow from the British Government, police and army chiefs is the vilest hypocrisy, fooling no-one. Hundreds of RUC men could be mobilised on a Sunday in October to escort a parade of 100 Orangemen around Belfast, but none to protect a Kennedy Way workplace full of anti-unionist workers who were the most likely target for loyalist revenge killings.

It is against such a reality that we need to honestly and fearlessly assess the present widespread calls and campaigns for "peace". No doubt there is a strong feeling of support for the Hume/Adams initiative. Twenty-five years of struggle, with no end in sight, even less of 'victory', has clearly taken its toll of lives and morale among thousands in the anti-unionist communities and workplaces. Moreover the fact that the Republican Movement has presented the Hume-Adams initiative as 'an honourable compromise' has strengthened the sentiment for peace. But anti-unionists should be clear that peace as a priority is *not* how either the British or Irish governments see it, let alone Ulster unionists.

For a start, the Tory government depends for its life on its deal with the Unionists. Any agreement which made the slightest concession at this moment, however small, to Irish nationalists, will spell the end of Unionist support for Major in parliament, and be used to whip up mass loyalist reaction on the streets.

Furthermore, both the British and Unionists clearly saw in the Hume/Adams initiative a signal that the Republican struggle is in a deep crisis. They reckon, correctly a total victory may be within their grasp—that the Republican Movement and the anti-unionist community are prepared to end their resistance, in return for a verbal formula which acknowledges both the Irish right to self-determination, but crucially also a loyalist veto. They smell blood!

That is why the British, the unionists, the Irish government, the clergy and the leaders of the ICTU are involved in the most massive peace campaign since the '70s. Its purpose is simple—to delude tens of thousands with the idea that the mood of 'peace' will open up the road to justice and reconciliation, all the better to weaken, marginalize and eventually destroy anti-unionist resistance to the brutality of the northern state itself. The real question that anti-unionist workers should continue to ask is *peace for whom?*

A 'peace' which will leave the British Army, RUC (and loyalist death squads) with their veto? 'Peace' in terms which will leave anti-unionists still 2.5 times more likely to be on the dole while Orange patronage continues unabated? 'Peace' in a society that will remain an economic and social 'black hole', where the wealthy and powerful middle class (Catholics and Protestants) look on while workers are condemned to an endless division among themselves over crumbs?

The fact that tens of thousands of anti-unionists believe there is no other way forward underlines the bankruptcy of Republicanism. Sinn Fein's belief that a few hundred guerrillas, with support from only a minority of anti-unionists could drive out British imperialism, has been cruelly and painfully exposed. Yet, despite the fact that it has failed to win the support of either the majority of nationalist workers in the North, hardly any in the South and absolutely none from the Protestant working class, it has carried on with policies of armed struggle and a bombing campaign whose overall effect has been to harden the divisions within the working class.

Now, Sinn Fein spokespersons admit, the Protestant working class cannot be bombed into a united Ireland, while week after week the IRA destroys Protestant town centres!

Republicans for years have poured scorn on those who, like the IWG, have consistently argued that any strategy aimed at overthrowing the Northern State must be based on an understanding of the island as a whole being a capitalist system tied into collaboration with British and world capitalist imperialism.

Any strategy needed to begin from the nature and existence of both states, and seek to mobilise the Irish working class and oppressed in a fight to the death against all aspects of exploitation and oppression economic, social, political, national.

Such a perspective of mass struggle—for workers' revolution to overthrow both states—held out the sole chance of winning Protestant workers to the goal not of Sinn Fein's 'democratic' capitalist Republic, but a workers' republic.

The Republican Movement throughout the last two decades has relentlessly opposed any such perspective of organising among anti-unionists and southern workers as the key to breaking the logjam in the North.

Such a perspective fundamentally challenges Republican illusions that Fianna Fail and its 'grass roots' would one day be 'won' to the struggle for national unity!

Now the masses face both an onslaught of state and establishment propaganda alongside a loyalist murder campaign while Sinn Fein actions openly suggest that its strategy has failed as it encourages its members and supporters to join the 'peace' initiatives and protests. The results are clear for all to see. Anti-unionists have been rendered politically and physically defenceless. The adventurist attempt by the IRA to wipe out the loyalist 'high command' on the Shankill merely underlined both the desperation and the inadequacy of armed adventures which are no substitute for the mobilisation of the anti-unionist masses.

