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The English language journal of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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Editorial

The "new world order"—imperialism after the Gulf

US imperialism has raised the victory standard high above the black smoke clouds that shroud the Gulf. For George Bush building the new world order meant taking Iraq apart brick by brick. Thousands of charred Iraqi corpses, dismembered by "smart bombs", are the frightful legacy of the USA's murderous determination to arrest its decline and reassert its global leadership.

"We kicked the Vietnam syndrome", exulted Bush. This was one of his main goals. Progressive forces across the world are being punished for their failure to deal a body blow to US imperialism and capitalism when it was weak and in retreat after Vietnam. Gradually, the USA found its strength. It tested its recovery by sponsoring proxy wars in Central America. Emboldened, it then reached out with its own forces to strike down feeble regimes in Grenada and Panama. Now it has successfully assembled and used a massive military machine on the other side of the world to defeat a significant military power.

After two decades of economic decline, of military stalemate with the USSR and of defeats from Vietnam to Iran, US imperialism once more stands as the unchallenged master of the planet. Semi-colonial bourgeois and Stalinist bureaucrat alike are now forced to ponder the results of this latest venture. The carnage in the Gulf is a warning of the punishment they can expect to receive if they step out of line. US imperialism lays down the law. Disobedience, as Saddam Hussein now knows, is a capital offence. This is the lesson Bush wanted to teach to the exploited and oppressed of the whole world.

The imperialist alliance

The scale of the coalition that Bush had put together to fight Iraq is not a sign of US military weakness. Economic recession obliged the USA to get Japan, Germany and the oil rich Gulf states to bankroll the war. Long term political calculations encouraged the USA to enlist the military support of semi-colonies in the Middle East itself. But it was US firepower that humiliated one of the largest armies in the world. And virtually all the coalition members gratefully accepted their role as junior partners in the US-run alliance.

The imperialists of Britain and France know that without the USA as world policeman their ability to continue exploiting and oppressing the semi-colonial world would be at risk. The semi-colonial regimes of Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia know that without US backing they would face threats from their long-suffering peoples. The coalition created by Bush has deepened this dependence and enhanced the USA's standing as the only truly world power.

A key factor that allowed the USA to secure its victory was the role of the USSR. Despite Gorbachev's inconvenient ceasefire proposals, the Kremlin never seriously threatened to obstruct the USA's march towards war. The Stalinist rulers were pivotal in protecting the vital United Nations' mandate for any action the USA wanted to take against Iraq.

This cowardice was partly the result of the bribes offered by imperialism to help Gorbachev manage his ailing economy. It was also a continuation of the headlong retreat begun by Gorbachev in 1985. Since then, in South-East Asia, Afghanistan, Central America and Southern Africa, the Soviet bureaucracy has helped US imperialism obtain its goals. The Kremlin assisted the installation of bourgeois regimes throughout Eastern Europe and the restoration of capitalism in East Germany. Once, the Moscow ruling caste sat as equals at the table of reactionary diplomacy; now they only sit at the elbow of the USA as it implements its grand designs.

Imperialist "peace" in the Middle East

The most immediate of these designs is to secure a reactionary peace in the Middle East. The ousting of Iraq was never designed to liberate Kuwait. The restored regime of the corrupt Emir has been freed only to impose martial law, to licence armed thugs to gun down opposition MPs and pogrom Palestinian and Sudanese immigrant workers.

The Gulf, the source of most of the world's oil reserves, will be secured for the continued exploitation of the multinational corporations. A region plagued by instability since the Iranian revolution of 1979 will once again fall under the strategic domination of the USA. A new Gulf Co-Operation Council will emerge. Syria and Egypt, armed by the USA, will provide the local muscle. The corrupt and despotic Emirs and Sheiks of the Gulf states will ensure that the democratic aspirations of the masses will be thwarted and repressed.

If the USA gets its way Iraq too will be "saved" from revolution. Either a chastened Saddam or, preferably for the USA, a new more pliant dictator, will re-establish stability and enable Iraq to play its traditional role as a counter-weight to Iran. Beyond the Gulf this reactionary settlement will spell disaster for the oppressed masses. The Kurds will remain deprived of their right to a nation in the new carve up. The Palestinian struggle—the most revolutionary factor in the Middle East—will be cruelly betrayed. The PLO had

banked on Saddam being able to transform the conflict into a general Middle East war, ensnaring Israel and re-uniting the Arab world in conflict with it. With this hope now dashed the PLO has embarked on a full scale retreat.

A US "peace plan" to resolve the Palestine/Israel conflict will guarantee the security and strength of the Zionist state. A "homeland", if it is granted, will not be a state in any meaningful sense. It will be a prison camp or reservation under the auspices of either Israel itself or a reactionary Arab regime in Jordan, Saudi Arabia or Egypt. It will be a state without the essence of a state—an independent armed force. The US victory means that such a monumental betrayal of the Palestinians is now more possible than ever before.

From defeat to fightback

Nobody should underestimate the scale of the defeat that has been inflicted on the masses of the Middle East as a result of the Gulf war. Nobody should ignore the fact that the first step towards a reactionary new world order has been successfully taken by US imperialism. The dictatorships throughout the semi-colonial world who exist courtesy of the USA are now breathing a collective sigh of relief.

The impotence of US imperialism at the time of the fall of Somoza in Nicaragua and the Shah of Iran struck fear into the hearts of these barbarous client regimes. That fear was exorcised when the Iraqi high command surrendered to General Schwarzkopf in a desert tent.

But if it is foolish to ignore the scale of the US victory, it would be short sighted not to recognise that imperialism still faces enormous strategic problems. The new order has not yet been established throughout the world. Many obstacles still confront it.

In the Middle East the imposition of a reactionary peace settlement will lay the basis for future conflicts. Already Iraq's fate is being decided by massive struggles, threatening the imperialism's plans for the transition of that country back into its fold as an obedient semi-colony. If the Kurds are denied a homeland and if the Palestinians are trapped in a Bantustan state, resentment amongst the heroic peoples will continue to simmer.

The masses of North Africa were mobilised in opposition to imperialism's war on a huge scale. As the regimes of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco stagger deeper into economic turmoil the anger of the masses will explode. Even in Syria and Egypt US arms will not mean a new era of prosperity and peace. The inability of imperialism or the reactionary regimes of Assad and Mubarak to satisfy even the most basic needs of the masses in these countries will inevitably provoke struggles.

Nor will such crises be confined to the war torn region of the Middle East. As imperialism weakens and discredits any bonapartist dictators that stand in its way, as it undermines the Islamic theocrats, the Stalinist bureaucrats and petit bourgeois nationalists it regards as outside the new world order, as it imposes "peace deals" and settlements in South-East Asia and Southern Africa, it will pile up new problems for itself. In each case the masses' most vital interests will be betrayed. The unbridled exploitation that will ensue from every "settlement" will not stabilise capitalism's world order. Quite the reverse.

In Latin America neo-liberal regimes scored initial successes over the misled masses. The result is one savage austerity measure after another, the reappearance of cholera in the slums of Lima and the assassination of homeless children on the streets of Rio de Janeiro. In Africa starvation and disease on an unprecedented scale threaten millions. In South East Asia a "settlement" that restores Pol Pot will be a prelude to a new round of war. None of these things will help in the establishment and maintenance of a new world order. They will undermine it, because the masses will not tolerate the misery inflicted upon them.

Nor will Bush find a smooth passage in Eastern Europe. The erosion or destruction of the planned economies is bringing unemployment and conditions of semi-colonial servitude. Strikes, revolts and renewed mass mobilisations will make the road back to capitalism extremely rocky.

Having succeeded in the peaceful restoration of capitalism in Germany the imperialists now realise what enormous costs are involved in bringing to life a system that was strangled fifty years ago. Despite their fervent desire to restore capitalism in Eastern Europe they, and their restorationist allies in the degenerate workers' states, lack the most fundamental pre-requisite for this: sufficient capital.

In reality, despite the scale of the defeat in the Gulf, it is events beyond the Middle East that will shape the final contours of the global world order into the next millenium. The USA's hopes and ambitions could be dramatically thrown off course by the explosion of a revolutionary crisis in the USSR. Imperialism is terrified of this precisely because it could open up a period of global revolutionary struggle and massive instability in which all the latent economic rivalries of the imperialist powers would be projected into the struggle for the economic fragments of the Soviet state.

Inter-imperialist rivalries

The project of a new world order stands in contradiction to the rivalries which have emerged between the imperialist powers themselves. The contradiction between the USA's military and political might and its relative economic decline will drag it into conflicts with Japanese and European imperialism.

The squabbles over Germany and Japan's initial reluctance to give whole-hearted support to Bush's warmongering, the differences over European unity between Britain and the German and French bosses, the breakdown of the GATT talks in December 1990 and the attendant threats of an outbreak of trade war—all these are harbingers of a period of inter-imperialist rivalry. And this rivalry will sharpen as the world slides deeper into economic recession, as the class struggle sharpens when workers once again move to

defend their jobs and wages. Disorder looms, despite Bush's plans.

The reactionary White House vision is threatened by objective developments within capitalism itself. The key question is can the oppressed and exploited of the world turn these developments to their own advantage? The answer is yes, on the condition that the crisis of leadership within the ranks of the world working class and poor peasantry can be resolved on a revolutionary basis.

The misleaders of the masses

The gains made by imperialism in the last period are a direct result of the betrayal of mass struggles by the false leaders of the masses. Stalinism and social democracy have played their part well as servants of the bosses. Throughout the imperialist countries they have sabotaged the struggles of the masses every time those struggles threatened capitalism.

In Britain, France and Italy workers repeatedly went into battle to resist the impact of right wing policies. The social democrats and Stalinists strangled or misled those workers. In South Africa the Stalinists and nationalists turned their backs on the revolutionary mobilisations of the masses in order to conclude a peace settlement with the apartheid state which will preserve the rule and domination of white capital.

In the semi-colonial countries the forces of nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism and Stalinism have either surrendered to imperialism or proved their inability to fight it to the end. The Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the Gadaffi regime in Libya, the mullahs in Iran and many more beside, have all demonstrated that their fundamental commitment is to the maintenance of their own rule. Deals with imperialism, or a preparedness to allow it to get its way in neighbouring countries, are a safer bet for such rulers than risking the mobilisation of the masses of their own countries for a life and death struggle with imperialism.

Even Saddam Hussein, who went so far as to wage a war with imperialism, proved himself to be no anti-imperialist. His adventure in Kuwait was a miscalculation—he thought imperialism would allow him to get away with it—not a blow against the USA or Britain. And when the war came, instead of mobilising his people for an anti-imperialist struggle he continued to repress them, sent untrained fighters to the front, left the imperialist holdings in his country unscathed, refused to arm the people.

In short, he waged a struggle he did not want in a manner designed to ensure its defeat. He preferred to see the slaughter of tens of thousands of Iraqis rather than risk losing face in his reckless adventure. Such is the bankruptcy of the nationalist ruling class in the semi-colonies.

It is thanks to these misleaders that the imperialists can crow that "order reigns"throughout the world. Yet the very foundations of this order are built on sand. The USA's new rise to dominance is directly related to the weakening or destruction of the Stalinist and nationalist leaderships. The USA sought to destroy them not because they were tyrants and misleaders but because they were occasionally obliged to try and check imperialism's unfettered domination.

As a result of these episodic confrontations the masses developed illusions in such leaders, despite the fact that they were pre-eminently a force for conservatism and counter-revolution. As these leaderships demonstrate their abject inability to combat imperialism and capitalism in the new world order and as imperialism's bloodthirsty and rapacious ambitions drive the masses to revolt, the possibility of building a new revolutionary leadership becomes ever greater.

The fight against imperialism and capitalism does not draw its origins or its power from the Stalinist, social democratic or nationalist leaderships—however impressive their state and party apparatuses may appear. On the contrary, these are all so many brakes on that elemental force which comes from the refusal of human beings to suffer limitless exploitation and political oppression.

Beneath the terrain on which our rulers are celebrating their "remarkable victory" is gathering the lava of the indignation and fury of millions. The more our rulers block up the old vents of Stalinism, social democracy, fundamentalism and bourgeois nationalism, the more surely they prepare a massive eruption which will sweep them all away.

The defeats of the last decade were not inevitable. There was no need to fritter and disperse the enormous potential of the struggles from Vietnam to Central America. This was performed due to the subjective weaknesses of proletarian leadership—the absence of an international party of world revolution. The next wave of revolutionary struggle will only succeed if it finds the nucleus of such a leadership ready, and if it wins leadership in the coming struggles.

To this task the LRCI devotes itself, calling on all who consider themselves revolutionary communists to join us.

The USSR at the crossroads

Since mid-November 1990 Mikhail Gorbachev has sponsored a creeping coup against his own policy of *glasnost*. Fragile and limited democratic rights have been conceded by the bureaucracy since 1985 and extended *de facto* by the struggles of the new workers' movement and the revolt of the nationalities. They are all under attack.

The advocates of a renewed bureaucratic dictatorship are on the offensive. Rumours abound that at the Politburo of 16 November 1990 the army, the KGB and the party conservatives gave Gorbachev an ultimatum—take action against the "forces of disintegration" or get out. His critics were not limited to the Politburo.

The conservative forces were headed by the 500 strong Soyuz group in the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, led by Colonel Viktor Alksnis and the Russian Communist Party leader Ivan Polozkov. They publicly attacked the economic chaos, the rampant criminality and the national antagonisms which they claimed were threatening the Soviet Union with destruction. They openly threatened to take action to "save the Union" if Gorbachev would not act.

Gorbachev did act, however. In essence he gave in to their demands, executing an almost complete factional re-alignment. At the December 1990 Congress of People's Deputies he demanded and got a massive increase in his powers as President to rule by decree. In December the bonapartist clique that surrounds him underwent a radical change of personnel. Out went the architects of *perestroika* and *glasnost*—Yakovlev, Petrakov, Medvedev, Shevardnadze. In came representatives of bureaucratic conservativism—Yazov, Kryuchkov, Pugo, Yanayev and Gorbachev's new Prime Minister, Pavlov.

Gorbachev's closest allies are now the KGB, the army high command, the MVD (Interior Ministry), the CPSU bureaucracy and the industrial managers. Gorbachev has allied himself with the main forces of old-style bureaucratic rule and repression. Their view of the situation facing the ruling caste was crisply expressed by Kryuchkov in his television address in early December: "Today the situation is formulated like this: should our great power exist or should it not? KGB officers have made their choice?"

Kryuchkov also uttered dark threats about foreign attempts to destabilise the USSR. Combined with Shevardnadze's resignation speech these warnings set the alarm bells ringing in Washington and the major West European capitals. But on the issue of the "new world order" Gorbachev hastened to reassure the imperialists that there would be no change in foreign policy, especially as it affected the Gulf War. Washington and Bonn need to keep Gorbachev in the Kremlin, at least until the war and the post-war settlement are out of the way.

And Gorbachev needs their continued support in order to bolster his bonapartist position against his present conservative die-hard allies, many of whom would like to remove him and return as much as is possible to a pre-1985 situation in the realms of both foreign and domestic policy.

In short Gorbachev seeks to restrict his turn to domestic law and order questions and a limited re-centralisation of economic affairs. He intends his bloc with the conservatives to be of limited scope and duration. The question is, who is using whom? This will be decided over the coming months in the unfolding struggles with the rebellious nationalities and the workers' movements.

The roots of the present political crisis lie in three areas:

a) the imminent disintegration of the Union-wide planned economy;

b) the moves to unilateral secession of the Baltic, Georgian and other republics;

c) the ousting from power and threatened collapse of the All-Union Communist Party.

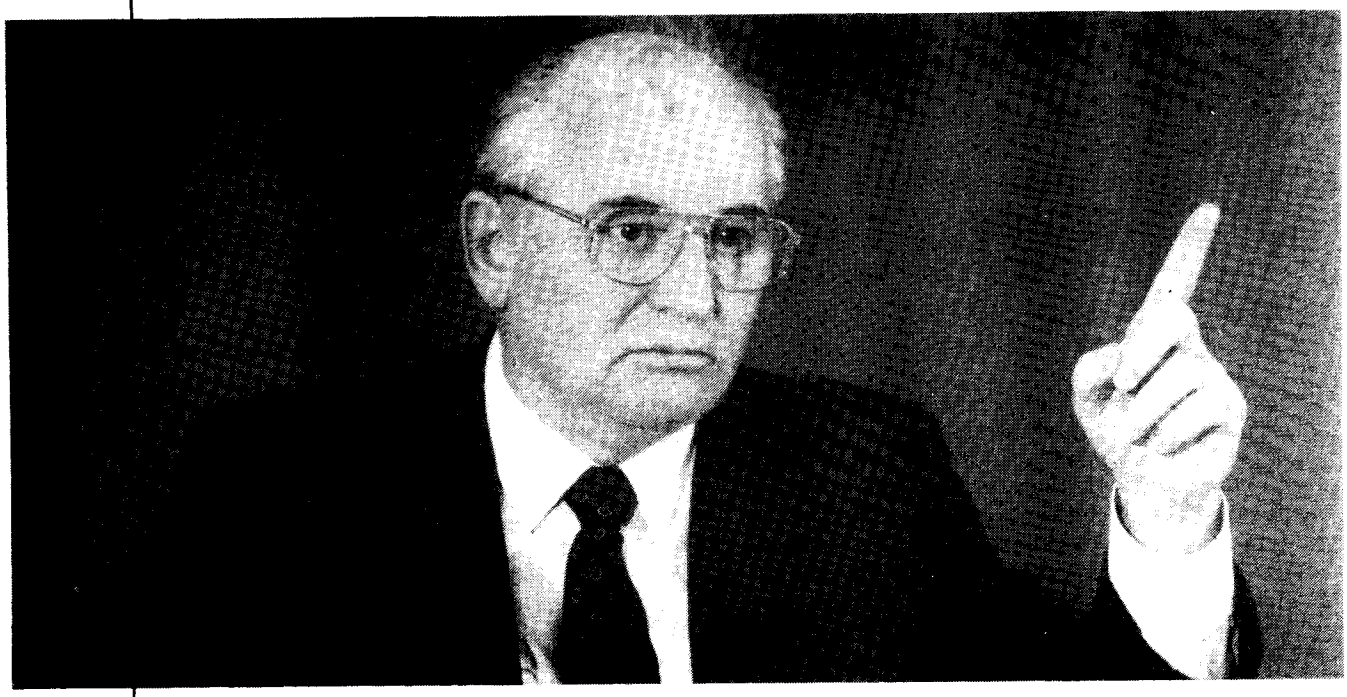
Irreconcilable contradictions in the economy

In December 1990 Gorbachev conceded the need to "allow a breathing space" in his reform programme. He did this without abandoning his declared commitment to the plans for a turn to a "socialist" market economy. He has obliged the enterprises to register their agreements with Gosplan (the Soviet planning ministry) and has unleashed the KGB to attack corruption, economic sabotage and the so-called mafia. He has put the KGB in charge of policing food distribution. They will almost certainly strike at the informal and illegal market economy that has mushroomed in the last few years.

The reasons behind Gorbachev's about face lie in the failure to draw up an operable plan for marketisation, or rather the failure to mobilise sufficient support within both the bureaucracy and the new social layers mobilised by *glasnost* for any one plan.

In July 1990 Gorbachev appeared to decide on a radical plan of transition. He reached agreement with Yeltsin and charged Shatalin to draw up what became the 500 Day Plan. But by September Gorbachev had yielded to pressure within the bureaucracy in general, and from Gosplan in particular. Whilst he expressed a personal preference for the Shatalin plan as against that of Rhyzhkov, he objected to the former's tendency to weaken the central power of the Union.

Adopted by the International Secretariat of the LRCI, 20 February 1991



After some hesitation he called in Aganbegyan to draw up a new Presidential Programme. However, this programme too has been shelved. Instead the role of Gosplan has been re-asserted, as has the role of the managers of the large enterprises. The result has been the resignation of all the leading "market economists" from Gorbachev's team of advisers.

The background to this retreat is the acute economic crisis and the near disintegration of the Union-wide Soviet economy. This crisis hits every Soviet worker hard. At the present time most important consumer goods are regularly unavailable in the state shops. Ever-lengthening waiting times for consumer goods combined with large nominal increases in wages, have massively increased the involuntary savings of Soviet workers over the last three years. Savings are now reckoned to stand at around 500 billion roubles. In order to claw these funds back into the state coffers the regime decided, by presidential decree, to abolish the old large denomination notes and limit savings withdrawals. This policy was carried out under the guise of attacking speculators but in fact particularly hit the lowest paid and retired workers. Recent western estimates suggest that the real living standards in the Soviet Union are well below those of Hungary and even Bulgaria. On 17 October 1990 *Izvestia* published statistics showing that nearly 79 million Soviet citizens lived below the minimum subsistence level.