#### **Local Committees of Resistance**

The building of local committees of self-defence is urgently needed. There is anger as well as frustration among anti-unionists! Many want to see action, no doubt anticipating a Republican response against the loyalist paramilitaries. But such action cannot be a solution to the needs of whole communities and workplaces.

Only self-defence groups, made up of anti-unionist workers and trade unionists with delegates from community groups, political organisations, youth, women and the unemployed etc. can unite workplaces and localities and prepare them against further loyalist attacks.

On the basis of such committees specially selected vigilante squads, subject to the control and discipline of each committee, must be trained. Furthermore, in order

to co-ordinate actions a centralised leadership must be elected and recallable, to plan and organise mass demonstrations, protests and strikes against every move of either loyalist hit squads or the forces of the state.

We must fight to win support from the trade union movement for every action we take. The bureaucrats of the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU will oppose every demand tooth and nail. To resist them (and loyalist control of trade union branches!) we need to create in the South a broad network of support groups among Irish workers and others to provide material, physical and political support to the anti-unionist masses, while simultaneously demanding that the resources of the Irish trade union and labour movement be put at their disposal.

Such measures would, of course, concretely bring the struggle up against the collaboration role of the Irish state and its government. We should demand an end to police and army surveillance on the border, and along with them the repeal of all repressive legislation including Section 31, which keeps the masses ignorant of the real conditions and experience of the northern nationalist ghettos.

In a situation of deepening beleaguerment of the anti-unionists we should demand and fight for the building of a mass united front of workers to undertake the task of armed solidarity.

Such an organised democratic mobilisation of solidarity against the Northern State and its loyalist pogromists would have to oppose and undermine the collaborationist role of the Southern state. It would have to demand the opening of the arsenals of the Irish state to equip the committees of self-defence. In such a context it would have to openly encourage the building among soldiers of local committees of support as the key to undermining and breaking the resistance of the officer class.

- No illusions in the "peace" peddled by our oppressors and class enemies!

- No illusions in the Hume/Adams initiative as any lasting solution!

- For mass democratic committees of self-defence and political action of workers and communities against imperialist repression in Northern Ireland. All armed action to be subject to this democratic control!

- For a united front mobilisation of workers, socialists and republicans throughout the thirty two counties to fight for these demands.

- For British troops out now, and the disarming and disbanding of the RUC and Royal Irish Regiment!

- For release of all anti-imperialist and socialist fighters jailed for their opposition to the Northern State!



# ***Peru: down with the dictatorship and its new constitution!***

*International Secretariat, 21 September 1993*

At the end of October there will be a referendum in Peru to adopt a new constitution. The dictatorship's "Democratic Constituent Congress" (DCC) adopted a new "Magna Carta" in which various democratic and working class historical conquests will be abolished.

Fifteen years ago, when Peru was going through a revolutionary situation characterised by mass political general strikes and the growth of the far left, the Constituent Assembly adopted a bourgeois constitution that included clauses that formally guaranteed job and social security, free public education, state monopoly of strategic industries, the right to rise up against any coup d'etat attempt, democratic freedoms, sovereignty of the parliament, etc. But now Fujimori heads a political counter-revolution to construct a more savage capitalism and an East Asian type strong "democratic" dictatorship.

Fujimori annulled huge historical conquests that were supposedly guaranteed under the previous constitution. In April 1992 he made a "self-coup d'etat" dissolving parliament and purging the judiciary. The military are now the real power in the country. More and more clandestine graves are discovered. Every week dozens more are butchered by the repressive forces. Today there are thousands of political prisoners that can be put on trial without a lawyer, without judges before secret tribunals. They can be sentenced to rot in jail until they die in small isolated jails.

Fujimori rules Peru as a "Shogun". He can do what he wants and without being accountable to anyone. He is not interested in having his own party. He is surrounded by a team of yuppie technocrats and free-market entrepreneurs and is mainly backed by Japanese imperialism and "little tigers" of East Asia. His most important weapon is the terrible Intelligence Service that taps the telephones and interferes constantly in the private lives of anyone they suspect.

During three years of Fujimori's "democracy" hundreds of thousands have lost their jobs, thousands of activists and trade union leaders have been sacked; hundreds of factories are now closed; nearly 10,000 have been murdered and less than 10% of the adult population has stable employment. In the last five years national output has shrunk by one third and nearly all the workers receive less than the minimum wage needed to fill a basic basket of food for subsistence.