The collapse of the Soviet economy signifies the failure of the old system of bureaucratic command planning and of the marketising reforms of *perestroika*. The fall in oil prices in the mid-1980s made the rotten basis of the Soviet command economy ever more visible. Economic "restructuring" was not simply a policy option for the bureaucracy, it was an absolute necessity. Something fundamental had to be done. *Perestroika* represented a consensus amongst the bureaucracy's chief ideologues that the old system could no longer be maintained intact.

As a caste founded on a political counter-revolution against the proletariat, the bureaucracy could only envisage reform as involving yet further concessions to capitalism. As in all their previous attempts at reform, the ruling layers turned to the introduction of market mechanisms. But *perestroika* did not represent a unanimous agreement over the pace and tempo of marketisation. It involved agreement only over the desired goal of a marketisation process. Thus although *perestroika* was meant to overcome Stalinist stagnation, it has in fact contributed to intensifying the economic crisis for at least the last two years.

The old mechanisms that held the Soviet economy together, even if they did not stimulate it, have either been dismantled or are on the verge of collapse. In the sphere of distribution recent years have seen an accelerating process of dislocation. The individual production units, ordered to become self-accounting, were obliged to fend for themselves, to become independent of the central planning agencies. But of course no capitalist market institutions existed to replace the directives of the ministries and of Gosplan. Often only crude barter deals between enterprises kept production going. This chaos strengthened the hand of speculators both within and outside the official bureaucracy. Products disappeared from state shops only to reappear on the "grey" or "black" markets at hyper-inflationary prices. Regions and republics withdrew from the all-Union distributive system in favour of providing for themselves. For the mass of Soviet workers this has meant ever greater shortages, longer queues and higher prices. Plans to cut price subsidies in 1991 can only make this situation worse for the Soviet masses.

By all accounts output is declining sharply. The OECD/IMF/World Bank joint report forecasts a drop of around 5% for 1991, while the *Economist* estimates that such a fall occurred in 1990 and that it could well double to 10% in 1991. Investment has slumped even more dramatically. Since 1988 the budget deficit has declined slightly but is still causing serious alarm in the central bureaucracy. At the same time the indebtedness of state enterprises has grown enormously due to declining productivity (itself a result of lower investment) combined with rising wages and relatively stable official prices. The increasing enterprise debts are, ultimately, also an increase in state debt, even if

they lie outside the budget itself. Even a bumper harvest in 1990 was so disrupted by bureaucratic mismanagement and the underdevelopment of the storage and transport infrastructure that the USSR had to use its scarce hard currency resources to purchase grain on the world market. The USSR even had to appeal for international economic aid from the USA and the EC.

Although theoretically still sovereign the planning agencies are less and less able to carry out their tasks. Formal enterprise autonomy, however, is not the main cause of this—90% of production is covered by ministerial orders which can override autonomy. Rather, it is regional dislocation and the black market which are undermining the planning authorities. The republics are increasingly refusing to collaborate with the central planning mechanisms. This is not only the case in the republics of the Baltic region and the Caucasus which have declared independence. The Russian Republic threatened to cut its contribution to the central state budget by over 80%.

The compromise budget for 1991 represents the recognition by a majority of republics that they are faced with economic collapse if planned trading links are not maintained or restored. Without real sovereignty and a legal market, bi-lateral trading links simply will not work.

Enterprises throughout the Union will be cut off from both their suppliers and their markets. In addition the hoped-for assistance from the west—the USA, the EC, the Scandinavian countries—has failed to materialise to any worthwhile degree. The republican and regional administrations are likely to transform the implementation of the 1991 plan and budget into a new arena of struggle with the centre and with each other.

In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky identified the origin of the bureaucracy's bonapartist dictatorship in the "necessity" of policing the queue for scarce resources. Now the disorderly queue consists of the rival nationalities and regions struggling over investment. Once more the Great Russian bureaucrat comes forward as the policeman to restore order—but at a heavy price.

The national question and the break up of the USSR

Gorbachev's *glasnost* initially served to mobilise pro-*perestroika* popular fronts in the majority of Republics. Gorbachev looked to the non-Russian peoples that make up nearly half the USSR's population as enthusiastic supporters of radical change. And so at first they were. Weak nationalist groups emerged from clandestinity and began to mobilise mass forces against the old guard. Newly installed Gorbachevite bureaucrats were obliged to form popular fronts in alliance with the nationalists and to compete with them in nationalist demagogy. But as *perestroika* has delivered fewer and fewer results, so these movements have increasingly fallen into the hands of openly pro-capitalist separatists.

In Georgia and in the Baltics the working class has powerful illusions that its needs can be met by going along with the project of independent capitalist statehood. The nationalists claim that such a development will bring prosperity to these small but relatively developed sections of the USSR. Nevertheless, the imperialists have already indicated that this is a utopia and that they cannot promise large scale investment. The future of these "independent" countries, like that of Poland, would include massive cuts in workers' wages, the dissolution of the social security system, mass unemployment and closures, and the prostration of these states before imperialism both economically and politically. Despite the fact that the restoration of capitalism would represent a historic defeat for the proletariat of these countries, as long as the Kremlin maintains its brutal refusal of independence and enforces this by bloody repression, the nationalists will retain their influence over the working classes.

1990 saw the mass nationalist movements oust the Communist Parties from any influence or leadership in a number of republics. The central government's refusal to grant free and unhindered self-determination has enormously inflamed nationalism in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldavia, the Western Ukraine and in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

After the spring 1990 elections to the republican parliaments the new nationalist governments began either to declare outright independence, or the superiority of republican to Soviet law, the creation of republican tariff barriers and customs posts and the project of creating national militias or armies. In the forefront of these moves have been Lithuania and Georgia.

Feeding into this eruption of nationalism has been the inter-ethnic conflict in the republics. The Armenian-Azeri conflict over Karabakh exploded in the anti-Armenian pogroms of Sumgait and Baku and the forced exodus of hundreds of thousands of Azeris. Soviet army intervention ended in hundreds of deaths at the end of 1989 and the beginning of 1990. In Moldavia the Gagauz and Russian minorities attempted to set up their own republics. In Georgia the Abkhazian, South Ossetian and Azeri minorities have likewise resisted being "imprisoned" in an independent Georgia. In Uzbekistan anti-Meshketian riots broke out in 1990. As Lithuania moved to a unilateral declaration of independence the Russian and Polish minorities protested through strike action.

It is certain that the conservative bureaucratic forces inflamed and manipulated these events to discredit and divide the forces fighting for democratic freedoms for the nationalities. But it is also true that leaders like Vytautas Landsbergis (Lithuania) and Zviad Gamsakhurdia (Georgia) are blinkered national chauvinists who will lead their countries' workers and peasants to disaster. In the Ukraine the Rukh has also moved sharply to the right, yielding to the poisonous influence of the Ukrainian Autocephalous and Catholic Churches. The stress on language restoration and the pro-Tsarist counter-revolutionary traditions of the civil war have resulted in a cold split between the western and eastern Ukrainian wings of the Rukh.

Great Russian nationalism, masquerading as "internationalism" and Soviet patriotism, is a major force for reaction in the USSR today. But the responsive small nation chauvinism which it has engendered in the republics divides not only the working class but also the nationalities themselves. The popular and national fronts like Sajudis and the Georgian National Forum are indeed socially counter-revolutionary forces that must be combated by the class conscious proletariat. This is not a hopeless task, despite their present strength. The cross-class composition of these fronts produces internal contradictions that can and will lead to splits and the building of different political parties. This is evidenced by the formation of independent labour organisations within the national republics and the struggle of Lithuanian workers against price increases proposed by nationalist leaders.

The nationalities—especially in the Baltics and in Georgia—stand in the path of Gorbachev's presidential coup. The coup claimed its first victims in January 1991 in Vilnius and Riga, but workers and nationalists in the Baltic republics have demonstrated their continued determination to resist. The referendums called in there, in opposition to Gorbachev's imposed referendum, reveal the level of support for independence. In Lithuania this was not just amongst ethnic Lithuanians but also amongst large sections of Russian and Polish workers. Gorbachev's attempt to use an all-Union referendum to forcibly retain pro-independence republics within the USSR will not put an end to the struggles, but it is likely to consolidate the nationalities and Russian populists such as Yeltsin in their opposition to the regime.

The Soviet bureaucracy's lack of perspectives

The bureaucracy is experiencing a deep crisis of political direction caused by the combined crises of the economy and the nationalities. Over the summer and early autumn of 1990 Gorbachev and the two major factions of the bureaucracy—the radicals and the conservatives—debated how to steer the USSR towards a market economy. In August and September Gorbachev appeared about to decide on forming an alliance with Boris Yeltsin and adopting something close to the radical 500 day plan drawn up by Shatalin.

This envisaged a drastic price reform which would devalue the massive private rouble savings accumulated in the economy, cut credit to unprofitable enterprises, introduce hard currency trade and investment in the USSR and allow mass unemployment as a result of closures and privatisation. Such a plan would have meant a qualitative increase in the pace of capitalist restoration. The adoption of such a plan would have amounted to a decisive break: from "restructuring" the centralised planned economy by market reforms to dismantling it altogether.

Yeltsin, who has broken with the conservative CPSU apparatus in order to concentrate on building a power base in the Russian Federation, was and is wholeheartedly in favour of such a programme. His base in society, in the bureaucracy and in the army, has the goal of a capitalist Russia linked by trading and defence treaties to sovereign republics. Since his election as President of the RSFSR he has sought to pull Gorbachev—sometimes by proposals of a coalition government, sometimes by threats to undermine and destroy his power—towards the radical market option. Gorbachev, as the bonapartist arbiter of the bureaucracy, has repeatedly avoided a final decision, seeking to play off the radicals against the conservatives.

The crisis and the conservatives

The economic crisis which surfaced at the end of 1990 narrowed the ground for this balancing act to a pinpoint. The economic crisis strengthened the conservative forces who had been in retreat for at least two years. These forces are based on the vested interests around Gosplan, the central ministries and what Ryzhkov called the Soviet military industrial complex.

They defend and always have defended the key elements of the old bureaucratic system. There are millions of bureaucrats who know of no other way of operating. Any radical marketisation threatens their jobs. The July Congress of the CPSU, which saw the departure of the radical marketeers around Boris Yeltsin, Anatoly Sobchak and Gavril Popov, and a mass exodus of 2.3 million rank and file party members, conversely strengthened the hold of the conservatives on the remaining apparatus.

Despite the fact that the radicals controlled many city and regional soviets, including those of Moscow and Leningrad, this did not give them real power. The foundation of an all-Russian Communist Party provided a new bastion for the conservatives. They still controlled the vital levers of the bureaucratic military machine, which they could use to obstruct and discredit the radicals who had been elected to improve the dire conditions of the masses on the basis of free market promises. The radicals had no effective alternative to break the stranglehold and the sabotage of the conservatives. Their only force, the mobilised masses, grew increasingly disillusioned and apathetic. That is why the November sessions of the Supreme Soviet saw a major revival of the hitherto silenced voices of Soviet bureaucratic conservatism.

The Soyuz group proved to be extremely influential despite its minority position in the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of Deputies. Major concessions had already been made to them in the two months before the December Congress—the appointment of a conservative as head of state television and radio and the actions taken in defence of army conscription in Latvia. In early December came the replacement of the pro-*glasnost* Interior Minister, Vadim Bakatin, by the KGB *apparatchik* Boris Pugo, the appointment of the ultra-conservative army general Gromov as Deputy Interior Minister and the speeches of KGB chief Kryuchkov against the independence movements in the republics. The whole offensive of the bureaucratic conservatives was aimed at forcing Gorbachev to take, or

at least support, decisive action against the separatists all over the USSR. Gorbachev was thus obliged to decide in favour of the conservatives in the final analysis.

Gorbachev's turn to the conservatives to bolster and save his all-Union bonapartism threatens shipwreck for the whole marketising project. He has increasingly become a prisoner of the most conservative elements within the bureaucracy. The military was dismayed at the consequences of the evacuation of Eastern Europe. The popular resistance to the military parades in Kiev and Minsk on 7 November showed that anti-centralist anti-militarism had already spread far beyond the Baltics. The KGB became increasingly alarmed at the breakdown of Soviet security in the republics. From mid-autumn 1990 they staged a serious fightback. Gorbachev and the conservatives needed one another again, but this time the deal was done on the conservatives' terms. The explicit basis of the conservatives' coalition with Gorbachev was obviously the law, order and unity question, not that of the plan or market, but the two are necessarily linked. As the repressive apparatus in the bureaucracy becomes strengthened, the market reforms, privatisations and similar ideas—endorsed by Gorbachev only a few months ago—will be dramatically slowed down.

One consequence of this fightback by bureaucratic conservatism was the increase in Gorbachev's formal powers in December. The pendulum of his bonapartism swung towards centralist dictatorship. This also showed quite how spineless the liberals in the talking shop Congress of Deputies really were. The majority of them supported Gorbachev's new powers: they could put forward no alternative. They hoped to rescue at least some liberal and pro-market ideas as long as the dictatorship was in Gorbachev's hands. In their home towns Popov and Sobchak had already introduced local rationing systems. Now, together with the Soyuz, these erstwhile "democrats" voted for draconian powers for President Gorbachev.

Despite the new turn the bureaucracy remains fragmented. This is illustrated by the extremely contradictory statements issued by Yazov, Pugo and Gorbachev over responsibility for the crackdown in the Baltic states. However, there can be little doubt that the fragmentation is giving more and more authority to local hardliners in the military and security forces and has already paved the way for a re-assertion of power by the hardliners in the all-Union apparatus.

Gorbachev still expresses his desire to preserve the market-oriented reforms that his former advisers advocated. But at the same time he wants to restore and preserve bureaucratic power in a unified Soviet state. Many of his advisers had always been authoritarians, not interested in *glasnost* or democratisation so much as seeking the power to impose *perestroika*. For them *perestroika* means the privatisation of the USSR's resources and the marketisation of its economy whilst preserving their own political power and economic privileges. This programme is a political expression of significant sections of the *nomenklatura* which want to transform themselves into capitalists or managers for capitalists.



Yeltsin

The most consistently restorationist forces, represented by Yeltsin, face terrific obstacles. Where will the capital to effect this restoration come from? The west will not provide it. Most of the 2,800 joint ventures are still only shop windows for western exporters, or fronts for Soviet co-operatives to escape taxes or launder black market profits. Many exist only on paper. The prospects for major industrial investment by imperialist capital in the midst of recession and war are grim.

Can the bureaucracy create out of itself a substantial layer of capitalists? Those sections of the *nomenklatura* most linked with the mafia and the speculators may have accumulated a large amount of hard currency but they are deeply unpopular and vulnerable to their rivals. The co-operatives and the petty entrepreneurs—which now employ around five million workers and account for up to 7% of GNP—face the same kind of problems. None of these strata have the resources to buy up any more than the tiny portion of state industry that seems profitable. Unlike their Chinese counterparts the Soviet bureaucrats have failed to lure the Soviet agricultural workers into "enriching themselves".

An important sector of the bureaucracy co-operates more or less openly with the speculators and the stratum of corrupt officials, managers and gangster elements collectively referred to as the "mafia". This sector includes conservatives who collaborate with the



mafia to improve their own incomes and/or to discredit the marketeers, as well as certain "democrats". In other regions, bureaucratic collaboration with the mafia has included stirring up nationalist and chauvinist sentiments as, for example, in the Uzbek pogroms against the Meshketians. In the bigger Russian cities such as Moscow and Leningrad, with their "democratic" majorities the liberals have worked with speculators and criminals in, for example, the privatisation of communal facilities. For some of the ultra-liberal economists, who want to legitimise the market as soon as possible, these are precisely the "suppressed capitalists" who could transform the Soviet economy. But all the marketising plans penned by Aganbegyan, Abalkin and Shatalin have been blocked by the immovable object, the vast bulk of the parasitic bureaucracy.

Although the radical marketisers are excluded from the inner bonapartist clique around Gorbachev, they still have positions of mass influence. Yeltsin and company were able to mobilise mass demonstrations in Moscow and other cities against the clampdown in Lithuania. Middle ranking officers and senior commanders in the army have expressed support for Yeltsin. He remains the most well known and popular alternative figure to Gorbachev. Gorbachev's plebiscite on preserving the USSR and accepting the new Federation proposals will be a major trial of strength. Yeltsin's own referendum for a popularly elected Russian and all-Union Federation is aimed at mobilising mass support and giving himself a "democratic mandate" to defy Gorbachev. Together with the Baltics, the western borderland republics and the Caucasus, the Russian Federation still presents a major obstacle to the conservatives.

The final outcome will rest upon the attitude of the masses in general and the soldiers in particular. The working class has no interest in the triumph of either side in this debate between bureaucrats. Its historic and immediate interests lie in the preservation and extension of democratic freedoms and the nationalised and planned property relations. Independent class forces will be obliged to defend these liberties alongside Yeltsin and company, whilst not for one minute supporting the Yeltsinites' seizure of power. On the other hand independent class forces are obliged to defend the statified economy alongside the conservatives whilst not for one minute abandoning the objective of overthrowing them.

The crisis of proletarian leadership

The years of *glasnost* have seen a flowering of independent working class trade union and political organisations. During the 1989 miners' strike strike committees were created in all the mining regions—an enormous step forward for the Soviet workers' movement. In addition the miners united across national lines. This international solidarity was an important counter-weight faced with the prevailing flood of nationalism. The strike ended with the conceding of most of the miners' demands and the strike committees were charged with overseeing their fulfilment. Since this did not occur further strike action was launched in the autumn of 1989 and the following summer. But by the middle of 1990 the miners' fighting power and unity had been already undermined, at least temporarily, by nationalism, regionalism and a growing demoralisation.

The strike committees became the basis for the foundation of a general workers' organisation—the Confederation of Labour—in May 1990. But the decline of the miners' strike committees and the lack of mass independent unions amongst other powerful sectors of workers facilitated the formation of the federation along bureaucratic lines.

The founding congress of the Confederation of Labour demonstrated the variety of forces at work in the new unions. It is influenced by the National Labour Union (NTS), a far right organisation which had links with fascism in the 1930s and 1940s and which had worked within the illegal underground union grouping SMOT in the early 1980s. The NTS describes itself as a Christian-social, Russian orthodox organisation and claims it is opposed to outright marketisation, to the "free market mafia" and to domination of Russia's economy by foreign imperialist multinationals. Its real objective is a corporatist "solidarist" Great Russian imperialism. It has a significant base amongst the Vorkuta miners.

The majority of miners at the congress were, however, influenced by pro-marketeers. They were influenced in particular by the liberals of the Inter-Regional Group in the Congress of People's Deputies,

with their demagogic promises that the market means control by the workers of their factories and their products. The extremely elastic term "self-management" was used to embroil the new leadership in schemes for free enterprise zones and other reactionary utopias. However, once spelled out in black and white, the actual marketisation plans of Shatalin and company, with their threats of millions of redundancies and raging inflation, have tended to undermine support for the liberals.

There is a confused spectrum on the left of the Confederation which opposes mass unemployment, "free prices", inflation and the break up of social guarantees and provision. Amongst this stratum the "United Front of Toilers", a conservative-bureaucratic and Russian chauvinist organisation, has gained influence. Elements in SOTSPROF also have some influence.

Within this growing layer of workers determined to resist unemployment, declining real wages, and the lack of the necessities of life, the influence of the new generation of hardline conservatives could grow rapidly. If this does happen then it will spell doom for an independent democratic trade union and labour movement. The conservatives' leftism, their talk of defending socialism and fighting capitalism, is entirely bogus. They want to use the masses, just as the liberals did, as a blind instrument for the preservation of their privileges and power.

A crisis of leadership

The Confederation of Labour is crippled by an acute crisis of leadership. It has so far failed to mobilise the workers against the projected attacks of the liberals (Shatalin's 500 Day Plan), nor has it mobilised against the new wave of bureaucratic repression since December 1990.*

Perhaps reflecting an impatience and disillusion with the Confederation, the activists in the remaining strike committees launched an independent national miners' union in October 1990. But regionalism had already begun to undermine the potential strength of a united organisation. Donbass miners initially looked for a Ukrainian solution to defend their pits, but they have now turned again to Moscow. The leaders of the Kuzbass spoke in terms of the economic independence and sovereignty of their mining region.

Deputies to the Russian Parliament from mining areas had already voted in support of the Shatalin plan and the old official union was attempting to regain some influence by offering use of its facilities to the independent miners' representatives. Thus, if the new union manages to function at all, it could be seriously weakened and fragmented from the very outset.

In the summer of 1990 the new enterprise laws, which increased management's powers, effectively reduced the powers of the Work-Collective Councils (WCCs). In 1987 Gorbachev gave the WCCs powers to supervise and veto certain management proposals as a counter-weight to conservative forces working against his reforms. Although the WCCs had been bureaucratically created and led, their protests did lead to increased rank and file activity. The outcome was a national meeting in Moscow in December and, under the influence of the Marxist Platform of the CPSU, the adoption of a reformist self-management position which already had considerable resonance among sections of workers.

Revolutionaries must support the development of all expressions of class independence at factory level. Democratically-elected factory committees with recallable delegates would be a powerful weapon against both capitalist restoration and bureaucratic repression. But militants must also been won to the need for a political revolution to overthrow the ruling bureaucracy. Such factory committees must combat syndicalist notions, which strive for independent factories linked by an idealised market without capitalists. An authentic workers' state will have to go beyond self-management and establish democratic centralised planning.

It is possible that some of the local independent trade unions, elements from the WCCs, the miners and perhaps some of the Baltic trade unions could come together under the impact of the approaching economic attacks. The creation of basic trade union organisations is one of the main tasks of the Soviet working class at the present time.

Revolutionaries must intervene in this work, arguing that the building of trade unions based on democratic factory committees is not primarily an organisational task but a political one. The failure of the many new unions and groups within the working class to overcome the chronic crisis of leadership amongst those fighting the bureaucratic centre has fundamentally been a failure to break from the political programmes of a spectrum of anti-working class tendencies ranging from Stalinists to fascists and including liberals and nationalists. In addition the AFL-CIO and other counter-revolutionary international organisations, including the current leadership of Solidarnosc, are strengthening their influence.

Forces independent of the bureauracy

The political forces independent of the bureaucracy which are active within the working class and which, in words at least, identify with its immediate and historic interests, are small and in disarray.

The Confederation of Anarcho-syndicalists (KAS) has a sizeable constituency amongst the youth and produces a weekly labour bulletin. Their fierce rejec-

* As we go to press a strike movement has begun amongst the Soviet miners centred around the Donbass and Kuzbass fields. The Donbass strike began as a sectional economic response to the crisis. They demanded a 150% pay rise for the miners. However, the dispute quickly took on political demands. In the Kuzbass the Council of Workers' Committees called a strike for the resignation of Gorbachev, the dismissal of the Supreme Soviet and Parliament, the lifting of media restrictions and in support of Yeltsin's campaign for a "no" vote in the referendum.

tion of Bolshevism in favour of Makhno, Bakunin and Lavrov, puts them firmly in the populist tradition, opposed to Marxism. They display the characteristic political idiocies of anarchism. Thus they were unable to come out for or against the freedom to form political parties! Clearly they cannot even recognise the crisis of leadership, let alone resolve it. Their lack of any clear class principles is reflected in their taking money for their publications from US government agencies and broadcasting regularly on the *Voice of America* radio station, seeing this only as ripping off the gullible Americans.

The Social Democratic Party claims some hundreds of members in 78 towns. It denounces Bolshevism and even "socialism", proclaiming the need to restore and defend private property whilst "using it for the people". It claims to base itself on German Social Democracy, though its opponents, such as Boris Kagarlitsky of the Socialist Party, assert that it is not a Social Democratic party at all. Certainly it has little significant base in the working class—although it has such ambitions—and it did intervene in the Confederation of Labour.

The Socialist Party, founded in June 1990, claims 300-500 members, mainly in Moscow and Leningrad but with some important supporters in strike committees in the Kuzbass. It is sharply opposed to privatisation of industry, sees some sort of role for planning, but places a heavy stress on self-management of the enterprises and a role for the market to co-ordinate them. It advocates parliamentarism as a political system.

Among its principle representatives are Boris Kagarlitsky and Nicolai Preobrazhensky. Kagarlitsky has praised the miners' strike committees as "like the soviets of 1917" but the Socialist Party clearly has no programme for defending and democratising the planned property relations nor for a restoration of workers' council power. It is equivocal on the Bolshevik heritage, clearly striving to take a middle path between revolutionary and reformist positions. It has no revolutionary perspective for the overthrow of the bureaucracy. With its present leaders and on its present programme it will not resolve the crisis of leadership in the USSR.

The Marxist Platform (MP) of the CPSU, founded in January 1990, claims support in 102 cities in party clubs and base organisations. It has three CPSU Central Committee (CC) members. Alexander Buzgalin, a CC member and representative of its left wing, has outlined a programme of moving to socialism via democracy at enterprise level as well as multi-party parliaments and other measures. He calls this "a real self-management democracy at all levels". He claims the MP "says yes to the market . . . under the control of mass democratic organisations". The MP calls for the transformation of the CPSU into a parliamentary party competing with others and abandoning its "leading role".

Such a strategic orientation to the transformation of the ruling party must be opposed by revolutionaries, whose programme is predicated on the revolutionary overthrow of its rule, although this does not of course preclude tactical interventions aimed at the working class elements of the party's membership.

There are reports that other, more left wing groups—such as "Proletarian Dictatorship", which it is claimed is orthodox Leninist—are also emerging. However, the burning task of the moment remains the construction of a revolutionary Trotskyist party committed to political revolution: the working class will be the subject of the crisis of the USSR unless it can resolve its own crisis of leadership.

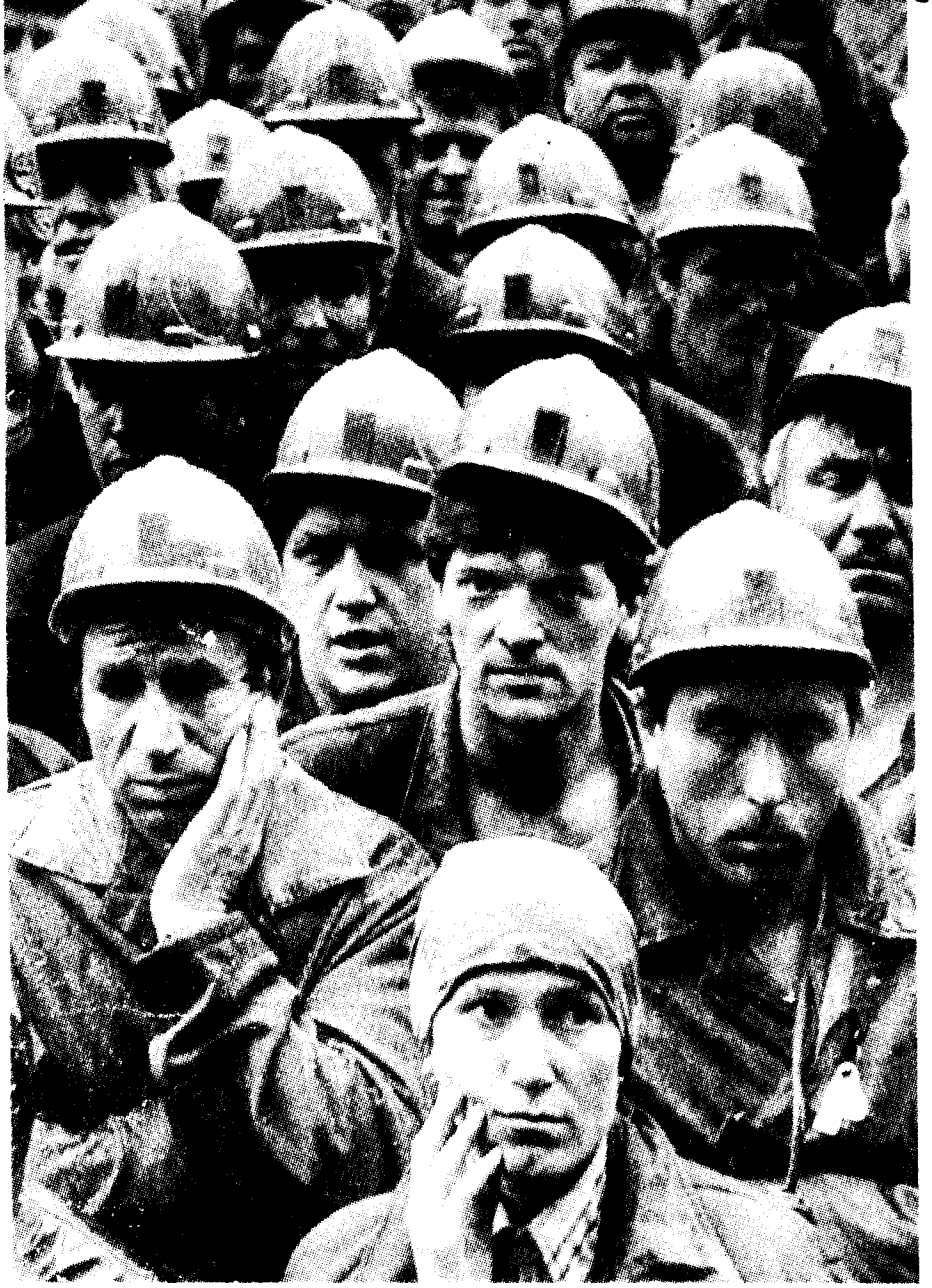
For a proletarian political revolution

For the oppressed nationalities, for the proletariat of the whole USSR, for the intelligentsia who fear the return of the unbridled thuggery of the KGB, there is only one answer: the living programme of Trotskyism. This programme starts now with the the fight to block the bureaucratic counter-revolution and hurl it back in disorder. Democratic rights, the right to strike, the right to demonstrate and to publish newspapers independent of the bureaucracy, must be defended tooth and nail. They are the vital air the proletariat must breathe in order to develop its class consciousness. Only thus can it learn who its true friends and enemies are. But such freedoms can never be developed and made permanent by reform of the bureaucratic state. Self-reform by the liberalising bureaucracy is a sham and a delusion. The fight to defend democracy for the working class must develop into the fight to open up a political revolution that can sweep the *nomenklatura* from power.

At the same time as fighting Stalinist oppression, the programme of Trotskyism fights to prevent the workers of the USSR having to suffer the agonies that capitalist restoration will bring—agonies which the workers of Eastern Europe are now facing or may face tomorrow. It is a programme for the defence of the remaining gains of the October Revolution—the nationalised means of production, the monopoly of foreign trade and planning—as against the misery, chaos and waste that is the reality of capitalism.

Trotskyism alone can really defend the USSR against internal counter-revolution and subjugation to US, European and Japanese imperialism. These world devourers have no interest whatsoever in creating a powerful prosperous (imperialist) rival to themselves. On the contrary they seek to divide the USSR into semi-colonies, spheres of influence and super-exploitation for their multinational corporations.

The programme of Trotskyism is a return to the liberating goal of the world revolution. It necessitates a once and for all break with the defeatist slogan of socialism in one country, which from Stalin to Gorbachev, has meant repeated betrayal for the international working class and the peoples oppressed and exploited by imperialism. To fight for this programme a new party must be formed. This party must be modelled on the genuine Bolshevism of 1903 to 1923, rooted amongst rank and file workers, with a living internal



democracy based on a high political level of cadreisation. It must be a disciplined combat party able to make a revolution at the head of the millions of proletarians. In short it must be a Leninist and not a Stalinist party.

Once again the proletariat needs councils of workers' deputies, the revolutionary soviets of 1917. This time they will have to fight against bureaucratic oppressors and defend the working class against the onslaught on its wages and social rights that all steps towards the market will bring.

The proletariat must invest all power in the hands of councils of recallable delegates. Genuine councils of deputies have nothing in common with the sham soviets which exist in the USSR today. They would be elected bodies representing workers in the factories, the offices and on the farms; they would have delegates from rank and file soldiers in the armed forces, and from the workers' districts of the towns and cities. These forms of democratic organisation and power are the only way in which a workers' state can truly be in the hands of those it claims to represent.

Workers must pledge themselves to support the struggle of the oppressed nationalities. They must build a voluntary federation with a common democratic plan of production.

This would have nothing in common with the forced incorporation and subordination of nations which Gorbachev is seeking to maintain. For those republics in which the majority have clearly expressed their wish to leave the Union, workers throughout the USSR must support their exercise of that right, and fight for the establishment of independent workers' council states.

But it is only with a co-ordinated plan throughout the USSR that the entire population's material and cultural level can be raised.

Such a plan would set as its medium term goals the raising of the underdeveloped regions of the USSR to the level of the highest, the reversal of the ecological disasters that Stalinist bungling has created, and it would renew the advance to full equality for the sexes by liberating women from the burden of privatised domestic labour.

Here and now, faced with an impending economic catastrophe and bureaucratic counter-revolution, all socialists and class-conscious worker militants must fight in all the workers' organisations for an action programme. Its immediate measures should include:

- Stop the bureaucratic counter-revolution—Down with the bonapartist presidency and its organs of repression! Get the KGB and all interior ministry troops out of the Baltics and all other republics seeking separation or autonomy. Immediately disband the Black Berets and all the shock troops of the MVD and the army deployed against the nationalities and workers.
- Defend and extend democratic rights—the freedom of assembly, the press, radio and TV! Against the bureaucratic censors. For the freedom to demonstrate, the right to strike and to form political parties (except fascist parties).
- Defend the democratic rights of all nationalities! Defend the right of the republics to secede from the USSR. Resist the imposition of the new Union Treaty. Soviet troops out of all republics that have clearly and democratically decided to withdraw from the USSR. Fight for the voluntary transformation of the Soviet Union into a genuine federation of free and sovereign republics.
- Drive the "ruling party" of the *nomenklatura* from power! Dissolve its fake "soviets"! All power to a nationwide congress of genuine councils of workers', collective farmers' and soldiers' deputies.
- Smash the sabotage of the bureaucrats, the speculators and the "mafia" with workers' and collective farmers' inspection and control of production and distribution! Down with the privileges of the bureaucracy. Open the bureaucrats' special shops to all. Resist all price increases and defend the state subsidies. Prices and distribution must be placed under the immediate control of committees of pro-

ducers and consumers. End the hoarding of goods by bureaucrats and speculators. Where real, as opposed to bureaucratically created, shortages exist there should be emergency rationing based on the priority needs of the workers, the young, the old and the sick under the control of the workers and collective farmers themselves. Oppose all job losses and wage cuts, cut the hours not the jobs, open the books of the enterprises. Committees of workers must divide available work and determine wage levels in line with a cost of living index drawn up by workers and in particular women workers.

- For workers' inspection and control of Gosplan, the Economic Ministry and the State Statistical Commission! For an emergency plan drawn up by the workers themselves at all levels to solve the crisis of production and distribution It must oppose all attempts to solve the Soviet economic crisis by driving women back into the home, forcing them to work part time and closing childcare and other social facilities.
- Defend the property of the workers and peasants from bureaucratic , private capitalists and imperialist monopolies! For social ownership of the means of production and a democratic workers' plan drawn up by a congress of workers' delegates.
- Elect genuine councils of recallable delegates in the enterprises and barracks as organs of struggle against bureaucratic counter-revolution and against the restoration of capitalism.
- For a restoration of revolutionary internationalism as the only foreign policy possible for a workers' state. For an immediate break with the imperialists' war in the Gulf. For military and other aid to the Iraqi people and all those struggling against imperialism.
- Arm the workers and fraternise with the soldiers! For the election of all officers by the rank and file soldiers. For a genuine mass workers' militia to counter bureaucratic repression, economic sabotage and those who incite pogroms.

The USSR stands at the crossroads. Two catastrophes face the Soviet proletariat. One is the restoration of a savage KGB dictatorship which may prolong the *nomenklatura's* death agony but cannot reverse it. The other would be the triumph of the restorationists, sending the USSR careering down the road being taken by Poland today.

The only way forward is proletarian political revolution towards workers' council power and an economy planned by the working class in the interests of all the toilers. But this road has to be fought for consciously by an organised vanguard—a Leninist-Trotskyist party that is also fighting to build a Leninist-Trotskyist International.

Breaking the chains of Stalinism: women in the Eastern Bloc

by Clare Heath

"In the last decades only the surface signs of tradition were destroyed. Traditional structures, like the slave-life of women in the family, remain."[1]

These words from a Soviet woman worker show the reality of women's "liberation" under Stalinism. For decades women in the USSR and Eastern Europe were told that they were equal and free, and that the "woman question" had been solved. These lies, together with the claim that socialism had actually been established, are being cruelly exposed as the regimes crumble one by one. The danger now facing women is that they may exchange one illusion for another. Instead of the bureaucratic chimera of "socialism in one country" and women's liberation, they are now being offered an equally fantastical picture of what the market economy and mass consumerism can do to lighten the crushing burden of domestic toil. Neither of these alternatives can advance the condition of women workers.

The collapse of the bureaucratic regimes in most of Eastern Europe in 1989 and 1990 had a special impact on the lives of women. It opened up great possibilities for self-expression and gave working-class women the opportunity to take collective action to change their lives. In Romania women played a major role in the revolution which brought down the brutal Ceaucescu dictatorship. Women were active in the factory committees and the workers' militia, meting out workers' justice to Securitate agents and throwing out the tyrannical and corrupt enterprise bosses. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe working women played a leading role in the demonstrations, the strikes and the political organisations that toppled the Stalinist rulers.

Working class women were clearly jubilant at the downfall of these police dictatorships, which they had no reason whatsoever to defend. The pompous male bureaucrats and their pampered wives had happily left them in misery whilst claiming to preside over socialism and to have solved the woman question. But the reality of this "socialism" and this "emancipation" was the denial of basic political rights, and the creation of economic conditions that meant most women spent their lives queuing for food, living in appalling conditions and working long hours for little reward.

After the overthrow of the Stalinists in most of Eastern Europe, and whilst the once almighty Soviet bureaucracy remains torn between a headlong rush to the market and a brutal but doomed return to dictatorship, the issue is now sharply posed: what type of society will best serve the interests of working class women and lead them towards genuine liberation and the final resolution of the woman question?

The Bolsheviks and the woman question

The situation of women in the USSR and Eastern Europe today is shaped by the origins of these states. After the Bolsheviks achieved state power in Russia in 1917 they began to enact progressive social legislation. Women were given the right to vote before they had gained it in the "advanced" bourgeois democracies of the west. Full and equal civil rights were enshrined in the Family Code of 1918: divorce became easily available, women were granted the right to own property, laws requiring wives to move residence with their husbands were removed and civil registration of marriage was established.

Children were given the same status regardless of whether or not their parents were married. Couples could adopt the name of either partner or both. These legal advances went beyond those achieved by the suffrage movements anywhere else in the world; indeed, some of the advances have yet to be achieved in many western countries.

The Bolshevik programme went beyond simple legal equality for women, recognising that formal equal rights did not tackle the underlying causes of women's oppression. Based on the traditional positions developed by Marx, Engels, Bebel and Zetkin, the Bolsheviks also sought to draw women into socialised production outside of the home, to protect women from harmful labour processes and to improve maternal care, to make social provision for child-care and household work. They sought in every way possible to organize and mobilise women for the construction of the new society. As Trotsky wrote:

"The revolution made a heroic effort to destroy the so-called family hearth—that archaic, stuffy, and stagnant institution in which the woman of the toiling classes performs galley labour from childhood to death"[2]

The implementation of this programme was uneven due to the adverse material conditions facing the Bolshevik government. Civil war, added to the carnage of four years of imperialist war, led to famine and near total social collapse. It was difficult enough to restore

1. See interview on page 23

2. L Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Pathfinder (New York 1976) p44



Kollontai (centre) at meeting of Women of the East, Moscow 1920

production to pre-war levels, let alone to create the surplus needed to facilitate large scale social advance.

The Bolshevik Party set up a special Commission, later a section, called *Zhenotdel* which was given the task of mobilising women in support of the Soviet government and also pushing for the rights of women at every level of the party and state apparatus. Groups of Bolshevik women agitators were sent to all areas, including Soviet Central Asia and the Far East, in an attempt to draw women into action against their own oppression. Child-care programmes and maternity homes were established wherever resources permitted, and intensive debates were fostered on the role of the family, sexuality and women's position in society. The Bolsheviks also legalised abortion and prostitution in 1920.