With his new constitution Fujimori would not only liquidate the democratic and workers' movements' conquests and attack local and regional autonomy. He would provide cast iron guarantees to the multinationals so that they can continue to plunder the country of their natural resources, ruin the ecological balance and destroy the workforce. In addition it would also introduce

two new reactionary measures: the death penalty for the anti-imperialist guerrilla leaders and the ability to re-elect the president for a second term.

With the introduction of the death penalty for political opponents Fujimori effectively tears up the human rights treaty that all Latin American states put their signature to. What is worse, Fujimori will try to implement it retrospectively, something that even the most reactionary reactionary regimes do not dare to do.

We don't give political support to the stalinist and popular frontist MRTA and PCP-SL. Moreover, we condemn these militarist-stalinists when they kill poor peasant and union leaders. But we don't give this bourgeois state the authority to judge them. We demand the release of all political prisoners and we only give the workers' movement the authority to judge them.

Fujimori wants to be re-elected as a powerful president of Peru. Seventy years ago Leguía took the same path and he was overthrown after 11 years of "constitutional dictatorship". The example of Leguía, Stroessner and Somoza shows that "constitutional" dictatorships can meet their end in mass rebellions.

Unfortunately, despite his reactionary actions Fujimori remains popular. The opinion polls constantly give him a 60% approval rating. The reason why this reactionary bloody dictator has mass support is because of the great discredit that the main political parties have fallen into together with the record of the stalinised and social democratised left, the union bureaucracy, and the authoritarian guerrillas.

In 1980 the first civilian government was elected after 12 years of military nationalist dictatorship. Throughout the 1980s the Peruvian population suffered more than 60 economic austerity packages, chronic inflation and hyper-inflation, a big fall in production and a big increase in unemployment and underemployment. The majority of the population have become not industrial workers or peasants but mainly street sellers and part of the informal sector. In ten years of "democracy" all the political parties have been discredited by supporting or participating in governments that created economic chaos and killed thousands. They plundered the municipal and national budgets and participated in corrupt business. In 1980 the Maoist-Stalinist PCP-SL started his "popular war" and three years later the Castro-Stalinist MRTA start its insurgence. The guerrilla movement's support peaked at the end of the 1980's. They became very unpopular. The Senderistas alienated the population when they tried to impose a regime of terror in the areas in which they have influence, when they killed thousands of poor people that didn't obey their dictats, when they shot popular and union leaders (like Moyano,

Chiara, etc.), when they destroyed roads, bridges, factories and electric pylons, when they tried to destroy the union and popular organisations that they couldn't control. The MRTA tried to appear as a more "human" guerrilla force but they too alienated the exploited and they disintegrated into several cliques that murdered each other. The capture of the main leaders of the guerrilla organisations was a strong blow to them. Now important sectors that supported the guerrillas in the past are organised by the army and support the regime.

The "left" has a criminal record. The United Left cohabitated with the Garcia government which started the hyper-inflation and hyper-recession, which supported the repression against the Maoist guerrilla fighters. Garcia's government betrayed the resistance to the economic austerity programmes and in the city councils they sacked workers, repressed strikes and were deeply mired in corruption. The left called for a vote for Fujimori in the presidential elections of 1990, they demobilised the workers in the face of the Fuji-shock and they now support the pro-IMF, pro-privatisation and pro-austerity programmes.

The complete discrediting of the traditional political elite and the parties was capitalised upon by a "clean", "technical" and seemingly "independent" leader that promised to rescue Peru with Japanese and foreign investment. Fujimori became popular as the strong man that could clean up the corruption, purge the rotten parliament and tribunals and establish order. The majority of the petit bourgeoisie and the street-sellers support him as the great salvation that could end the economic chaos and hyper-inflation. The army backed him as the man that could smash the subversives. The US imperialists tolerated him as a strong man to defeat the "Narco-terrorists". The Peruvian capitalist are with him because he destroyed the unions' power.

Over the last years independent right wing bourgeois candidates have become more popular than the parties. When Fujimori made his coup d'etat 80% of the population supported him. In the elections for the Constitutional Congress the traditional parties received a minority of the vote. In the last (April 1993) municipal elections the left, that in 1986 had one third of the national vote, received less than 5%. In Lima the spectrum was polarised between two reactionary "anti-parties" and pro-dictatorship candidates. Now Fujimori and the "Yes for the new constitution" is ahead in the opinion polls.

The campaign for the "NO" to the constitution is led by the traditional capitalist parties. All of these agree with Fujimori on the necessity to smash the subversives, eliminate working class and democratic conquests, over privatisation, on the IMF programmes and on a neo-liberal economic programme.