Although regarding both as evils for the women concerned, arising out of women's oppression, they recognised that criminalising women was no solution. There was a fierce debate on the proposed legalisation of abortion, with leading Bolshevik women arguing that it should be made available alongside improved access to birth control for women.

These positive developments were initiated and led by women Bolsheviks including Alexandra Kollontai, Inessa Armand and Nadezhda Krupskaya. Kollontai fought within the Russian Social Democratic movement for many years before the revolution to ensure that special attention was paid to the question of women so that the bourgeois feminists did not win the support of working class women.

In the early 1920s she promoted discussions on sexuality and the family which acted as a fundamental challenge to the petit bourgeois morality and ideology which even most revolutionaries still held on to these questions. Kollontai argued that the building of a socialist society required the transformation of every aspect of social life, including that of sexuality and personal relationships.

At an All-Union Congress of Working and Peasant Women in November 1918 Inessa Armand, the first director of *Zhenotdel*, said:

"The bourgeois system is being done away with. We have entered the period of socialist construction. Private, separate domestic economies have become harmful anachronisms which only hold up and make more difficult the carrying out of new forms of distribution. They must be abolished. The tasks carried out earlier by the housewife for her family within her tiny domestic economy must become independent branches of social labour. We must replace the thousands and millions of tiny, individual economies with their primitive, unhealthy and badly equipped kitchens and primitive washtubs by clean and shining communal kitchens, communal canteens, communal laundries, run not by working women/housewives but by people paid specially to do the job."[3]

The Bolsheviks in retreat

Faced with a growing economic crisis in 1922, the Bolsheviks were forced to temporarily adopt a policy of concessions to capitalism, the New Economic Policy (NEP). This retreat on the economic front represented a serious and sustained threat to the liberatory goals of the Bolshevik women's movement. In the first period of the NEP there were extensive job losses, 70% of which affected women. The number of state homes for children and mothers fell sharply and women were pushed back into increasing economic dependence on men and there was a flourishing of prostitution

In 1926 a new Family Code was introduced. It imposed greater responsibilities on parents for looking after their children after separation and divorce. It granted the same legal status to *de facto* marriages as to legally registered ones and made divorce even simpler.

3. Inessa Armand, quoted in Elizabeth Waters, "In the shadow of the Comintern", *Promissory Notes, women in the transition to socialism*, edited by Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp and Marilyn B Young, New Feminist Library (1989 London) pp33-34

The purpose of this legislation was to ensure that the families of un-registered marriages were supported by fathers. This was opposed by Kollontai but supported by many women who believed that the growth of less formal relationships had enabled men to avoid their paternal responsibilities.

This re-emphasis on individual responsibility for child-care was a retreat from the goal of socialisation. It was a cruel proof that right can never be higher than the material circumstances of society allow for. As Trotsky wrote:

"To institute the political equality of men and women in the Soviet state was one problem and the simplest. A much more difficult one was the next—that of instituting the industrial equality of men and women workers in the factories, the mills and the trade unions, and of doing it in such a way that the men should not put the women to disadvantage. But to achieve the actual equality of man and woman within the family is an infinitely more difficult problem . . . As long as woman is chained to her housework, the care of the family, the cooking and sewing, all her chances of participation in social and political life are cut down in the extreme."[4]

The rise of Stalinism

Isolated, and faced with a growing parasitic bureaucracy, the Russian Revolution slowly succumbed to a bureaucratic counter-revolution. As the working class lost political power, Stalinism organised a forced march to the right. Real reverses occurred in the position of women. These were not justified as a forced short-term retreat but were sanctified as the natural order of things. Trotsky designated this period "Thermidor in the family". The advanced revolutionary cutting edge of the Bolsheviks' programme—the socialisation of domestic work, the responsibility of society for the care of children, the mobilisation of women into political and social life, the challenging of the old sexist and patriarchal structures in family and sexuality—all these were abandoned and indeed denigrated by the bureaucratic usurpers of the revolution.

With the introduction of the industrialisation and collectivisation programme of the late 1920s women became viewed, not as a force to be mobilised for their own liberation, but as a workforce to be organised to meet the targets of the Five Year Plan. They were subordinated to production through work in the factories and fields, and to reproduction through giving birth to large families. The needs of the Stalinist planners were placed before the interests of women and the working class.

Women's participation in social production was massively increased—between 1928 and 1949 the number of women workers in the Soviet Union increased from 3 million (24% of the workforce) to over 13 million (over 50%). Meanwhile, the responsibility of women for domestic labour in the family was massively reinforced. This was a "double shift" with a vengeance! The Stalinist interpretation of women's liberation through work is a caricature of the revolutionary position. The Bolsheviks never regarded women's emancipation as an automatic process which would arise out of women being given jobs. They saw it as something which required a conscious struggle to transform work, home life and the political organisation of society. The Stalinists would have none of this.

In 1930 Stalin abolished *Zhenotdel* on the grounds that it was no longer necessary. The individual family unit was actively promoted and glorified. It became a way of reasserting control and discipline over the working class. The ideology of the socialist family, the base unit of society from which everyone worked as one to construct the Soviet motherland, was a central part of the atomisation and political dictatorship over the working class by the new ruling bureaucratic caste. Divorce was made more difficult in 1936. Abortion was re-criminalised for first pregnancies in 1935 and made completely illegal in 1936. The Stalinists claimed that because "socialism" existed in the USSR and the woman question had been solved, women did not need to avoid having children!

With this came an assault on all that was progressive about the early Bolshevik debates on sexuality. *Pravda* led a campaign against these ideas, now such a threat to Stalin's authoritarian state:

"So-called 'free love' and all disorderly sex life are bourgeois through and through, and have nothing to do with either socialist principles or the ethics and standards of conduct of the Soviet citizen . . . The elite of our country . . . are as a rule also excellent family men who dearly love their children. And vice versa: the man who does not take marriage seriously . . . is usually also a bad worker and a poor member of society . . . A woman without children merits our pity, for she does not know the full joy of life. Our Soviet women, full-blooded citizens of the freest country in the world, have been given the bliss of motherhood."[5]

Stalinism fostered a strong sexist culture to support the continued centrality of women's role as mothers and wives in addition to their work outside the home. Although the regime applauded the women tractor drivers and exhorted women to be good workers and "heroine" mothers, the role separation of male and female workers was continually stressed. Sexism in education and stark job segregation was the norm. Girls and women were encouraged to be mothers and workers in the unskilled or caring professions. Opportunities for women to enter male dominated professions were provided for a few women who could show to the world what "equality" for women looked like.

The Stalin period continued to repeat some of the words of Bolshevism on the emancipated woman, but this was now measured by her contribution to the "socialist" industrialisation project—how much grain and how many children she could produce. The family was reinforced in order to increase discipline within the working class. Thus the one aspect of the Marxist programme that was retained—increased participation in production—came to represent not a first or second step along the road to liberation but, when tied to continued domestic slavery, an inordinate burden on women.

4. L D Trotsky, *Problems of everyday life*, Pathfinder (New York 1973) p38

5. Quoted in Rudolph Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russian: the family in the USSR* (London 1949) p252

This slavery was made more acute by the waste and chaos of bureaucratic planning, the shortages and poor quality of consumer goods. Separated from the other integral elements of that programme—the socialisation of domestic labour, the commitment to breaking down sexism and old ideas about the woman's role, the mobilisation of women to take decisions and control over their own lives individually and collectively as part of the democratically controlled workers' state—entry into production ceased to have a revolutionary function. In short, women were reduced to production machines for the state and breeding machines with little control over their own fertility.

Trotsky described the results in terms that would ring painfully true even today:

"The forty million Soviet families remain in their overwhelming majority, nests of medievalism, female slavery and hysteria, daily humiliation of children, feminine and childish superstition." [6]

The position of women in Eastern Europe

In the period after the Second World War, Stalinism expanded its influence into Eastern Europe. Degenerate workers' states were created in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania and Yugoslavia. These counter-revolutionary overturns of capitalism resulted in states which mirrored many of the features of the USSR including formal political and legal equality for women.[7] The other features of the Stalinist position on women, the drawing of women into social production and the rhetoric about women's equality, varied widely from country to country.

The position of women in each state was determined by a combination of the influence of the USSR with its Stalinist constitution, and specific features based on the historical position of women in each country. For example, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) had a long tradition of women's organisation, with strong women's anti-fascist committees. The Stalinist bureaucrats first incorporated these and later abolished them, but were never able to completely destroy the tradition of women's political organisation—indeed over 30% of the seats in parliament were reserved for women.

Significant advances for women were made in the GDR following the occupation of the region by the Soviet Armed Forces. In 1947—before the overthrow of capitalism—women were declared equal and granted equal pay for equal work. The 1950 Act for the Protection of Mother and Child and the Rights of Women included provisions for state child-care, maternity grant and paid maternity leave, a revision of family law, and positive measures to increase women's qualifications and promote their access to male dominated areas of work.

Despite such reforms, the Stalinist GDR was far from being a paradise for working women. The relative advantages enjoyed by women were always double-edged. All legislation referred to women as "workers and mothers" and the assumption that family and child-care was the primary responsibility of the woman remained unchallenged. Although by the 1980s 80% of women of working age worked outside the home (compared with only 32% in West Germany) women were still responsible for 80% of all domestic labour! Although the state provided considerable child-care to enable to women to work—by 1986 81% of children under three years old were cared for in day-care centres and after-school supervision was available for 84% of six to ten year olds—the quality of care was poor, so much so that many women did not want to entrust their children to the run-down nurseries.

In the other East European states the participation of women in social production and the level of social provision was generally less than in the GDR but still in advance of the situation in the west. By the 1970s women constituted about a half of the labour force, whereas they averaged only one third in the OECD countries. There were variations in this development. In Hungary the proportion of women in the workforce increased from 29% to 44% between 1949 and 1974, but in some areas of Yugoslavia less than 6% of the workforce were women in 1986!

Throughout the degenerate workers' states Stalinist bureaucratic misrule has meant that the participation of women in work outside the home has not broken down the traditional divisions of labour at work and the segregation of women into low paid and unskilled jobs. In Poland women's wages are only 65% of those of men; in Yugoslavia the figure is 75%. In Eastern Europe as a whole the wage gap between men and women ranges from 30-35%. This figure has remained virtually unchanged since the Second World War.

In other words, despite the destruction of capitalism, despite the numerical expansion of women workers and the formal provision of equal pay, Stalinism has proved unable and unwilling to transform the nature of "women's work". Formal equal rights cannot overcome women's inequality where the roots of that inequality in the family remain unchallenged, or, as in the Stalinist states and under capitalism, are reinforced.

The bureaucrat's plan comes first!

Throughout Eastern Europe, the needs of the bureaucratic plan were fulfilled whatever the cost to the working class in general or women in particular. The pollution and poor living conditions in the sprawling grey workers' districts of Eastern Europe's industrial regions meant that poor health and infant mortality placed an even greater burden on women in their role as mothers and housewives. The concentration of many of these countries on the manufacture of heavy industrial products for the USSR meant that consumer goods were neglected. The lack of labour-saving devices for use in the home has been one of the major complaints of women in Eastern Europe, as has the failure of the regime to invest in good quality housing and social provision.

These factors have meant that women have not experienced the increase in work outside the home as a step towards liberation but as an additional burden.

6. L D Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, op cit, p145

7. For an analysis of these bureaucratic overturns see *The Degenerated Revolution*, Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group (London 1982)

Child-care and basic household tasks—cooking and preparing meals, washing and cleaning—generally take much longer in Eastern Europe than in the west due to the failure of the plan to even match the provision of labour saving appliances common in Western Europe. Poor distribution and bureaucratic theft mean that women spend hours queuing for food and basic consumer goods.

In virtually every case, this massive burden falls entirely upon working-class women: in Poland women are exclusively responsible for cooking in 94% of households, and for washing and ironing in 90%. In Yugoslavia women do an average of 26 hours of housework each week! The bureaucrats in the GDR dealt with women's "double shift" in a classic fashion: women were granted a "household day"—one day off every month, and if they had two or more children were allowed a shorter working week. Whilst obviously perceived as a boon by the women concerned, this measure reinforced the division of labour in the home: men were explicitly excluded unless they were single parents or their wife was certified as ill.

The bureaucracy encourages motherhood

As in the USSR, the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe were determined to ensure a growing workforce for the future by promoting larger families through "pro-natalist" policies of various types—almost all of which ultimately failed. The most extreme and savage form was found in Romania. Ceausescu's drive towards economic autarky led him to outlaw abortion and contraception and couples were regularly screened at work to make sure they were not using contraception! Childless couples were hounded by the state and penalised through higher taxation.

The GDR also had a pro-natalist policy, but encouraged population growth through positive encouragement of women to "choose" to have more children, combined with widespread—if poor quality—child-care provision and generous maternity leave. The 1972 legislation on abortion in the GDR was explicit:

"The equality of women in education and vocation, in marriage and family makes it necessary to leave it to the discretion of women themselves to decide whether and when to have a child ... Women have the right to decide on their own responsibility and on the number and timing of children they bear, and shall be able to decide upon this through a termination of pregnancy."

This relatively progressive position—far better than that prevailing in West Germany—was not the product of enlightened Stalinist bureaucrats in the GDR. Rather it reflected the relative weight of the traditional organisation of working class women in the region, and the importance for the Stalinists of maintaining at least the passive acceptance of bureaucratic rule among these layers. When the Wall came down in 1989 the whole Stalinist project in the GDR came tumbling down with it. The abortion legislation has proved a sticking point in imperialism's destruction of the degenerate workers' state: for the next period the ex-



Soviet woman welder

GDR will maintain its pre-1990 abortion legislation, although the imperialists have made clear their intention to wipe out this gain.

The revolutionary upheavals of 1989-90

Ever since the creation of the degenerate workers' states, working women have played an important role in the revolutionary struggles which have periodically shaken the Stalinists' bureaucratic rule. In Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, faced with growing discontent amongst women, the Stalinists were forced to launch a new women's movement, the Czechoslovak Union of Women (CUW). During the "Prague Spring" of 1968 the CUW, which was 300,000 strong at its peak, ousted the old leadership and was an important focus for sections of the opposition. In Poland the revolutionary struggles of 1980-81 saw the massive involvement of women—50% of the Solidarnosc activists in the early days were women, although they were later marginalised by the increasingly reactionary and Catholic leadership.

The struggles of 1989 and 1990 mobilised many women, opening up new opportunities but also new dangers. Freed from the Stalinists' dictatorship over political life, women have looked for new alternatives. The abuses which were inflicted on the working class in the years of Stalinist rule have discredited "socialism" in the eyes of millions.

Whilst fighting against bureaucratic dictatorship the leaders of the various opposition movements have inexorably turned their gaze towards the mirage of the market economy. This has appealed to many workers and to women who yearn for the apparently comfortable lifestyle of women in Western Europe.



Ethnic Turkish women demonstrating in Bulgaria

This seductive but poisonous alternative is accepted by virtually everyone: from leading oppositionists to many of the Stalinists themselves as they desperately try to cling onto power.

What does the market and capitalism promise for women? Many working class women are understandably tempted by the democratic and individual freedoms they see on offer. They are tempted by the wealth, the availability of consumer goods, even the clothes and the reported sexual freedoms that they believe exist for women in the west.

But the reality of restored capitalism would not be that of the idealised media vision of the "Swedish" model. Whilst a minority of women—mainly the petit bourgeois and bourgeois—would undoubtedly be wealthier, have more opportunities and be able to exercise some of their freedoms, for the vast majority of workers it would mean continued and worsening drudgery at work and in daily life. Restoration of capitalism would make life more difficult and insecure for millions of working class women in Eastern Europe. Lack of jobs, market prices for housing food and fuel would all be felt hardest by women as they sought to keep the family fed and clothed.

The destruction of the degenerate workers' state in the GDR and the moves towards the rule of the market in Poland and Hungary have revealed the true values of capitalism. Unemployment has escalated as "unprofitable" enterprises are closed. For those without jobs, the promise of possibly better wages under capitalism is of little comfort.

Child-care and other services are being axed as enterprises close. Where nurseries remain parents will be charged "market prices" for the care their children receive. Many women will be forced through lack of jobs and kindergarten places to stay at home to care for their children. In Poland women have faced repeated attempts to outlaw abortion, and suffered as prices rise and subsidies are removed, whilst in Czechoslovakia abortion has already been restricted.

The experience of the majority of women in capitalist countries throughout the world is one of poverty and deprivation. The crises of capitalism, the exploitation of the imperialists who seize the land of peasants and proceed to destroy the fertility of that land through over-intensive single crop techniques, the forcing of millions of women and children to the urban slums and shanty towns to beg or live by prostitution—that is the reality of the capitalists' market world-wide. And this is the grim prospect facing the working women of Eastern Europe, not the media image of the glamorous liberated housewife.

Women in the USSR today

In the USSR the political crisis has yet to be resolved. For the moment the Stalinists still retain power. A massive potential threat to their rule is the seething discontent of working class women.

The crisis of bureaucratic planning has exacerbated a situation which was already verging on the unbearable for millions of Soviet women. The specific oppression of women in the USSR is massive. For example, on average Soviet women with young children do twenty hours more domestic work per week than men.

Domestic appliances are virtually non-existent, and as in the other Stalinist states, those social services which do exist are utterly inadequate in quality and quantity. This is particularly true in the rural areas and in the eastern republics—social service provision in Tadzhikistan is only 6% of that in the urban areas. And those services that do exist are under threat. As the enterprises become competitive and "extras" like providing a service for the local community are axed parents now have to pay five times as much to put their children in some local workplace nurseries if they do not work in the factory.

One result of *glasnost* has been a debate about the role of women in society. Gorbachev contributed to this debate and his sentiments have found resonance amongst many parts of the bureaucracy and in the working class itself:

"Over the years of our difficult and heroic history, we failed to pay attention to women's specific rights and needs arising from their role as mother and homemaker, and their indispensable educational function as regards children . . . We have discovered that many of our problems—in children's and young people's

behaviour, in our morals, culture and in production—are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and slack attitude to family responsibilities.

This is a paradoxical result of our sincere and politically justified desire to make women equal with men in everything. Now, in the course of *perestroika*, we have begun to overcome this shortcoming. That is why we are now holding heated debates in the press, in public organisations, at work and at home, about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission."[8]

The free market "experts" advised Gorbachev that millions of workers would have to be sacked in order to shore up the ailing bureaucratic system of planning and production. His response was to focus on women as being the easiest to get rid of. Given the monotonous drudgery of most jobs in the degenerate workers' states and the crushing weight of domestic work, he could present a return to the home as liberation from toil and the restoration of the wife and the mother to her "natural" sphere.

The bureaucracy has long been searching for an answer to the "problem" of women's participation in the world of work. From 1980 onwards part-time work has been promoted for women, as has home-work, but few can afford to lose earnings. Changes in maternity leave and benefits in 1981 encouraged more women to stay at home, with women being entitled to twelve months leave on partial pay. But these changes did not substantially shift women out of production—they have remained at around 50% of the workforce since the end of the war.

Gorbachev sought to reverse this process and make women more responsible for the family, something also made necessary by the cuts in social provision which have accompanied the moves towards the market from the outset. The twelfth Five Year Plan (1986-90) included the growth of part-time work, further development of home—work and a shortening of the working week for women. Maternity leave was extended to eighteen months.

Elements of Gorbachev's programme for women found favour within the working class. The miners' strike in the Kuzbass in 1989 included as one of its demands the provision of three years maternity leave for women. This might sound tempting to many women, but it would make them ever more dependent upon their husbands, and exclude them from the social life of collective work.

A shorter period of guaranteed maternity and paternity leave, on full pay and with job security, combined with a shorter working week, flexible hours and child-care leave for all parents plus the provision of high quality child-care, would ensure relief from domestic burdens whilst allowing their continued participation in the workforce.

Many women have openly opposed this reversion to the old sexual division of labour. Even within the party organisations women have raised objections. At the All-Union Conference of Women in 1987 delegates argued for equality in domestic work against Gorbachev's "womanly mission". The Conference also argued for better prospects for women in promotion and training and a breaking down of the sharp contrast of male and female labour rather than adopting a "back to the family hearth" position.

The hardship experienced by the mass of women leads many workers to look for more time to carry out domestic work. But for this to be channelled towards demanding more time for women in the home, rather than towards a reduction in the working week for all workers, represents a step back in the position of women. The back-to-the-home solution of the marketising reformers is supported by the growth of other reactionary ideologies. Following decades of suppression the church has enjoyed a growth in influence under the greater democratic freedoms of *glasnost*. The Orthodox Church in Russia, Catholicism in the Baltic republics and Islam in the eastern republics are all gaining influence. All these religions, often strongest in their hold over women, support moves restricting women's role to that of family domestic slave and child rearer.

The response of women workers

In the face of this pressure from the bureaucracy, the church and pro-market forces to return to a "purely womanly mission", the response of women has varied. Whilst there are those who mistakenly embrace this retreat, others have resisted. In Poland women in the independent workers' movement have organised to defend abortion rights and women's jobs. In Germany women in the former GDR have led action to protect child-care facilities and progressive abortion laws.

But as the forces of reaction grow more confident, women find it more and more difficult to mobilise. Working class women's own specific needs will be increasingly ignored. In the change from revolution to counter-revolution in the GDR, the role of women and their organisations changed. Women's groups participated in the Round Table discussion of autumn 1989: their reward has been to see their interests signally ignored by all major parties since the time of restoration.

Seeking to fight reactionary proposals to return to hearth and home, and disillusioned with both pro-bourgeois and working class organisations, many progressive women will be drawn towards the ideas of feminism. They will be attracted by the idea that women must organise "autonomously" to win equality with men in all spheres of society. But feminist ideology and the feminist programme does not provide a real solution to the problems facing the majority of women in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Instead of seeking to make the fight against women's oppression part of the struggle of the working class as a whole, the feminists see women's struggles as distinct and separate.

Radical feminists argue that that working class women must not unite with working class men against the common enemy of boss or bureaucrat, but that all women should should unite against their common

8. M Gorbachev, *Perestroika* (London 1987) p117

enemy, men. They further claim that the inability of Stalinism to liberate women shows that socialism is no guarantee of women's liberation. They ignore the fact that these societies are not socialist. They are dominated by a bureaucratic caste which is incapable of taking society forward.

The radical feminists' recipe of a cross-class alliance of women would be poison for working class women: the only power which can successfully sweep away the bureaucracy, beat back the impending restorationist onslaught and open the way to real women's liberation is that of the proletariat. All separatist movements which try and split working women away from the labour movement will inevitably weaken the only real force for progress.

Socialist feminism shares with radical feminism the idea that the structures of women's oppression have a separate existence from other forms of oppression and exploitation. They refer to this system of domination as "patriarchy". This idea leads socialist feminists to argue that women must organise autonomously and to expect that their struggles will be distinct from those of the working class as a whole.

Pushed on by the inexorable logic of their anti-working class theory of patriarchy, socialist feminists in Western Europe have ended up being more concerned about the interests and ambitions of a narrow layer of petit bourgeois women than about the fate of the majority of women—the workers. The socialist feminists have generally gravitated around the reformist parties, taking part in both local and national government. They have thereby lent credence to the reformists' fraudulent formal commitment to equality for women and have frequently played a full role in the reformists' anti-working class actions.

Feminism cannot offer a way forward for working women in Eastern Europe. Nor can the capitalist market, be it run by Stalinists, Social Democrats, populists or nationalists. The only alternative for working women in the degenerate workers' states is a return to the revolutionary tradition of the Bolshevik programme for women, now embodied in the programme of Trotskyism.

The need for a revolutionary programme

The revolutionary upheavals of recent years and those ahead offer the opportunity for the working class, and women workers in particular, to organise to fight for their own interests. These cannot be separated from the general struggle to destroy the bureaucracy, resist the restoration of capitalism, and totally transform the degenerate workers' states into revolutionary vehicles for the liberation of the working class.

The choice is a stark one and the stakes for women could not be higher. A return to the market would face working class women with a dramatic *worsening* of their conditions as well as with the loss of a historically vital instrument for their emancipation—the nationalised and planned economies.

As each country adopts more and more market reforms, leading ultimately to the restoration of capitalism as in the GDR, women will experience mounting attacks on their daily lives: increasing unemployment, loss of job security, reduced child-care provision, loss of abortion rights, decreased rights to parental leave. At the moment women in Eastern Europe and the USSR are generally equal before the law and in political life. Whilst such formal equal rights can never mean true equality if the lives of women remain dominated by family responsibilities and low paid work in the factories, they should be defended against repeal.

Both the hardline Stalinists and the restorationists want to reduce women's participation in work. But it is through involvement in social production that women can fully become part of society, can break from isolation and dependence within the family and can organise collectively to determine their own future and the shape of society. Women, alongside male workers, must control the way they work, the goods they produce and their equitable distribution throughout society. The division between domestic work in the household and collective work in the enterprises must be broken down. The collective provision of services to carry out domestic work, raise children and care for dependents is a central part of the liberation of women.

Child-care and social provision in the Stalinist states are generally high by capitalist standards, but provision is extremely uneven, and the quality of services is often appalling. Nurseries and kindergartens are staffed by women on low wages and with little training. Without any collective and state child-care women would be forced into an even more dependent position with regard to their husbands and families, so it is important to defend state and enterprise provision of such facilities. But the present quality of such provision should never be idealised and can only be improved fundamentally through the direct control of workers and parents.

For women to achieve real freedom and equality there must be a society which plans the social provision of basic necessities such as good quality housing, food and care for the aged, the young, the sick and the disabled. These tasks cannot be the responsibility of the individual family unit and in particular to the women within it. Nor can they be left to the gross inequalities of the capitalist market.

To decide on such priorities and to meet them requires a conscious direction of society's resources. This will only be possible in a state where all the large scale means of production are the property of the working population as a whole. Workers must control the planning, the quality and the distribution of all goods and services. This is only possible in a revolutionary workers' state based on workers' councils which assures the active participation of the majority of workers, including women.

Women who were jubilant at the downfall of the Stalinists in Eastern Europe and who are active oppositionists in the USSR can play a decisive role in shaping their future if they understand the impact of the Stalinist workers' states on their lives, foresee the assaults of capitalism and fight for a revolutionary alternative to both.

"Deaf to our problems"

An interview with Natasha, a worker in a Moscow food factory *

The promised equality of women in the Soviet Union does not exist. What do you think are the main areas in which working women face sexual discrimination?
Let me give a concrete example from our factory. We have technical brigades which are led by the four most highly qualified workers. Even though the work of the leaders is a lot less physically demanding than the work of the women in the brigade, it is impossible for a woman to become the leader. In the ten years I've worked in this factory it has only happened to a woman once—and her husband was the director of the factory!

In general women are either employed in middle management or they do heavy physical labour. To become a boss or a chief engineer the brightest woman has to be at least ten times as smart as the brightest man.

On the other hand, women are, of course, burdened with family problems which also stop them from getting on. Family matters are regarded as private affairs which do not need to be taken into account either by the factory administration or the politicians. People are expected to cope with these problems by themselves. And the men have made it very clear that it's the women who have to cope with them!

How do men and women divide the housework?
In principle there is no such thing as "housework" because it is taken for granted. By tradition it is women's work. However, because women use up so much energy through hard physical labour at work, they come home completely exhausted and their husbands have no choice but to do things themselves. If they don't they will have nothing to eat and would live in a filthy flat. This is not the result of women having fought for their rights—they simply can't do any more.

Many women get divorced because they can't cope with the double burden any longer, but this only creates new problems. The children stay with the mother in any case, and the most difficult problem is how to turn one flat into two. That means finding someone who would like a bigger flat and can swap it for two smaller flats. That is extremely difficult and can take years, so people who are divorced are frequently forced to carry on living together.

The Social Democrats, Patriots and Radicals [liberals] have come up with the new idea that women should be taken out of work and stay at home instead. This is supposed to solve two problems in one go. Families are supposed to function better and the problem of unemployment will be solved at women's expense. But up to now not one political party has asked women what they actually want. Women don't want to leave the workplaces as long as there is no alternative for them, as long as there is no choice. They want to be economically independent.

Women can only have real freedom when they have the possibility of choosing whether or not they want to just stay at home and do housework. They must decide this themselves. That is the aim of emancipation—to remove their dependency on their husbands. When a woman decides to separate from a man it should not mean personal and social catastrophe. Separation should not automatically mean that the woman suffers a drop in her living standards.

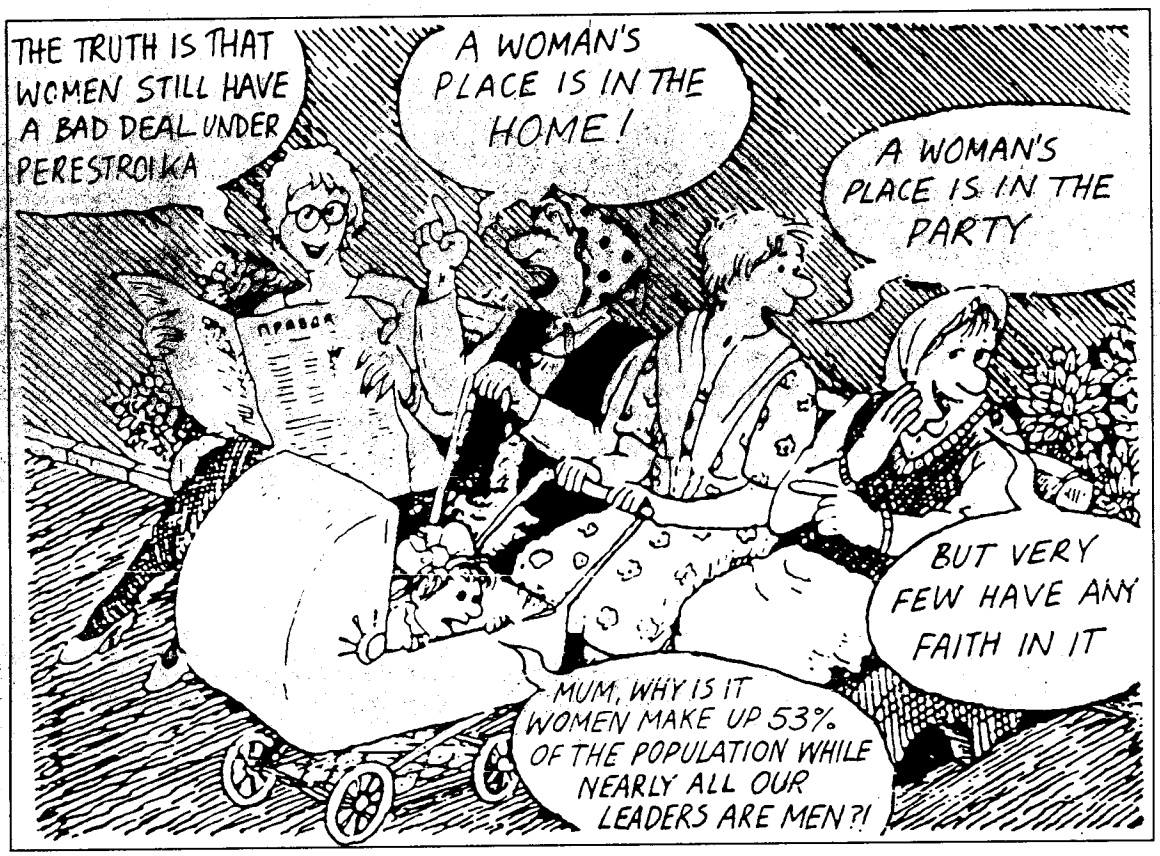
The state must recognise that it has a duty to help women. Attempts have been made to prevent women's independence from men, to make women stay at home and bear children, "so that the Russian nation doesn't die out"—an argument that I heard from someone recently. But women won't take that any more, you can't turn the clock back. Women want to have their own personalities, not simply be the appendages of men. Women will fight tooth and nail to keep their jobs even though the work is so heavy. To throw women out of the production process would have consequences that the Democrats can't even begin to imagine.

What is the situation as far as social services like nurseries are concerned?
In comparison with the 1950s there's been some progress. For example, maternity leave has been extended to three years: 56 days on full pay, then 35 roubles a month for two years, then unpaid. That's a big improvement since my mother's time: she had to go back to work after one month. But things are looking bad, above all because the nursery workers earn next to nothing. They are very over-worked and badly qualified, and the low pay doesn't attract the most committed workers. When my children are at the nursery I don't feel that I have a minute's peace of mind. On the other hand, nurseries cost us very little.

In the new year (1991) nursery prices are supposed to be going up quite a bit in order to raise the pay of the nursery workers. On our wages we would never cope with this increase. There is a proposal that it should cost 70 roubles per child. I can't imagine that we will each individually have to pay 70 roubles from our wages. It will probably be taken from the workplace social funds.

What happens is that the income of each enterprise is divided into three funds—the investment fund, the social fund and the wages fund. Everything taken out of the social fund goes towards the costs of building homes, holidays etc. Because the housing problem is so enormous a massive contradiction is developing between funding the nurseries and funding the housing programmes. At the moment there are two possibilities be-

* This interview was given to a representative of the LRCI in the USSR, in November 1990



V Rozantsev/A Bezik

ing discussed by the Moscow Soviet: either an increase in pay—in which case we will pay for the nurseries—or else the factory pays for it. So long as homes, nurseries, schools and health services are heavily subsidised, as they are at the moment, then we can manage on our wages. But a friend of mine who has just returned to Moscow hasn't been able to find a nursery place for a month. If she gets a job she doesn't know what she's going to do with the kid.

The demand for nursery places is so great that the office which allocates the places is besieged by women. They stand in the queue, crying and begging for a place for their child. The only women who can get a place in an all-day nursery are those who work from eight in the morning to five at night, five days a week, and have no grandmother who can look after the child

The hardest time in a woman's life begins when the child goes to school. Because in the first year lessons stop at noon, the child is alone for the rest of the day. There is the possibility of a day group, but there is exactly the same struggle for these as for places in nurseries. Relations with the kids get worse and worse because, really, they're left to run wild.

There have been attempts to have a sliding scale of working time but it's hardly been put into practice anywhere. There's almost no part time work, while more and more the factories want to avoid employing women with children if possible. If we went over to a market economy women with children would inevitably be the first to suffer the consequences. Every plant would have to consider when a woman could work and when not, and they would get rid of the problem as quickly as possible. At the moment, no-one is looking into this problem, not even the unions. The three groups who would be most affected by the transition to a market economy, the ones who would immediately notice its effects, would be those nearing retirement, the unqualified and women. In the last five years, I've noticed that women with children practically never change jobs because the risk of not getting a new one is too high. They just have to put up with whatever happens in the factory.

What about personal relationships?

Marital relations in the Soviet Union differ greatly according to national and social tradition. For a woman who lives in a village the situation is almost untenable if she isn't married by the age of 25. A woman who lives in the countryside and has "free" sex is not safe, even from physical attacks. Women obviously have more freedom in the city. Here you can have children without being married and not face such problems. In the town they can disregard tradition, and these freedoms are spreading further out from the towns.

There is a new wave of christian weddings, but at the moment these are only superficial phenomena, it doesn't mean that there is a real return to tradition. In the last few decades only the superficial signs of tradition were destroyed. Traditional structures like the slave-life of women in the family remain.

As long as the whole structure is not changed a return to these ways is possible. However, even if women do believe more in the church now, that doesn't mean that they'll let themselves be completely dominated by men again.

What about the availability of contraception?
You can't get contraceptives. Abortions are carried out without anaesthetic. It is pure humiliation. In a way women have adapted to these conditions and they tolerate them because they have no idea how it could be any different. Funnily enough, when the question of contraception is raised it's mainly by men. The problem puts women under so much stress that on the one hand it gets on their nerves and on the other hand they can't have normal sexual relations. So even the men begin to notice the consequences. The way they carry out abortions makes you feel like cattle, and the way that women's illnesses in general are dealt with is thoroughly degrading and painful. There are no pain-killers. Of course such poor treatment of women also has its effect on men and children.

There is still moral pressure not to raise issues like contraception openly. There are massive moralising protests against television broadcasts or newspapers that deal with the question. But it is the problems that are immoral—how can it be immoral to talk about them! We have to shout about these issues wherever we can. We have to shout because society has made itself deaf to these problems. They have been pushed aside to such an extent that it is completely impossible to have a normal discussion about them.

What has been the effect of *perestroika* on living standards?
The wages used to be only about half as much and life was really difficult—you had to count every penny. Today the wages have doubled but, all the same, living standards have fallen. A brigade leader used to get 300 roubles. Today he earns 500 roubles but cannot live any better because inflation has risen faster than his wages. In the past, inflation was a rather abstract concept for us; we didn't really know what it was. Today everyone knows exactly what it is! To take an example, in the 1970s a good pair of women's shoes cost 30 roubles at state prices. Today they are 75 roubles. Even though there has been no official price rise it happens anyway. We have no control over price rises.

How much of your food do you get through the factory and how much do you have to queue for?
The range of products which are distributed in the factories has got a lot broader. There used to be more things in the shops, and in the factories you only got those things that aren't in the shops. In the shops there's nothing now apart from bread and milk so more things are distributed via the factories. But, at the same time, the amounts allocated to the factories are getting smaller and smaller so you have to work out who is going to get something and who isn't. For example, if thirty people order a product but there are only ten, then those ten items have to be divided between the thirty. Our lives are a permanent gamble.

On the other hand, you only get anything in the shops if you queue from nine in the morning till six in the evening with a short break only if someone keeps your place for you. If you can do that two days a week then you get about half of what you need because in-between times there are deliveries.

What about the black market?
Back where I come from, in the Northern Caucasus, there's been a black market for decades. The people there hardly ever buy anything—apart from milk, cream and bread—from the ordinary shops. They have had market prices for a long time—women's boots, for example, are 350 roubles. This situation has drawn a lot of people into the black market, people pinch things from work, and so on. Down there, state wage levels don't really have any meaning. In Moscow, people are much more dependent on wages and what there is in the shops. I think that this winter there is really going to be hunger here. There's no meat, no butter and no cheese.

Why not?
Big cities like Moscow used to be like oases. They were in the first category for provisions which meant that even then, out in the provinces, there never used to be meat or margarine in the shops. But now lots of areas and provinces hold their products back and don't deliver to Moscow. Today the products get lost and disappear into these huge territories. There's always been a shortage but it wasn't as conspicuous because it wasn't the case in the cities and the situation in the rural areas was not so visible. For example, sugar is now hoarded in enormous silos in the Ukraine because of the economic war between Russia and the Ukraine.

Our food industry is collapsing because of the state of the machinery. The machines are very old and re-equipping would require huge investment. In the old days the central bureaucracy controlled what had to be delivered where. They knew there were places which were self-sufficient, where you didn't need to deliver meat, and that there were places like Leningrad, Sverdlovsk and Moscow where it had to be delivered to avoid unrest. The whole distribution system has now collapsed and only the most urgent gaps are filled—if there are strikes in the Kusbass then meat will be delivered there. Since Yeltsin came into power the bureaucrats' boycott has got worse. If the Democrats do bring down the government and get into power then we really would have chaos because, obviously, there would be no possibility of them ordering these bureaucrats about. That's why, at the moment, I don't support the slogan, "Down with the government!" I reckon the Democrats would lose against the *nomenklatura*.

The decisive question now is: which way are those sections of the bureaucracy who hold the levers of economic power going to move? The Democrats' only chance would be if this layer moves in their direction. But if it came to a confrontation then the Democrats would be unable to shift this obstacle. They would turn on each other like rats. At the moment the downfall of Gorbachev is the most dangerous perspective.

In Lithuania Sajudis managed to take power because they were properly organised. They could occupy the key positions and hold onto them. Solidarnosc in Poland managed to take over from the bureaucracy with the help of the church. But here there is no such power, or at least not yet. There are no big organisations that are really united and can thus be a factor in events. "Democratic Russia", for example, doesn't have any binding ideas around which it could really organise itself and be

active. It keeps on dissolving in internal quarrels. Even the Moscow Soviet has proved to be completely powerless. After a couple of its meetings were broadcast people became pretty disillusioned.

It seems that in Moscow some state canteens have been closed and turned into co-ops, obviously with prices four and five times higher.
I don't know anything about that. It doesn't affect me. I don't go into such canteens. But for anyone coming into the city, who has no relatives or friends, it really is a huge problem. The Moscow Soviet, of course, wants to privatise everything, which will naturally mean price rises. The co-ops raise prices because they know that the consumer has no choice. It can only lead to reduced supply and higher prices.