All of them had their hands stained with the blood of thousands of peasant, workers and political prisoners who have been massacred. But they don't want to be diminished by a regime that does not want to rule through political parties and that have strong despotic tendencies.

Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the former UNO's General Secretary, is trying to appear as the great leader of the united opposition. He has received the support of the social-christian PPC, the APRA and several left leaders. He only criticizes the "asiatic dictatorship" model but he is in favour of neo-liberal democracy. This imperialist

puppet who backed the imperialist attack on Iraq, could only replace Fujimori's regime with another pro-imperialist anti-popular government.

In the coming referendum we are in favour of a massive NO vote. We reject the PCP-SL's call for a boycott because the masses do not recognise the illegitimacy of this campaign. A boycott will strengthen Fujimori and anyway it could only be imposed through terror against the population. At the same time that we are for a massive NO vote and even for critical participation in some NO campaign meetings we are for the sharpest political differentiation from the bourgeois "no vote" camp. A political block with APRA, AP, PPC and Pérez de Cuéllar would mean a popular front with reactionary capitalists that would only object to the most anti-democratic aspects of the new constitution. But they back Fujimori's anti-working class content. The bourgeois opposition is against the death penalty but they are in favour of other kinds of strong repression against the subversives, the peasants and the workers' movements. They might be against Fujimori's re-election but they are in favour of the corrupt capitalist democracy, the privatisation, the sackings etc.

We demand that the CGTP, CCP, SUTEP, CUS, PCP, UNIR, PUM and all the workers organisations and left movements should create a workers and anti-imperialist united front to defend working class conquests and liberties and oppose the new constitution, maintaining class independence and opposition. We demand that they should organise an independent leadership and demonstrations that reject the new constitution for allowing for Fujimori's re-election and the death penalty. But at the same time we fight to get this leadership to demand job security, living wages of no less than \$500, a sliding scale of wages and working hours, full employment or full pay, expropriation of all the companies that announce closure, nationalisation of the monopolies and foreign companies, cancellation of the external debt, freedom for all political prisoners, and self-defense for working class and popular committees. We demand that they organise a national assembly of rank and file delegates from all the union and popular organisations to call for a national stoppage.

We demand of the guerrilla movements that they abandon their popular frontist and authoritarian strategies, stop their attacks against the workers' movement and put themselves under the discipline of the workers' and popular organisations.

Against the new constitution we do not defend the present constitution. We demand immediate elections to a new and sovereign Constituent Assembly. It should be convened without military rule, curfews and state of emergencies in any part of the country, with freedom for all political prisoners, with workers and popular control of the electoral process, with a vote to the soldiers, to all Peruvians over 16 or under that age that work and with the media placed under workers and popular control.

When the bourgeois opposition call for mass meetings and demonstrations revolutionaries should not adopt a sectarian attitude. At the same time as criticising their demands we should distribute leaflets and critically participate in order to unmask them. We should press their rank and file to fight. Our main aim is that the workers' movement should try to unite and try to lead the opposition to Fujimori. •

# **No to Yeltsin's constitution! Vote CPRF, fight restoration!**

The referendum and elections of 12 December in Russia is designed to give a constitutional seal of approval to a highly illegal act. For such was Yeltsin's bonapartist coup d'état carried out between 21 September and 4 October. The coup resolved the duality of power at the centre of the Russian Federation that had inhibited his efforts to restore capitalism. In the period which followed Yeltsin set out to spread his unified control over all the regions and republics of the Federation.

How did Yeltsin succeed on this occasion when his previous coups—in November 1992 and April 1993—proved wholly or partly abortive? The answer lies in the struggle for control of the decisive levers of the coercive machinery which has been going on since he won the referendum in April this year. Western and Russian commentators blamed Yeltsin for weakness and indecision then in not closing down parliament and calling elections. But the truth is that the situation of dual powerlessness that still existed prevented any decisive measures.

A bitter struggle raged during the spring and early summer for the undivided control of the armed forces that form the core of the state machine. Nowhere was this more decisive than in the vast repressive network of the MVD (the Interior Ministry) which gathered into itself nearly all the functions of the old Russian KGB. This ministry has divisions of its own troops and police as well as having various Army divisions closely associated with it. These forces are the real "bodies of armed men" charged with internal order. It was here that the fiercest fight first broke out between those who supported Yeltsin's presidential power and those, including the head of the MVD, Viktor Barranikov, who had moved over towards Yeltsin's parliamentary opponents headed by Alexander Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov.