Earlier you mentioned the Social Democrats, Liberals and Patriots who want to force women out of production. Are there any political forces which have a progressive position on this question, which stand for the real liberation of women?
Firstly, nobody really concerns themselves with this question, or if they do then only out of sight of the state and out of the sight of men. The Democrats in power say, "We don't have any means to solve this problem" because, of course, it's a matter of money. If there were any money then, naturally, the first priority would be to put it into production. That means that solving this problem is a task for the soviets or the women's movement which fights in the soviets. But it would be wrong to think that the factories here would do anything.

Is there any basis for a women's movement? What significance do the Women's Councils have? Do women bring these questions into the working class movement?
In Lithuania there is a women's movement. Here in Moscow there is the Committee of Soviet Women, but no-one knows why it exists. The Women's Councils existed before and there is an attempt to revive them but it won't come to much.

Whenever a woman goes somewhere with a problem, whether it's to the doctor, to the boss or whatever, they always say: "That's your problem, you just shouldn't have been allowed to have children". The activation of the Women's Councils is an attempt to push these problems away. Women are supposed to get together and solve the problems themselves. But these Women's Councils have no real power.

The trade unions which, on the face of it, are supposed to be concerned with these things, in fact concern themselves with them as little as they do with all the other matters which they should deal with. There is neither a party nor a movement that has really grasped the issue. Women are always the ones causing trouble, the fifth wheel on the chariot. Whenever someone finally finds an ideal solution to something, then along come the women and don't fit in with the proposals. They don't fit into politics, they don't fit into production, they are the trouble-makers.

Does that mean there are women in the working class movement who raise these problems but they are ignored?
Everybody knows, men and women, that it is meaningless to put women's problems first because there are much more global problems which haven't been solved. The present level of production, our social services, our health services and so on don't allow women's problems to be solved. To solve any one of them would mean—investment. Only then would we create the basis on which women could really get their rights.

My own opinion is that only a political tendency which included this problem in its programme and fought for it from the beginning would really be able to achieve the emancipation of society. If the working class movement always puts this question aside then it disqualifies itself and will also discourage women from fighting. I think that a political movement that really put the woman question in the centre would be able to solve the problems all the easier because it would understand the whole of politics much more globally.

From slavery to socialism

An action programme for women in the USSR and Eastern Europe

Working women in the USSR and the rest of Eastern Europe are faced with twin dangers. The collapse of the Stalinist dictatorships threatens both the restoration of capitalism and the possibility of a hardline bureaucratic crackdown. The restoration of capitalism would bring untold hardship for the vast majority of women in the degenerate workers' states. But what, apart from the planned property relations, remains for working women to defend in the degenerate workers' states?

Women, like the rest of the working class, have no interest in defending the old bureaucratic regimes. They have no interest in defending the corruption, the inequalities, the poor quality of consumer goods, the inadequate supplies of food. The working class must ensure that the present political, economic and social crisis is resolved in their interests. Advancing towards women's liberation and true equality in the degenerate workers' states means defending those gains which have occurred for women, whilst fighting for the creation of a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat through political revolution.

Real liberation for women has nothing in common with the declared "equality" of women in the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states. Women can only develop to their full potential when they are relieved of the burden of the family. The whole of society should ensure that its members are adequately fed, housed nurtured and cared for. It should not be the responsibility of each isolated wife and mother in the home.

A transformation on a massive scale will be needed to achieve this. It will require the redistribution of resources to meet the basic needs of all. It will require a total transformation of the culture and psychology which are so rooted in the family and its role.

Raising the standard of living of all to achieve women's liberation is not possible under capitalism or Stalinism. In different ways, both these corrupt systems are based upon the maintenance and extension of inequality. In particular the market is based on the exploitation of the many to meet the greed of the few. It is part of an economic system which can never feed, clothe and house the world's masses, let alone raise living standards to such a level as to allieviate women's burden.

The degenerate workers' states must be transformed into truly socialist societies, without which there can be no women's liberation. Under the rule of the working class the state can and will be able to plan the production of goods which people need, and distribute them in such a way as to relieve misery. In the next period women in the USSR and Eastern Europe need, simultaneously, to resist capitalist restoration and bureaucratic repression and take forward the fight for a democratic and revolutionary workers' state.

For a woman's right to work!

The most immediate attack felt by many women is the loss of employment rights. Women must defend their jobs and their high level of participation in the workforce. No redundancies, no to "women out first" solutions! Cut the hours not the jobs, share all available work with no loss of pay!

Managers and would-be capitalist bosses say that job cuts are necessary to make the enterprises profitable. In reply the workers must organise committees in each enterprise to distribute available work. They must open the books and scrutinise them to find out where the managers are syphoning off money and lining their own pockets. The workers, not the bosses, must control the work and the hours!

For women who work part time there must be full employment rights and equal rates of pay, but women should resist the moves towards expanding part time work. They should fight for a shorter working week for all, with time off for all workers to perform household and child-care tasks.

Although the vast majority of women are in paid labour in the USSR and most of Eastern Europe, their work is generally segregated and under-valued. Defence of the right to work should be carried out alongside a struggle to transform the nature of the work that women do.

There should be positive attempts to train women into jobs where they are under-represented, and men should be encouraged to enter areas of work currently regarded as "women's work". In order to make such opportunities a reality for women, training has to be provided alongside expanded child-care and social provision for children.

Equal pay for work of equal value!

Women are segregated in low paid jobs and generally have far lower wages than men. Women must demand equal pay for work which is considered equal, not by the managers and bureaucrats but by committees of female and male workers. Part timers must be given

Resolution adopted by the International Secretariat of the LRCI, March 1991

equal rates of pay with full timers in the same or similar jobs. Inflation is a real and escalating problem in the USSR and Eastern Europe. The only way workers can defend their standard of living against inflation is to demand a sliding scale of wages, with a rise of pay for every rise in the cost of living. But it cannot be left up to the managers to determine the level of inflation—it is women who generally have to buy the food, clothe the family and therefore know the real cost of living. Committees of workers must determine the true rate of inflation and organise to force compensatory pay rises. Women will be essential participants in the price watch committees which set the wage claims.

Defend subsidies and price control—resist the rule of the market!
Women bear the brunt of increased prices as subsidies are removed to make way for the profiteers. Resist all price rises, defend the subsidies and place prices under the control of committees of local workers and consumers and producers! Every day, women have to face the chaos in distribution which produces shortages and massive queues. Many shortages are caused by bureaucratic hoarding or the diversion of goods into special shops for those with privileges, or onto the black market. The whole distribution system must be transformed and placed under the direct control of the workers and consumers. Open up the special shops to all! Where real shortages exist there should be emergency rationing of basic goods under workers' control, giving priority to those in the greatest need. Women in particular know the needs for food and other consumer goods and must be involved in deciding production and distribution priorities!

For a workers' plan of production and distribution!
When women and other workers take control of the factories, wages, prices and the distribution of goods, it will soon be clear that the bureaucratic plan and the new market mechanisms fail to meet even basic human needs. Neither the stagnating plan of the bureaucrats nor the chaos of competing enterprises under the "rule" of the market can achieve this. The only solution is to take planning out of the hands of the bureaucrats and place it under the democratic control of those who know what is needed and what can be produced—the working class. Each individual factory, farm or distribution network cannot operate in isolation, even under workers' management. Planning requires the best use of available resources on a national and international scale, diverting investment from heavy industry towards consumer goods, massive investment in communications and transport, in housing and welfare.

Defend and extend social provision!
Women should oppose the closure of kindergartens and nursery schools, and resist the imposition of fees for these services. The state must be forced to provide free, good quality child-care for all ages of children to enable the parents to work and participate in social and political activity. To ensure that quality is improved the control of these facilities must be taken into the hands of the parents and local workers' organisations. Children must be given the highest possible quality of education and care, including a conscious fight against sexist stereotyping.

For a massive programme of house building, with workers and women controlling the design to ensure adequate facilities for communal laundries, restaurants and social areas!

For a free and high quality health service with good quality after-care for those who are discharged from hospital. This will allow members of the family to continue working and not be forced to look after dependent relatives full time. For full social provision of care and recreation facilities for the elderly, the disabled and the chronically sick, under the control of the users of the services and local workers' representatives.

For the full socialisation of domestic labour!
Improving state child-care and social provision will dramatically improve the lot of women. But it will not necessarily relieve them of the burden of responsibility for the family. For women to achieve full equality domestic labour must become a collective responsibility, with the state investing resources in expanding and improving all social facilities.

For women's rights to reproductive health care!
In the USSR and Eastern Europe women have been expected to produce large families to meet the needs of the plan for more workers. Contraception is limited and abortion is either used as a brutal form of contraception, as in the USSR, or denied as it was in Ceausescu's Romania. To begin to control their own lives women must have the choice as to whether and when to have children. There must be free abortion on demand, and a massive expansion in the availability of contraception. Women should demand high standards of clinic facilities for abortions.

Protect women's maternity rights!
Women should be entitled to a year on full pay around the time of a child's birth, with guaranteed re-employment in the same post and no loss of job status/grade. If a woman wishes to return to work earlier this must be allowed. Fathers should be given paternity leave of up to one year if they choose to care for the child. Maternity services should be expanded and the quality improved to reduce maternal and infant mortality. No work for women in jobs that threaten their reproductive functions—no heavy manual labour for pregnant women! Protection of all workers against the hazards of work in nuclear and chemical industries.

Defend and extend democratic rights! Full equality for women!
In the USSR *glasnost* improved basic democratic freedoms such as the right to organise and publish, but these are constantly threatened with bureaucratic clampdown. In the Eastern Europe many democratic rights have been won but will be constantly under threat from either bureaucratic clampdown or capitalist restoration. The right to strike, to organise free trade unions and political parties and to publish mate-

rial is essential if women's voices are to be heard. Women must have guaranteed full equal rights under the law. No legalised discrimination, no forced marriages! Civil marriages and non-registered marriages should have the same status. For immediate and easily available divorce at the request of one partner.

Against sexism!
In the USSR and Eastern Europe women have been told for decades that they are equal to men in all ways, and that the "woman question" has been solved. Yet women continue to be oppressed through their role in the family, their double shift of worker and housewife, their limitation to manual and semi-skilled labour. The continued acceptance of this situation as "normal" by many workers, including women, is a function of the strong sexist ideology which portrays women's central role as being in the family.

To overcome this, to allow women to express their discontent with their lives, to allow them to organise resistance to the physical and sexual abuse that some of them suffer, requires a conscious fight against sexism. Although women will never be fully liberated whilst private domestic labour exists, in the period of transition men must be encouraged to take equal responsibility for housework and child-care in order to begin breaking down the divisions between the sexes, and to allow women more opportunities for political, economic and social activity.

For sexual liberation!
Sexuality is heavily repressed in the USSR and Eastern Europe, particulary for lesbians and gay men. This has worsened as the church has attained greater influence. There must be no discrimination on the grounds of sexuality, and there must be good quality sex education for all. Open discussions about sex and sexuality should be promoted, and the influence of the church must be resisted.

For the freedom of prostitutes from state harassment and the provision of good quality medial and social support for prostitutes, including re-training and alternative employment for those who wish to leave prostitution! No to bureaucratic censorship! For full freedom to publish sexually explicit material, including for gay men and lesbians.

For the complete separation of church and state!
Religion must not be allowed to determine civil laws or impose its norms on women. No constitutional defence of the "rights of the foetus". No return to the bride price or enforced marriages! No to the veil! All education must be state organised and secular, with no religious schools permitted.

Build a working class women's movement!
In fighting for all these demands and resisting the onslaught of the captialist and the bureaucrat, women need to be organised. The existing organisations, whether the old Stalinist parties, the trade unions, the various parliamentary bodies or the new "democratic" organisations and free trade unions, all under-represent women in their leadership and membership.

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IRISH WORKERS GROUP

Women are denied full participation in political life because of their continuing oppression in the home. A conscious struggle is needed to overcome these inequalitites and mobilise women to take part in struggle and participate in the building of a new society which meets their needs.

In all workers' organisations, unions, political parties and representative bodies women should have the right to caucus, and have guaranteeed representation on all levels of the leadership. In every factory, collective farm and locality women must organise committees to fight against the attacks they currently face, and to try and involve the largest number of women in activity through mobilising them in the home as well as at work.

Such organisation should not be counterposed to organising in the new independent trade unions, parties and workers' councils which develop. Rather they are a way of maximising the participation of women in these general class organisations. Brought together, such women's organisations can form a mass working class women's movement which will be central to the defence of women's interests.

For a proletarian political revolution!

Whilst there are many defensive struggles over social provison and jobs, the most fundamental thing to defend in the USSR and Eastern Europe is the abolition of private property and capitalism. In the USSR this was an achievement of the revolutionary working class and marks a major advance. In Eastern Europe capitalism was bureaucratically overthrown, but once private property had been abolished it represented a gain for the workers.

It is therefore necessary to defend state property against selling it off to private investors. But this does not mean defending the existing bureaucratic planning which is unable to meet even the basic needs of the working class. Planning of production and distribution can only meet the needs of the working class if it is democratically controlled with priorities determined by the producers and consumers together through a revolutionary workers' state.

Open the road to socialism and women's liberation!

Only with such a state can the road to women's liberation be opened, leading to the emancipation of women from privatised domestic work and child-rearing. The democratic workers' state will immediately begin the socialisation of these tasks, aiming at a higher quality of provision than the isolated household can offer. It will draw men, women, the old and the young into the socialisation process.

Only this will enable the development of true equality for all in performing the necessary productive labour of society and receiving the benefits of this collective labour. Socialism and its higher stage, communism, are inseparable from the liberation of women—no communism is conceivable without women's liberation, and no women's liberation is possible without communism.

Build a revolutionary party!

The political revolution can only take place with the conscious organisation of the working class, men and women, with a programme to take power out of the hands of the bureaucrats, to create a workers' state based on councils of workers at every level. To develop and carry out such a programme needs a new party of the working class. Not the Stalinist parties which have discredited socialism in the eyes of workers throughout Eastern Europe and the world, but a revolutionary, Leninist-Trotskyist party. Women will play a central role in this.

The revoutionary party must organise a fraction for work amongst all layers of women, with appropriate forms of propaganda and agitation. This section of the party should build a mass working class women's movement and seek to win these women to the revolutionary programme for the political revolution.

Build a mass working class women's movement!

A new beginning for German workers

Introduction

The political revolutionary upsurge in the German Democratic Republic during 1989-90 destroyed the Socialist Unity Party (SED) which had ruled on behalf of the Stalinist bureaucracy since the foundation of the state in 1949.

Like all ruling Stalinist parties, a major part of its membership consisted of place-seekers, managers and functionaries whose adherence to the party provided access to material privileges and power. With the collapse of the old regime this parasitic layer's nominal commitment to Stalinised "Marxism" vanished, along with the social advantages of party membership.

The majority of factory managers and bureaucrats left the party. With characteristic cynicism many sought to preserve their personal influence by joining Kohl's CDU. Worker members of the party, who had been obliged to join in order to receive training and advancement in their allocated sphere of employment, left the SED in droves as soon as it was safe to do so.

Once the SED/PDS recognised that it would not be able to stabilise the highly charged political atmosphere which existed under its own rule, its leadership, under Modrow and Gysi, capitulated to the West German bourgeoisie and accepted the reunification of Germany on a capitalist basis.

Since then the PDS has sought to reconstitute itself as a loyal and legalist social democratic opposition, embracing the market and bourgeois democracy while affecting a radical posture with environmentalist and bourgeois feminist policy statements. Yet the PDS leadership have faced difficulties in carrying through their desired transformation of the party. This is largely due to the character of its remaining membership and structure, and the nature of its support.

The present composition of the SED/PDS

The PDS still has hundreds of thousands of members in workplaces and estates across the East. In the December elections they polled around 11% in the former GDR. These votes come, not from former bureaucrats, but from sections of workers and intellectuals fearing the effects of the reintroduction of capitalism on their jobs and social security. They imagine that the PDS is the only party which could cushion the blows that Bonn will aim at the East German working class' living standards.

Yet the party has not sought to mobilise its working class base in struggle, nor to provide any militant opposition to the redundancies and closures that have swept the East. To do so would undermine its attempt to gain bourgeois respectability and parliamentary credentials. Yet, not to do so stands in contrast to the needs of its working class members.

Internal consequences

At the same time the PDS's formal rejection of the SED's Stalinist ideology has had an impact on the party's internal organisation. In reaction against its past the PDS has become a hotch-potch of differing interest groups, tendencies and commissions. However, this appearance of genuine party democracy actually provides no formal mechanism for controlling the party leadership, which continues to operate behind the membership's backs. This explosion of debate around programmatic, theoretical and historical questions has enabled tendencies within the party to emerge that have sought to oppose the leadership's drive to social democratisation.

Of course, the members of the PDS are not the only workers in the former GDR whose political ideas have been shaken by the events of the last eighteen months. Those, particularly in the South, who drove the Stalinists from power in the belief that unification would bring rapid rises in living standards have had their illusions sorely weakened. What sets many PDS members aside is their continued opposition to capitalist solutions and their subjective commitment to socialism.

Revolutionaries enter the PDS

This cannot be sustained forever against the defeats and demoralisation that will flow from their leaders' politics. German supporters of the LRCI have therefore joined the PDS with the express aim of fighting for the ideas of unfalsified Trotskyism as the solution to the acute crisis of leadership facing the German working class.

This has, of course, attracted howls of criticism from centrist organisations active in the former GDR. The Spartacists have accused the LRCI of accommodating to the PDS's social democratic leadership while the German adherents of David North's "International Committee of the Fourth International" have, no less predictably, denounced our comrades for acting as the Stalinist's "fifth column".

What our accusers have in common is their inability to distinguish between membership of the PDS and political adaptation to its leadership. On their part this

reflects an unconscious recognition that with their political method these groups would not be able to maintain a revolutionary line against the pressure of the leadership.

The document reproduced here is the platform which our comrades are organising around within the PDS. Its revolutionary character is plain for all to see and requires no further comment here. In the coming months, as the consequences of unification for the whole German working class begin to unfold, our comrades will be fighting to win PDS members to support the demands and slogans of this platform as they intervene in the class struggle.

As serious militants grapple with the fundamental questions facing the class, it will be the supporters of the LRCI who will attract the best of them to the building of a new revolutionary Trotskyist organisation in Germany.

Call for the foundation of a Trotskyist Platform in the PDS

Translated from *Arbeitermacht 10*, 20.10.90

The last year has seen a political earthquake: the overthrow of the old Stalinist bureaucracy, the restoration of capitalism in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the reunification of Germany. The entire socialist movement is now posed a burning question: how should the working class respond to the attacks which face us from the ruling class of the new, united Germany?

The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) is in a unique position to develop an answer to this question. It remains a mass party with links to the working class in East Germany, if only to a minority of it. The old Stalinist leadership and the majority of the bureaucrats and directors have long since left. The party presents itself as open, has adopted new democratic structures and has begun to undertake a renewal process—and consequently a thoroughgoing theoretical and programmatic debate within its ranks.

The PDS faces a clear alternative: either to continue on its current course towards social democracy, albeit with a slight radical colouration, or to transform itself into a party which really seeks to lead a consistent struggle for the interests of the workers.

For all its apparent modern efficiency capitalism is a system of economic anarchy which adheres to one fundamental principle: production for profit. For a handful of exploiters it is a paradise; for the great majority of the population it is a life of wage slavery, no matter what level wages may be. Marx and Engels, the founders of scientific socialism, maintained that in this society the interests of the workers and their capitalist exploiters are directly and irreconcilably opposed. The attacks on the living standards and social gains of the workers of the former GDR as a direct consequence of Kohl's *anschluss*, are merely further proof of the validity of this statement.

The logic of the "social market economy"—namely making production profitable for the capitalists—has led to the closure of whole sections of industry, to mass unemployment, to social insecurity and the prospect of massive tax increases. This logic allows the employers, despite all their promises of democracy, to impose ever greater restrictions on the workers' right to defend themselves. The competition between bourgeois nation states continually threatens to plunge the world into wars of plunder for the control of international markets and sources of raw materials. Imperialism—monopoly capitalism—has led to the enslavement of whole nations and continents in semi-colonial servitude.