The MVD itself was deeply divided like all other parts of the state machine. Many commentators have always assumed that it was a "conservative" bastion because of its links to the military industrial complex and its long term role (as the KGB) in forming the bedrock of the Stalinist dictatorship. But the the MDV has over the last two to three years become deeply involved in capitalist enterprise. Former KGB officers, often the most intelligent and knowledgeable people in the bureaucracy, easily inserted themselves into the burgeoning class of businessmen involved in dealing between the remains of the state economy, the newly privatised trading system and foreign businesses seeking to penetrate Russia. In effect, these "security bureaucrats" were able to transfer their

parasitism from the centrally planned economy to direct individual parasitism on the disintegrating planned economy and the emerging trading enterprises. The top layers of the old KGB and new MVD went into business in a big way. Large numbers of the lower echelons have transformed themselves into private security agencies for the new class of "businessmen".

At the same time these people were still firmly wedded to the continuation of absolute central control by the Russian Federation over the regions. If the local and republican enterprise managers were to grab hold of real sovereignty, including control of foreign trade, then the central MVD personnel would be deprived of their source of income. They also became hostile to those state managers who were not only resisting the market policies of Gaidar and Yeltsin but who threatened to expose and punish the corruption of the latter. They themselves were engaged in corruption on a grand scale. Indeed, capitalist restoration and widespread theft of state property are one and the same process where the legal framework for the transition process is ill-defined or non-existent. It is as natural and as absolutely inseparable from the process as piracy, looting and plunder were inseparable from the "primitive accumulation" phase of capitalism a few centuries ago.

There was a large and growing stratum of the MVD which was very fearful of the policies of Khasbulatov and Rutskoi. The latter were seen as hostile to the new entrepreneurial layer and guilty of making too many concessions to the regions and to the nationalists. This battle was won within the MVD by the pro-Yeltsin forces. Barranikov was replaced in July 1993 by Nikolai Golushko, a KGB veteran of thirty years experience. A thoroughgoing purge of parliamentary supporters was launched by Golushko which brought the MVD over decisively into Yeltsin's camp.

During the September confrontation with parliament Khasbulatov's loss of any real influence within the KGB was revealed when he appointed his own rivals as defence and security ministers (Barranikov at Security and Vladislav Achalov at Defence). Golushko, not defence minister Pavel Grachov, was the key figure in carrying through the military side of Yeltsin's coup. The army was throughout unreliable and its units played no real role until it was clear that Rutskoi and Khasbulatov were finished. Despite awarding Grachov a medal in the immediate aftermath, by 15 November Yeltsin was publically criticising Grachov for his vacillation and indecision when it came to storming the White House. In reality, the MVD units which surrounded the General

Staff building to "protect" it were there to prevent any elements of the high command going over to the side of parliament. Only elite formations either directly under MVD command, or with special liaison with it, carried out the decisive fighting for Yeltsin.

The army proper preserved a studied neutrality. The

Taman motor rifle division, the Kantemirov tank division the Tula, Pskov and Ryazan airborne divisions, were all under the effective command of the MVD. In addition it was the MVD Dzerzhinsky Division that saved the Ostankino TV station, which was to prove the decisive turning point during the first days of October.

## Who stands for what in the Russian elections?

Elections are to be held to the Council of the Federation (178 seats) and the State Duma (450 seats). These will take place under a mixed system of first-past-the-post constituency based polls and election from party lists chosen under proportional representation (PR).

By the deadline of 6 November 21 parties had achieved the 100,000 signatures needed to pass over the eligibility threshold for standing. However, only thirteen will in fact stand. Moreover, only eight of these have any chance of surmounting the 5% threshold for election on the PR list. They are;

**Russia's Choice** led by first deputy premier Yegor Gaidar and Anatoly Chubais, minister in charge of privatisation. Other top leaders include Gennady Burbulis, the key figure in Yeltsin's inner circle and mastermind behind the October coup. The Movement of Democratic Russia, the main organisation of the democratic intelligentsia, has joined it on condition that it remained a bloc and not a formal party. Russia's Choice is thus the main neo-liberal, fast-track restorationist party. Since the leaders are government ministers they have unlimited access to the media which they have used to the full.

As well as Russia's Choice there are two other main "Yeltsinite" parties but which are fearful of the unpopularity of the "shock therapy" to which Gaidar is inseparably linked. They thus distance themselves from him and call for more "social" protection against the effects of the reforms. These parties or blocs are;

**The Party for Russian Unity and Concord** headed by deputy premier Sergei Shakhrai. It stands for a less centralized Russian state and so gains support from regional representatives, it has some relationship with Russia's Prime Minister, Victor Chernomyrdin.

**The Movement for Democratic Reform** headed by St Petersburg mayor Anatoly Sobchak and former Moscow mayor Gavril Popov. It is heavily based in, but also limited to, these two cities. It too is strongly pro-privatisation but calls for more social guarantees.

**Yavlinsky-Boldyrev-Lukhin-Bloc**, whose most prominent figure is the economist Grigory Yavlinsky. This bloc is critical of the privatisation programme, favours a less slavishly pro-US foreign policy and a tougher approach to the "near abroad"—the other states of the CIS.

All these parties would probably form a pro-Yeltsin bloc in the Duma to continue the neo-liberal reform with a little social camouflage.

Beyond these Yeltsinite or "presidential" parties lie a number of parties which, like the "Centre" in the old parliament, seek to slow down or stop the neo-liberal measures, stop the wholesale opening up of the economy

and the country's resources to foreign capital and seek some sort of re-assertion of Russia's hegemony over the CIS states. They are, in essence, Russian nationalist, state capitalist restorationists. They include;

**The Civic Union for Stability Justice and Progress**; this is the rump of the old Civic Union led by Alexander Volsky and is still rooted among the directors of the large scale state industrial enterprises and what has been called the "military industrial complex". It is in a close alliance with the **Agrarian Party of Russia** led by Mikhail Lapshin, representing similar strata in the vast collective farms which still "own" most of the land. They wish above all to preserve the subsidies to the loss-making state enterprises though they have a declared aim of privatisation. The undeclared aim is that the directors shall be the first beneficiaries and the future owners. The Civic Union urges the halting of radical reform and a partial return to central planning. It seeks to restore the former Soviet Union "by consent".

**The Democratic Party of Russia**, led by Nikolai Travkin. Unlike the Civic Union, this party originates from the former democratic opposition movement but has evolved into a more strongly nationalist force. It is harshly critical of the neo-liberals for selling out Russia to the west.

Besides these parties of the Yeltsinite restorationists and the state capitalist centre there are two parties, one of the extreme right the other of the Stalinist left.

**The Liberal Democratic Party**; led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. A Great Russian Chauvinist demagogue who denounces all the other nationalities and calls for the forcible submission of the other CIS states to Russian control. He draws his support from the elderly, the unemployed and the most desperate sectors of the population. The Zhirinovskiy movement could evolve quickly into an openly fascist one.

**The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)**, headed by Gennady Zygunov and has as its key slogans, "Labour, Democracy, Justice". This Stalinist party is calling for a "no" vote on the constitution which it denounces as bonapartist. It advocates a return to the economic system which prevailed before January 1992. It proclaims its intention to set up a "broad communist-patriotic bloc" and is co-operating with the Agrarian Party of Russia, the Russian All-Peoples' Union, The Constitutional Democratic Party and the Christian Democratic Movement.

The CPRF thus combines defence of the planned economy—at least as it was left after Gorbachev's marketising reforms, a denunciation of Yeltsin for selling out to imperialism at home and abroad, and Great Russian Chauvinism.

## Yeltsin resolves dual power in Russia

After Yeltsin had used the crushing of parliament to bring under his undivided control the army as well as the MVD forces he turned his attention to the hitherto rebellious regions and republics of the Russian Federation. He demanded that those which had criticised his 21 September decree and recognised Khasbulatov and Rutskoi's executive authority to renounce their actions and dissolve themselves.

In the regions (oblasts) and republics of the Federation the duality of power was expressed for two years in the presidentially appointed Heads of Administration, on the one side, and the city, oblast or republican Supreme Soviets, on the other. The former were effectively bonapartist prefects but they had been unable to exert total power since the soviets retained legislative power and the army was formally neutral. In reality, the latter leaned to one side or another depending on the local high command.

After 21 September large number of regions erupted in conflict between the Heads of Administration, most of whom recognised Yeltsin's coup, and the Soviets, a majority of which refused to recognise his dissolution of parliament and the Supreme Court.

Key areas of resistance to Yeltsin were the Volga, Central Black Earth and North Caucasus economic regions in European Russia. Located in a belt west, south and east of Moscow these are the sites of much of Russia's heavy industry. These were the regions which voted most heavily against Yeltsin and the economic reform in the April referendum. In addition, there was strong resistance from the Urals and the West Siberian region especially Novosibirsk. Further opposition came from Amur in the Far East. Here Yeltsin had lost the support of both the executive and the legislature. Yeltsin had to dismiss the Head of Administration whom he had been forced to appoint after a wave of workers' strikes against an earlier appointee of his; he also dissolved the Soviet. Finally, a number of national republics and autonomous regions resisted Yeltsin's coup—including Bashkortostan, Udmurtia, Altai, Buryatia, Tuva and Khakassia.