Any workers' party which accepts the fundamental logic of the capitalist system will become an agency within the workers' movement for the enforcement of the interests of capital. If the PDS goes further down the road of social democratisation, if the renewal process leads to the acceptance of the market economy as the defining principle of economic and political life, then this will have catastrophic consequences for the working class members and sympathisers of the party. It will mean that the PDS will support, and even defend, cuts in social spending. The party will have to accept and justify factory closures and countless other attacks on the workers on grounds of "realism and necessity", that is, on the basis of the logic of the capitalist profit system.

It would be a tragedy if the PDS's break with Stalinism simply led to the adoption of an equally reactionary ideology, namely social democratic collaboration with imperialist capital. Is there an alternative? We say—yes!

If the PDS wants to base its politics on the consistent defence of working class interests then it must develop and adopt a programme of militant opposition to capitalism. It must return to the established aim of Liebknecht, Luxemburg and Lenin—to overthrow the capitalists and their economic system. It must set itself the goal of making the only real alternative to capitalism a reality: a planned economy under the leadership and control of democratically elected and accountable organs of workers' power! This was what the Bolsheviks under Lenin and the Left Opposition under Trotsky fought for. It is in complete counter-position

to the bureaucratic and despotic deformation and caricature of such a planned economy under Stalin, Ulbricht or Honecker. It is an economic system that cannot survive on the basis of the productive forces of one country—still less on the basis of half a country like the GDR! Such a healthy workers' state would have to fight for the extension of socialist planning throughout the world.

Many will say that this is an unrealistic goal—especially now, when the collapse of "really existing socialism" is so clearly apparent. On the contrary, it is an illusion to imagine that capitalism can be made to operate in the interests of the workers, of the exploited of all countries, or that the capitalists will willingly give up their power and domination. The PDS must fight for a programme of concrete demands linking day to day struggles with the strategic task of overthrowing the capitalist state's repressive apparatus and replacing it with the political and economic power of democratic workers' councils. This transitional method is the core of the programme that we set out below.

We appeal to all PDS members who really want to fight the rule of the German bourgeoisie to join us in building a Trotskyist platform in the party which would fight for the PDS to adopt such a political perspective. We call on all comrades to discuss our positions practically and fraternally. The renewal process in the PDS is not yet over, its results not finally decided, and we see our work in the PDS as a contribution to the solution of the current crisis of the left.

The PDS has set itself the task of rehabilitating the political currents and workers' leaders who have been defamed, oppressed, silenced and killed for so long by the Stalinists. But in doing this it has forgotten Leon Trotsky—Lenin's comrade-in-arms in the October Revolution, co-founder of the Soviet Union, leader of the Red Army in the civil war, prominent fighter in the Left Opposition against the developing bureaucratic dictatorship, founder of the Fourth International, slandered and ultimately murdered by Stalin. It is high time that Trotskyism had a voice and a presence inside the PDS.

A draft action programme

The Kohl government wants to make the workers East and West pay the costs of the *anschluss*. Against this we say:

Make the bosses pay!
No to all factory closures, whether on "economic" grounds or not! The PDS must call for strike action against all redundancies and for occupations against all threatened closures.

No to all cheap labour! Equal pay for equal work—at Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) levels! Against the threat of inflation we must fight for the introduction of a sliding scale of wages linked to a price index drawn up by independent committees of workers and housewives.

Down with anti-working class tax increases—tax the bosses' profits and their property.

No to mass unemployment, which will be used to create a reserve army of labour for capital: unemployment pay with no time limits, at the level of the average workers' wage.

For a programme of useful public works, under workers' control and paid for out of the bosses' profits at the usual wage levels for the industry, to repair the environment and infrastructure of the GDR after the years of Stalinist mismanagement.

Long term mass unemployment brings with it demoralisation and political confusion among the unemployed, and as German history up to 1933 shows only too well, prepares the ground for a massive growth of fascism. To avoid this danger, the PDS must call, for and begin to organise, an unemployed workers' union within the ranks of the DGB.[1]

Hands off socialised property—attack the private monopolies!
Not satisfied with their unlimited control over the means of production, the West German bourgeoisie is now set to plunder the former GDR. Against the robbery by the speculators, and in order to begin anew the fight against capitalist exploitation, we demand:

No privatisations! All industries in the hands of the Treuhand[2] must be placed under workers' control. Nationalisation of the banks and big financial institutions without compensation. Nationalisation of the major enterprises under workers' control without compensation. No return of confiscated property—of land or industry—no to any compensation payments.

For workers' control over production!
In spite of the Bonn government's oft-repeated rhetoric about the lack of democracy in the GDR, their "democracy" ends at the factory gate. Employees are excluded from all real decisions relating to their enterprise. Instead there is the much-vaunted system of "co-determination"—through which the Factory Councils participate in deciding how many redundancies will be made or how much overtime is to be worked! Against this class collaboration we demand direct workers' control. For independent and sovereign mass meetings of all workers!

Where PDS members have been elected to them they must fight within Factory Councils against co-determination and class collaboration, and for the workers' right to a veto over work times, against redundancies and for control over all matters relating to wages. Against business secrecy and secret deals we demand the opening of the books to inspection by everyone employed in the business.

In every industrial dispute the PDS must fight for the building of factory councils to lead the struggle, with recallable delegates democratically elected by the workforce.

To counter possible provocations by strike-breakers and police attacks on picket-lines or factory occupations we must demand the establishment of workers' defence squads.

The PDS must constitute itself as a separate fraction in the DGB. Against the domination of an arrogant and unaccountable trade union bureaucracy—all too

1. The FRG's national trade union federation

2. The state capitalist trust holding all nationalised property in the former GDR

familiar to the workers after forty years of the Stalinist regime—we fight for the building of a militant rank and file movement across the individual DGB unions. No trade union leader should be allowed to earn more than the average skilled worker's wage. All trade union leaders to be elected directly by the rank and file, all elected officials to be directly recallable. For anti-capitalist policies for the unions. For workers' unity East and West—don't let the bosses play the workers off against each other.

For democratic class struggle unions!
For democratic united unions: one industry—one union! For a democratic unification of the DGB and the FDGB[3] under rank and file control. No to the bureaucratic smashing of the union structures in the former GDR. For the retention of democratically elected trade union and factory committees. For the right to build fractions in the DGB! Against rules excluding radicals and the "incompatibility clause".

No to EEC plans for a capitalist "land reform"!
The big agricultural concerns want to destroy socialised and collectivised farming through a "reverse land reform". They want to smash the collective, co-operative and state farms. Accepting competitiveness in the market, i.e. profitability, as the guide-line for agriculture will mean higher food prices and, for the co-operative farmers, unemployment and impoverishment as the result of unrestricted competition against western agri-business. The PDS must defend the real interests of the collective farmers and rural workers.

Stop the smashing of the co-operative farms! No to the re-privatisation of the land! No returning of the old Eastern Junkers' property! For the right of the co-ops to sell their goods direct to the public! For joint commissions of workers and farmers to organise the production and distribution of food. Against the deliberate wrecking tactics being used we must fight for interest free credit from the state for the co-operative and state farms.

For the defence and extension of the working class' social gains!
The family is a base unit of bourgeois society. By making housework primarily a women's task, thus keeping them isolated in the home, capitalism divides the working class and passes the burden of domestic labour onto women.

This is why capitalism is trying to abolish welfare organisation which, inadequate as it was, did exist in the GDR. It wants to drive women back into the home and deny them the right to self-determination over their own bodies. Against these attacks on fundamental rights we demand:

No closure of child care day centres, or any other public social provisions! Improve and expand these services instead! Abolish paragraph 218 throughout Germany, East and West! Free abortion and free contraceptives on demand. Equal rights to work and equal pay for women. For equal and free access to education for all. Defend the polytechnic schools. Complete separation of church and state within education!

Women are subject to systematic discrimination and oppression in society in general including within the ranks of the labour movement. The PDS must lead a campaign for the establishment of a working class women's movement which will combat women's oppression wherever it occurs. This movement must organise to fight sexism in society in general, and particularly within the workers' movement in its struggle against the class society which creates and maintains sexism and women's oppression.

Under capitalism it is only those who can pay profiteering rents who have the right to accommodation. In what was the GDR, one of the first effects of the market economy will be massive rent increases. To counter this we must prepare for a massive rent boycott—led by neighbourhood committees and with trade union backing. Down with the profiteering landlords! Down with the re-privatisation of housing stock. For a massive public sector programme of house building and home improvement to meet tenants' needs.

Fight fascism wherever it raises its head! Down with all forms of racism!
The fact that the German Nationalist Party (NPD) conference in Erfurt was protected by the police while at the same time a PDS election rally could be banned by the local mayor shows the reality of bourgeois democracy. We must have no illusions that this state and these police will protect us from fascist attacks, or indeed that we can expect them to do anything significant about neo-Nazi activity at all. Quite the contrary.

Fascism aims to destroy all independent organisation of the working class; the twelve year Nazi dictatorship gave us a bloody example of what this means. Fascism means deadly danger for us. Even now, when the fascist groups are still relatively small and isolated, hardly a week goes by without brutal attacks on foreigners, guestworkers or leftists.

No rights, no tolerance and no mercy for fascists! Instead of hoping for discussions or a state ban on the right wing terror gangs, we must fight for the broadest possible united front of all workers' organisations in order to prevent the growth of neo-Nazis like the NDP, FAP, DVU and the REP's, to stop all extreme right mobilisations and to smash their organisations.

For self-defence squads to protect meetings and demonstrations against fascist attacks and to prevent fascist meetings from taking place. The PDS must support and give practical aid to the self-defence of foreigners. Expell all known fascists from the trade unions.

For the active defence of the victims of racism! Against lesbian and gay oppression!
Full rights of citizenship for all who work in Germany! Active and passive voting rights for all foreigners and guest workers resident in Germany. No immigration controls or limits. Rights to autonomy for the Sorben and for Sinti and Gypsies.

No discrimination against lesbians and gay men in the allocation of housing and jobs. Fight all reactionary attacks on sexual minorities. For the building of a

3. The former GDR national trade union federation

lesbian and gay movement within the labour movement to fight for lesbian and gay liberation.

For an anti-capitalist defence of the environment!
If "really existing socialism" equalled or outstripped capitalism in any way it was in its squandering and dissipation of our natural environment and its resources. Nonetheless, the boundless and brutal destruction of the environment in the capitalist Federal Republic clearly shows that the Greens' ecological reformism can at best remove only the symptoms and the worst abuses, not the source of this destruction. The working class is the main victim of the current alarming deterioration of natural living conditions. It must take the fight against the destruction of the environment for the sake of profit into its own hands.

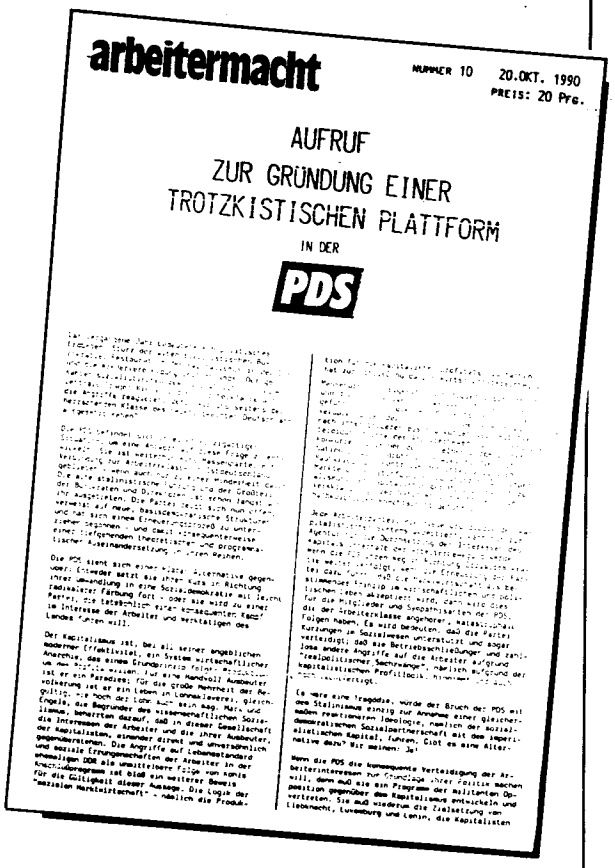
For independent inspection commissions with labour movement and neighbourhood delegates, to control all dangerous and ecologically damaging production processes, and if necessary stop them. For workers' control of all industries with environmentally damaging waste products. For strikes and direct action to impose guaranteed safety standards, as established by workers' inspection commissions. Close all acutely dangerous factories and power stations with no loss of employment or earnings for the workforce. For a programme of public works to protect all aspects of the environment, paid for from the bosses' profits and under workers' control.

For a truly democratic centralist party!
The SED was an appalling caricature of the genuine democratic centralism which Lenin's party was based upon. All internal dissent was met with administrative/police suppression, whilst free discussion and political debate was replaced by a personality cult, manipulation and the doctrine of the party leadership's infallibility.

In abandoning the Stalinist corruption of democratic centralism the PDS could now move to the opposite extreme. With the confusion of different grassroots organisations existing inside the PDS some form of centralism is needed to regularise internal communication between party members, to ensure the democratic decisions of the majority are carried out and, not least, to hold the party leadership to account. Real democratic centralism involves full and free internal discussion combined with the strictest unity in action outside the party once the decision has been made.

We demand of the PDS:

No exclusions and no expulsions of minority socialist currents, and no ban on radical fractions, tendencies and platforms. Down with the PDS's "radical clause". For the right of all party members to build their own platforms. For party papers to give free access for oppositional points of view. The party press should be open to all its members. For real democratic discussion in the PDS an internal bulletin representing a full range of different opinions is indispensable. The PDS MPs must be accountable to the party at all levels. No party official and no MP should earn more than the average wage of a skilled worker. For direct control over all party property by the members.


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NUMMER 10 20.OKT. 1990
PREIS: 20 Pfg.

AUFRUF
ZUR GRÜNDUNG EINER
TROTZKISTISCHEN PLATTFORM
IN DER
PDS

For the right of all the socially oppressed (women, ethnic minorities and immigrants, lesbians and gays, etc) to organise caucuses at any time and at all levels within the party.

The party must re-organise itself in industry and must win the trust of the workers—through a democratic discussion, through decisive politics and through the defence of the workers' interests in daily struggle.

For workers' democracy, not the democracy of the Bundesbank!
The "peaceful revolution" of last autumn enabled the workers of the GDR to get new democratic freedoms. After forty years of Stalinist dictatorship and restraint the right to build independent workers' organisations, to express one's opinion freely, and to be able to strike undoubtedly constituted definite gains. But instead of going forward to the establishment of real workers' democracy at state level, instead of establishing the rule of workers' councils, based on democratically elected and accountable workers' delegates, subject to recall at any time, instead of completing the political revolution by overthrowing the remnants of bureaucratic rule, the mass movement allowed power to pass into the hands of West German capital. Indeed, by democratically electing the "alliance" government of De Maziere it legitimised the direct agents of the bosses' *anschluss*.

The undemocratic form of the GDR's *anschluss*, as dictated by Bonn, has given us a taste of just how "democratic" even the most democratic form of bourgeois rule is, when economic interests are at stake. We can now vote for a new federal government every couple of years, but have no real say in any political decisions between those elections. Our only choice is to withdraw electoral support from parties all of which are quite content to play out the comic charade of

"peoples' representation" in their parliamentary talking shop. Meanwhile real power lies with the heads of the major concerns: the banks, army chiefs, police and intelligence agencies, the unelected judges and bureaucratic hierarchy of the civil service. But that is the real essence of bourgeois democracy. We must expose this hidden dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by consistently fighting the thousands of undemocratic restrictions of bourgeois law which seek to restrain and prevent workers' resistance.

Down with the 5% electoral clause. No restrictions on election rights. Down with all bans on labour movement meetings and demonstrations. All bans on PDS meetings (such as in Arnstadt) must be met with party mobilisations. Organise a party self-defence group against attacks (as in Frankfurt/Oder) and right wing provocations.

Open all Stasi and other security service files to workers' inspection! Dissolve all secret services! Down with the "Berufsverbot"! Down with paragraph 129a! No to all legal restrictions on the right to strike! Smash all anti-union laws! No confiscation of PDS and FDGB property by the bourgeois state!

Our representatives in parliament must speak for the workers and oppressed. They must use parliament as a tribune of the class struggle, voting against every reactionary bill and laying bare the diplomatic horse trading and manoeuvres that characterise bourgeois parliamentarism.

State and revolution

In the fight for the socialist transformation of society the capitalists will never give up their power willingly. Like every other ruling class in the world, the German bourgeoisie has clearly shown that it will use its state power against our movement without reference to the hallowed principles of the "democratic" constitution. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism—remember Chile!

As Rosa Luxemburg has already shown us, if we are to take the road of militant struggle against the capitalists and their state then we must recognise the strategic necessity to violently smash the ruling class' repressive apparatus. We must aim for the dissolution of the BND, the abolition of the army and the police and its replacement with armed organisations of the entire working class. It is clear that this can only happen in a situation of heightened class struggle, in a pre-revolutionary situation. But we must prepare the way by agitating for democratic soldiers' councils in the army, for soldiers' unions within the DGB. In every class battle, in strikes and occupations, we can begin the fight for a real workers' militia by fighting to build workers' and pickets' self-defence squads.

The government that we aim to build must stand in the tradition of the Spartacus League of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, and the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky—not in the tradition of Noske and Ebert or of Grotewohl and Pieck! It must not be a party relying on a formal parliamentary majority while in reality being at the beck and call of the capitalists. Even less can it succeed in winning power through a *putsch* supported by the tanks of an occupying power. The only way it can win and implement its power is through the actions of the majority of the working population organised in democratic workers' councils.

We must inscribe on our banner the strategic goal: for a democratic workers' council republic in Germany and for the Socialist United States of Europe!

For genuine internationalism!

The old SED practiced an obscene caricature of internationalism. It slavishly followed the foreign policy interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy. Under Stalin, who stifled the revolutionary internationalism of the Comintern, eventually dissolving it as a concession to the western allies in 1943, "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism had become the dominant theme of Soviet foreign policy. This meant abandoning the struggle for the establishment of socialism on a world scale. We are experiencing the catastrophic consequences of this policy today, as the USSR itself faces collapse.

The Stalinist parties' abandonment of the strategy of permanent revolution in imperialism's "third world" semi-colonies meant forcibly limiting workers' and the peasants' struggles to a "democratic stage". They wanted to build strategic alliances with nationalist, "progressive" sections of the domestic bourgeoisie. This left the workers' movement disarmed and helpless as the national bourgeoisie first secured their own power, and then turned with savage violence against their former alliance partners. The bloody massacres and defeats from Indonesia to Chile, from Iran to Nicaragua are striking evidence of this suicidal policy's criminal consequences. Even now the Stalinist "realists" in South Africa are trying to limit the revolutionary struggle of the black workers to a negotiated solution with the apartheid regime—laying the basis for a new and cruel defeat.

In order to "preserve socialism" the Stalinist bureaucracy has repeatedly suppressed workers' uprisings against their rule in the degenerate workers' states, one of the most recent examples being the Tiananmen Square massacre. But at the same time these heroes of "really existing socialism" make no secret of their preparedness to deliver up the state and the economy to the capitalists to escape from the dead end which their reactionary and utopian "socialism in one country" has led them to.

The ruling bureaucracy is concerned, not with defending workers' interests, but with preserving its privileges at any price. Gorbachev has sold the GDR for promises of credit and investment from German capital. He is even prepared for the USSR to intervene in the Gulf alongside NATO, to show its loyalty to its newly found imperialist "friends"

We must return to the internationalism of the revolutionary Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky. In the newly united Germany, the future leading imperialist power in Europe, we must resist every effort imperialism makes to extend its domination over Eastern Europe once again, and in so doing erect a new imperialist world order.

Not a penny, not a person for the bourgeois army! In the best tradition of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, the PDS must stand against every military budget,

and every intervention of German troops outside Germany.

We must defend semi-colonial countries like Iraq against direct military aggression from the imperialist states. Despite their often reactionary and brutal dictatorships countries such as this must be defended against every imperialist intervention, even when it takes place in the name of "democracy". Every defeat for imperialism weakens the world system of plunder and enforced dependence in general, and makes the overthrow of dictatorships at home easier. National liberation movements like the PLO, ANC, FSLN and the Kurdish resistance demand our unconditional support in their struggle against imperialism.