Yeltsin quickly moved to use the regions' and republics' response to the decisive events in Moscow to order them to dissolve themselves. Realising now that the local military and militia would obey Moscow, most of them meekly voted themselves out of existence. A few such as Amur and Novosibirsk oblast did put up some prolonged resistance. From 9 October Yeltsin began a process of dissolving soviets at all levels: city, raion (borough), village as well as the oblast and republican ones. As he said to an interviewer, "the days of Soviet Power are over, thank God!". On 22 October Yeltsin decreed a wholesale reform of local government. Between December 1993 and March 1994 all territorial subdivisions must elect small sized local government bodies (city dumas). They cannot have more than fifty members and any laws or regulations they pass together with the budgets they agree will have to be approved by the Heads of Administration.

Yeltsin then set about hardening the already strongly bonapartist new constitution and making sure that it would be put to a referendum before the media, let alone

a democratically elected assembly, could seriously debate it. Yeltsin's top priority is to focus enormous power in the hands of the President and to ensure the government's complete subordination to him.

The Yeltsin draft constitution is a travesty of even a bourgeois democratic constitution. This starts with the position of the subjects of the Russian federation, the constituent regions and the republics of the national minorities. The provision in the original draft that the republics are "sovereign" has been summarily removed. As Yeltsin has commented, with all the rudeness of the Great Russian Chauvinist bully that he is; "this constitution is not for separatists". He also noted, without any evident irony, that "he supported the right of self-determination, as long as no one tries to separate from Russia"! There is to be no distinct citizenship of the republics in addition to Russian citizenship.

The president also has the right to appoint the prime minister subject to parliament's endorsement but to sack him/her without the state Duma's agreement. This would leave the new Federation Council and State Duma largely useless talking shops. He and his imperialist backers know that to carry out the programme of capitalist restoration, the President will need extraordinary power. He cannot let the discontent of the masses be expressed in any sort of democratic institutions which have real power. He must appear to raise himself above the contending parties and classes in society in a completely bonapartist fashion.

Yeltsin has announced he will serve out his term of office and probably not stand for re-election in 1996. The elections and the referendum on a new constitution are to be rushed through on 11/12 December. Yeltsin, touted by the west as a great democrat, has avoided like the plague the convocation of any sort of elected Constituent Assembly which might have debated the constitution. He hopes that the repression meted out to the Stalinist and nationalist forces, the censorship and intimidation of the press and the total control of the radio and television will give the whole election campaign a plebiscitary character. Effectively the masses will be asked to choose; "Yeltsin or Chaos"? In the referendum the voters will be asked "Do you accept the Constitution of the Russian Federation?" It will be considered to have received popular approval if 50% of the electorate vote and if over 50% of them vote "yes". Hence, a mere 25% of the electorate will be enough to pass it into law.

### The working class and the elections

What should the workers of Russia do faced with this situation? Clearly, once the elections and referendum are in the past Yeltsin will want to re-start the badly stalled restoration process. At the moment there is little more than an economic disintegration process underway. Russian workers missed a good opportunity to stop Yeltsin during the September/October crisis. Distrusting him, but distrusting Rutskoi and Khasbulatov as much or even more, they ignored the calls to take strike action for the parliament. They were bystanders in the struggle between the "bosses". Igor Klochkov, the head of the Russian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FNPR), was forced to resign after the ignominious failure of his calls for a general strike in support of the White House. Yeltsin threatened the unions with the loss of

their property and a "moratorium on trade union activity". The bureaucrats, demonstrably without a mass base, capitulated immediately. Pro-Yeltsinite, Mikhail Schmakov of the Moscow Council of Trade Unions—feted by Boris Kagarlitsky and the Party of Labour—has replaced Klochkov and immediately called on the unions to stay out of politics. As part of his 21 September coup Yeltsin struck a death blow to the official unions and their bureaucracy by taking out of their hands the administration of the social security funds. It was the fact that the unions administered these that kept millions of workers in these unions. There are reports that workers are now leaving them "in droves".

It is to the "independent" unions, for all their pro-capitalist leadership, that we can look to for the first resistance. Already the miners of the Kusbas and of Vorkuta, up to now Yeltsin's strongest supporters, have threatened to strike in early December over the planned mass pit closures as well as over broken promises on wages and conditions. Their leaders will obviously try to sabotage these strikes. The government has signalled to its friends in the west that it is planning a major confrontation with the unions and especially the miners after the elections;

"In an attempt to mollify two lobbies that are threatening not to vote on 11 December for the Gaidar-led 'Russia's Choice' electoral bloc, Gaidar said the government would continue to support miners and farmers. In private however, members of the Russian government are saying that in the new year the Yeltsin leadership will have to follow the example of Thatcherite Britain and face down a challenge from organised labour. They say that the only industries in which independent unions are strong enough to mount a sustained strike are coal mining and defence production and that the government could defeat a strike in either. This is because coal stocks are high following the general fall in [industrial] production and because a drop in weapons' production would not at present be seen as posing a serious threat to Russian security." (RFE/RL News Briefs 15-19 November, 1993)

In truth, more than just the coal miners and the defence workers face an attack after the election. If the parties loyal to Yeltsin and the restoration process succeed in getting a clear majority for their constitution and in the two houses of parliament then all Russian workers can expect a swift and savage attack.

What should workers do in the elections and after the elections? The elections are important in the sense that if Yeltsin were to fail to get his 25% for the constitution or fail to get a Yeltsinite majority in parliament it would open up another political crisis; it would certainly postpone the planned attack on the nationalised economy and the working class.

Yeltsin may have resolved the dual power but the point of fusion, especially between the army and the KGB forces, is scarcely strong and established. It is unlikely that an outright pro-Yeltsin military dictatorship could be imposed without splitting the state machine once more, this time more openly and disastrously than before for the restorationists.

But no electoral defeat for Yeltsin will solve the workers' problems. At best such a defeat would give the workers a short breathing space to shake of their politi-

cal paralysis and organise a fightback and build real unions and factory councils, impose workers' control.

Tragically, no working class party committed to a revolutionary communist action programme exists let alone is able to stand candidates in this election. This itself is a testimony to the terrible continuing crisis of leadership of the Russian proletariat. The elections and the referendum are a bonapartist farce. Doubtlessly, millions of workers will not bother to vote. But these workers will not do so because their class consciousness and political awareness is higher than those who will participate. Quite the reverse. No serious forces apart from the ultra-Stalinist chauvinist followers of Andreyevna or the anti-semitic sect of Anpilov are calling for a political boycott.

Clearly, the classic conditions for an active boycott—a high level of class struggle and a manifest readiness by the proletariat to use direct action methods of political struggle—do not yet exist in Russia.

How then can workers aim blows at Yeltsin and the restorationists at the polls? First, they must vote "No!" to Yeltsin's constitution. Secondly, they should give a critical vote to the list and candidates of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF). This is the largest Stalinist party, with a mass following and organisation.

They should do so despite its loathsome Stalinist programme, despite its Great Russian chauvinism, despite its calls to form a patriotic front, despite its hostility to workers' democracy and the fact that it seeks power first and foremost for the old caste of ousted bureaucratic parasites. Why then vote for it? Because it is a party rooted historically in a degenerate workers' state which still, even now, hangs by a thread. It is in marxist terms a bourgeois workers party.

True, all the loathsome policies mentioned above show its bourgeois political character. Yet it is a party of the working class and no longer—as was the CPSU before 1991—mainly a part of the ruling caste's political tyranny and transmitter of privilege. Moreover, it continues to defend (bureaucratically) planned nationalised property relations, it has close relations with the official unions (for all their shell like character) and it is the only party (apart from the fascistic Zhirinovskiy) that denounces Yeltsin and his constitution.

Thus the workers who vote for the CPRF will be those who in the here and now most radically reject Yeltsin's politics and economics. The election can be used to assemble the working class around this layer and help impede Yeltsin.

Revolutionaries should march alongside them at the ballot box. But this is only the beginning. They should demand of the CPRF and any sections of the unions that support them to use their election appeals—or the State Duma if they are successful—to call on the workers to take direct action against the Yeltsin-Gaidar offensive. If they do this, if they give immediate support to the Vorkuta and Kusbas miners then they can give Yeltsin and his henchmen a big shock in the new year.

If they do not the CPRF will be exposed as the superannuated Stalinist bureaucrats they really are. In either case the real battle ground is the mass action of the working class against capitalist restoration. The savagery of the attacks to come will face workers with the stark choice: struggle or surrender. •