Germany—get out of NATO! No more foreign troops in Germany—for the immediate withdrawal of all NATO troops and all missile bases from Germany! For a mass campaign, inside and outside the Bundeswehr, against NATO and in particular against any participation in the intervention in the Gulf! Down with the economic blockade of Iraq!

We are for the greatest possible support for all revolutionary struggles and workers' movements against Stalinist oppression in the degenerate workers' states. For free trade unions and independent working class organisations. For the right of secession from the USSR for all nationalities and republics, if the majority of the population wish it. Only the political revolution, the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its replacement by democratic workers' councils, can really defend the workers' existing gains and prevent capitalist restoration. For the defence of the USSR, China, the East European states, Cuba and Indo-china against all internal or external restoration of capitalism.

The Socialist International has stood on the side of capital since 1914. In time of war its parties have again and again sent the workers off to imperialist carnage. In government, in times of peace, they have not shrunk from attacking workers' living standards and social gains in the interests of the bourgeoisie. Despite much talk about a "democratic solution of the north-south conflict" social-democracy unequivocally supports the imperialist world order, which condemns four-fifths of humanity to hunger, poverty and barbaric oppression. It plays a pioneering role in the re-introduction of capitalism in the countries of "really existing socialism"—in the name of bourgeois democracy and the "social market economy".

By the 1930s the Communist International had been turned into an agency of the Soviet bureaucracy by the Stalinists, and it was finally destroyed politically and organisationally in its entirety.

Without an international party which can develop a strategy for the fight against capitalism using the lessons of the struggles of the workers and oppressed around the world, without an organisation which consciously and actively unites and leads those different struggles, international solidarity will be weak and internationalism will remain an empty phrase. With good reason Marx and Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky made great efforts to build an international party.

To all comrades in the PDS wanting to fight for the rebirth of the real tradition of revolutionary Marxism; to all those who want to break completely with Stalinism and launch a consistent struggle against all social democratic currents within the party; to all those who wish to build a new revolutionary workers' party in Germany and a new revolutionary communist International, we submit this proposal for the construction of a Trotskyist Platform in the PDS as a contribution to the renewal process in the party.

Cuba—the final domino?

By John McKee

A small island nation of ten million people, Castro's Cuba has long been used to hostile encirclement. But as the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) prepares for its Fourth Congress this year, the country can rarely, if ever, have been more isolated.

The winds of popular revolt have even swept through that last bastion of Stalinist orthodoxy in Eastern Europe—Albania. But Cuba under Castro has set its face against the historic upheavals occurring an ocean and a continent away.

At the end of 1989, faced with the collapse of Cuba's closest allies in the Eastern Bloc, Fidel Castro made some of his most unyielding statements yet as to his commitment to defending "socialism" in Cuba. In his new year message to the Cuban people he said that the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) would not deviate from the "socialist path" and called on Cubans to "defend the ideological and military trenches of the revolution".

In a clear scathing reference to *glasnost* in Eastern Europe and the USSR, Castro declared that the revolution could not be defended by "insulting socialism, destroying its values, discrediting the party, demoralising the vanguard and renouncing its leading role."[1] In February 1990, defying friend and foe alike, he insisted to Cuban trade unionists that "there can be no doubt that unity around the revolutionary ideas . . . of socialism and communism will be upheld and defended at any price."[2]

Characterising Castro as the "last of the dinosaurs", the US administration has been confidently predicting that Castro's regime will quickly follow the fate of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and General Noriega's regime in Panama. While last year in Cuba banners and posters sprouted declaring for "Socialism or Death", in Miami bumper stickers optimistically declared "Next Christmas in Havana".

Although Gorbachev too may have shaken his head in disbelief at the latest turn of events in Cuba, many Stalinists and anti-imperialists—especially in Latin America—have seen the Cuban stand as one of the few positive developments in an otherwise disastrous period. Gorbachev is regarded, correctly, as the architect of a foreign and domestic policy which capitulates to imperialism and weakens the struggle against it. Castroism has refurbished its image as one of the last bastions of socialism and of support for the anti-imperialist movements.

Nevertheless, the pride is tempered with fear. Is Cuba not "out on a limb", many ask? Surely, it is only a matter of time before this vulnerable little island is crushed under the heel of the Colossus of the North? Many well-wishers of Cuba are only too aware that the survival of the Castro regime rests in the hands of an increasingly fickle and craven Soviet bureaucracy.

Trotskyists too are concerned for the fate of the Cuban revolution. The gains made by the Cuban masses since 1959 are clear to see for anyone not blinded by hatred of the regime. Living standards have improved considerably. Illiteracy was almost eliminated in the 1970s. In the same decade health care improved dramatically: Cuba's mortality rate per 10,000 live births was halved between 1970 and 1980. Life expectancy (72.5 years) has surpassed that of the USA.

In 1982 even a Joint Economic Committee of the US Congress was forced to admit in 1982 that Cuba had achieved:

". . . a highly egalitarian redistribution of income that has eliminated almost all malnutrition, particularly among children, and a national health programme that is superior in the Third World and rivals that of numerous developed countries."[3]

But the threat to these gains does not just lie outside Cuba. The very policies of the Castro leadership have for decades blocked the road to the development of these gains in the direction of socialism; now they threaten the very survival of the gains themselves.

The origins of the current crisis

The Third Party Congress of the Cuban Communist Party in 1986 met in an atmosphere of crisis. The Cuban economy was stagnant. The chief theme of the Congress was how to reverse the situation. Between its first and second sessions, held in February and December 1986 respectively, Castro launched the "Rectification Process". This policy has meant that the party has strengthened its grip on the central economic levers and is using them to cut living standards and intensify labour discipline. What led to this desperate move?

In the 1960s deep divisions existed in the leadership of what had become a Cuban Stalinist party, the Integrated Revolutionary Organisations (ORI).[4] This organisation was made up of the July 26th Movement (J26M), which had led the guerilla struggle against Batista, and the old Stalinist party, the Popular Socialist Party (PSP). The different traditions of these components of the ORI, and their different histories, were reflected in their approach to economic policy. Both factions were struggling with the same problem. The revolution of 1959 had provoked a serious clash with the USA. In the course of this struggle the petit bourgeois leadership of the J26M around Fidel and Raul

1. Latin America Regional Report Caribbean, 1.3.1990

2. *NACLA*, Vol 24 No2, August 1990, "Cuba: facing change"

3. Mesa-Lago, "The Economy of Socialist Cuba" (Albuquerque 1981); Max Azicri *Cuba: Politics Economy and Society* (London 1988) 121

4. Later the United Party of Socialist Revolution (PURS)

Castro broke with their bourgeois allies and expropriated the major imperialist and Cuban industries.[5]

Survival depended on the economic support of the Soviet Bloc, especially the USSR. In its most significant step the USSR stepped in and replaced the USA as the major buyer of Cuban sugar. To ensure continued support for this new foreign policy and remove internal opposition to it, Castro's forces remodelled the economy along non-capitalist lines.

But these measures were not implemented by the democratic organisations of the Cuban workers. The J26M and the PSP had made this impossible by systematically repressing all semblance of workers' control and democracy. Instead, Castro relied on the ORI and the increasingly bureaucratised trade union movement to force through the new economic plans.

For decades Cuba had been tied to agricultural production—especially sugar—for the US market. Castro initially sought to diversify the economy. But his attempt to develop industries which could produce the goods previously imported from the USA was quickly abandoned in favour of a plan which emphasised traditional agricultural production.

The government soon realised that a tiny island like Cuba would have to play to its inherited economic strengths within a wider dependence on the Soviet Bloc. This plan was encouraged by the USSR which offered a stable market for Cuban agricultural produce at prices above those of the world market.

How much dependence on the USSR?

A captive Soviet market could not entirely diminish the impact of the US economic blockade. To alleviate this pressure more and more economic aid from the USSR was required. Events such as Khrushchev's October 1961 capitulation to the USA's demands to remove its nuclear missiles from Cuba—without reference to the Cuban leadership—left the Castroites deeply suspicious of the wisdom of this dependence.

One wing of the Cuban leadership around Che Guevara attempted to minimise the scope of external economic assistance by emphasising the role of "moral incentives" and "socialist consciousness" among the workers. State enterprises would operate as branches of a centralised economy, their efficiency no longer measured by their "profitability".

Productivity would be ensured by a continuing socialist enthusiasm for work, by a strong identification with the fate of the factory or farm, and inspired by a vision of the society to be built. Voluntary labour and shock "production brigades" figured very heavily in drives to fulfil production targets.

Another wing, largely around the old PSP cadre, emphasised the necessity of market incentives for individual enterprises and supported a degree of decentralised decision making. Modelling themselves on the reforms introduced under Khrushchev they argued for tangible incentives to increase productivity and to stimulate the private market in parts of the economy; in short, a Cuban version of "market socialism".

By 1965 Castro, who had initially stayed aloof from the argument, came down in favour of a more centralised and voluntarist approach. He declared that by 1970 Cuba would produce a 10 million tonne sugar harvest, over double the output of 1964. Given the favourable buying price guaranteed by the USSR, the prize for achieving such an ambitious goal was a dramatically boosted Cuban economy which could have used the increased foreign exchange to lessen its dependency on the USSR.

To pursue this target Castro and his circle tightened their grip on central economic decision making. They circumnavigated the national planning agency, JUCEPLAN, with their own "Special Plans" to try and speed up production and circumvent bureaucratic bottlenecks. In the spring of 1968 the so-called "Revolutionary Offensive" was launched, taking into public ownership virtually all the small businesses such as bars, restaurants and street food outlets, some 56,000 in all.

The "new line" in the economy was an unmitigated disaster. In 1969 the sugar harvest was 4.5 million tonnes instead of the 9 million planned. In 1970 a huge concentration of resources on sugar to fulfil the plan resulted in the biggest harvest ever—8.5 million tonnes—but only at an enormous cost to the rest of the economy. In a self-critical speech delivered on 26 July 1970 Castro pointed out some of the costs: milk output down 25%, steel bars down 38%, cement down 23%, fertilisers down 32%, tires down 50% and so on. The failure to reach the 10 million tonne harvest turned out to be a watershed in Cuba's economic development.

The "left turn" in the economy was reflected in the Castroites' foreign policy. From the beginning of the creation of a degenerate workers' state in Cuba, Castro had been determined to have good relations with the bourgeois governments of Latin America (e.g. Brazil). But under the pressure of the US blockade Cuba began to support armed *"focos"* in some of these countries.

This was never a revolutionary socialist strategy but rather an armed continuation of Castro's popular front policy. Castro never called for workers' self-organisation or for the arming of the masses. On the contrary, he sponsored petit bourgeois movements which acted in a self-appointed manner on behalf of the exploited and oppressed.

The Cubans' support for guerilla struggle in Latin America—against the line of the official CPs—became increasingly open from the end of 1965. The newly founded Cuban Communist Party, launched in April 1965, hosted the Tricontinental Conference in Havana at the start of 1966. Much to Moscow's disgust many guerillaist groups were given credentials, and Castro gathered many of the Latin American delegates to plan the launch of the Organisation of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS).

Castro launched a vicious anti-Trotskyist attack at the Havana conference. This was not surprising given his suppression of Posadas' "Trotskyist" POR. What was more surprising was the open sympathy shown for OLAS, and even a desire to enter it, by other Latin American "Trotskyists".

5. See *The Degenerated Revolution*, Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group (London 1982)



Fidel Castro (centre) and Raul Castro (far left), during the guerilla war

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) unconditionally supported Castro in this turn; Nahuel Moreno[6] proclaimed himself a Castroite and said his objective was to create united Castroite parties throughout Latin America. In Bolivia, where Guevara was operating a doomed guerilla *foco* after he left Cuba in 1965, Guillermo Lora,[7] leader of the "Trotskyist" organisation, the POR, claimed that this *foco* was the vanguard of the Bolivian revolution.

Castro, needless to say, did not think in these terms. He envisaged OLAS as the organising centre for guerilla struggles in Latin America, in order to strengthen his diplomatic hand. Castro supported the guerilla split from the Venezuelan CP in 1966.

Yet this attempt to break out of Cuba's isolation by "exporting" revolution to Latin America, even if it meant attacking the Latin American CPs and alienating Moscow, ended in failure. After Guevara's death in Bolivia in 1967 the "left turn" in foreign policy came to an abrupt end.

The disasters in Latin America quickly led to a turn to the right in foreign policy and rapprochement with the USSR. The Cubans supported the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and backed up their support for the Allende Popular Front in Chile and the left nationalist military dictatorships of Torez in Bolivia and Velazco in Peru by calling on workers not to strike against these regimes.

The turn to the Soviet model

The "leftist" economic policy continued for two more years. A right shift occurred when the 1970 economic debacle led to a dramatic turn towards the Soviet economic model and system of planning. In December 1970 a Cuban-Soviet Commission of Economic, Scientific and Technical Collaboration was created. This led the way in the restructuring and development of the Cuban bureaucratic apparatus under the guiding hand of the Soviet bureaucracy. The numbers of Soviet technicians increased dramatically; JUCEPLAN the central planning agency was upgraded in importance, the "Special Plans" disappeared and "voluntary labour" was no longer given an important place in the economy.

In mid-1972 Cuba became a full member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). At the end of the year the Kremlin agreed to postpone all payments of interest and principal on Cuba's considerable debts to the USSR until 1986-2011. At the end of 1973 the moribund CTC trade union organisation was revived. At its first congress for six years the CTC dutifully endorsed the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work". The Stalinist translation of this meant a turn towards material incentives and privileges for chosen groups of workers acting as transmission belts into the working class for the new party line.

By 1973 JUCEPLAN was in a position to present the first fully-fledged Five Year Plan (1973-1980). A new "System of Economic Management and Planning" (SDPE) was to be introduced in the second half of the decade. This was a system of planning modelled on the 1965 Soviet economic reforms, the major features of which included the decentralisation of many management functions at both national and local level, financial accountability and autonomy for state enterprises, and reliance on material incentives (and hence inequality of incomes) to increase production.

This greater integration into the economic orbit of the USSR and COMECON helps to explain how Cuba managed to take so many strides forward in the 1970s and early 1980s compared to the rest of Latin America.

6. The leader of the powerful Argentinian USFI section

It exported sugar at inflated prices and imported oil at reduced prices. This enabled it to amass hard currency by re-selling excess oil.

Direct aid and loans were made on top of these subsidies. By 1977 Cuba received approximately $10 billion in assistance from Moscow, of which about half had to be repaid. In June 1989 the Soviet Prime Minister, Nicolai Ryzhkov, announced that Cuba's debt to the USSR had reached $34 billion. And this figure does not included the aid and trade with the rest of Eastern Europe.

While it is true that much of this aid was in the form of poor quality industrial goods—which as the Cubans are not slow to point out would be difficult to "sell" elsewhere—the dependence of Cuba on aid and subsidised trade with the Soviet Bloc is dramatic. It is an Achilles heel of the Cuban revolution which is being dangerously exposed by the USSR's *perestroika*.

Castro's bureaucratic dictatorship

Alongside these changes in the economy went changes in the state structure itself. Here we have to destroy a persistent myth peddled by "Trotskyist" fellow-travellers of the Castro regime. For example, one of the US sections of the USFI recently claimed that:

". . . the Cuban leadership is not Stalinist. While bureaucratic deformations exist inside the Cuban workers' state, they have not crystalised to the point that a distinct bureaucratic caste has arisen whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of the Cuban people."[7]

Bewitched by the myriad forms of popular consultation inside Cuba, many on the left have taken this view. It is false. The Castro leadership does not yet suffer from the same crisis of legitimacy that dogged the Eastern European regimes, which had been imposed at bayonet point. But the Cuban workers have no more real political power than the Bulgarians or the Albanians.

The Cuban Communist Party has built and refined its monopoly of power over many years. The long-postponed first congress of the CCP met in 1975, ten years after the Party was founded. The CCP upgraded its direct involvement at almost all levels of the country's administration, and its role was gradually changed to that of supervision and control. A "Socialist Constitution", drafted in early 1975 and "discussed" throughout Cuba, was adopted by the congress.

The legislative body of the state, the equivalent of the Supreme Soviet in the USSR, was declared the "National Assembly of People's Power", while "Organs of People's Power" were established at a local and provincial level. The only thing these organs lacked was any semblance of real power!

The only popular vote is for municipal candidates to the Assembly. In 1984 about three-quarters of these were CCP members. As if this was not enough, to ensure conformity with Fidel's line, no opposition parties or campaigning are allowed, and the CCP has to approve all the candidates for the National Assembly that emerge from this first round of voting. Delegates to the Assembly are elected only by the successful municipal candidates. It is hardly surprising to find that in the National Assembly, votes on specific measures are invariably unanimous. In the local bodies the workers are only allowed to raise minor problems that do not challenge the bureaucracy's privileges.

The Assembly chooses the Council of State, whose President is both head of state and President of the Council of Ministers. Fidel Castro naturally fills both these positions and still finds time to fulfil his duties as First Secretary of the CCP, and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces! His brother Raul is Second Secretary of the Party as well as being the highest ranking officer in the army. So as not to be left out, Raul's wife heads the Cuban Women's Federation!

There is no doubt that the Castro brothers stand at the head of an inner clique of the Stalinist ruling caste which rules Cuba, most of whom hail from the days of the guerilla struggle in the Sierra Maestra. Outside of the Ceaucescu and Hoxha dynasties of the Balkans it would be harder to find a clearer example of a "distinct" and "crystalised" bureaucratic caste with interests "diametrically opposed to those of the Cuban people."

In the realm of the economy the planning agencies do not draw on the creativity and ingenuity of the masses through genuine workplace and workers' council organisations. The plan is composed without reference to the workers' own democratically determined needs and its results and adjustments are imposed from above. In classic Soviet fashion, managers make up the norms and figures they can fulfil. They lie and make deals with the local party bosses. They invent bonus systems guaranteed to pay out even at low rates of productivity.

JUCEPLAN tried to take these distortions into account, but because of the bureaucratic system, it could not do so. Its planning was, at best, carried out in partial ignorance and, at worst, completely blind. On top this inefficient system lay a growing, privileged bureaucracy able to obtain the goods and perks it considered necessary outside the rationing system and without resort to the black market which imposed on the rest of the citizens of Cuba.

From stability to renewed crisis

The first half of the 1970s saw the Cuban economy grow considerably. The new plans, concentrating primarily on sugar and the mechanisation of production, produced growing harvests in a period when the price of sugar was high. The integration of the economy into the plans of COMECON gave Cuba guaranteed export markets and the ability to make long term decisions. Rates of economic growth between 1971-75 averaged 6.3% a year and between 1976-80 around 4% a year.

Despite these impressive results Cuba, like the other bureaucratically planned economies, suffered from the chronic inefficiency and incompetence that went with a system which had deprived the workers of real political power over decision making.

7. *Socialist Action*, October 1990, p20

In the 1970s it was common to see buildings left half-finished because of shortages in supplies. Major projects like oil refineries ran over production time by years. Transport problems were appalling, with the waiting time for buses running into hours. "Finished" housing was often sub-standard, so state agencies were bribed to authorise its use. In 1988 in the province of Havana 50% of all soft drink and beer bottles produced were destroyed as unusable. Basic goods were increasingly rationed because of shortages, leading to a growing black market.

In the early 1980s it was estimated that one third of all agricultural produce went rotten due to inadequate transport, negligence and bad planning. Monitoring the journey of a batch of cabbages from field to dinner table revealed they had to get through twelve levels of bureaucracy before they reached a Cuban's plate!

The 1980s were a major test for the Cuban regime. Ronald Reagan's 1980 Presidential victory led to growing tensions between Cuba and the USA. Although Cuba, unlike the rest of Latin America, avoided the catastrophic recession of 1982-83, external factors exacerbated its economic problems. Sugar prices slumped on the world market from 25¢ a pound in 1980 to 4¢ in 1985. The value of Cuba's sugar exports fell from $886 million in 1981 to $171 million in 1985.

At the same time the USSR was no longer willing to accept Cuba's repeated failure to fulfil its production quotas. In 1984-85 Cuba spent $100 million buying sugar on the world market to make up the quota. Droughts and hurricanes upset production and added to Cuba's difficulties. The fall in oil prices from the mid-1980s removed the final prop holding up the Cuban economy. In 1986 hard currency earnings were reduced by $300 million.

The growing debt crisis

Cuba was faced with real difficulties in servicing its convertible currency debt. This had grown in the 1970s as Cuba borrowed from the capitalists to fund its development programmes. In 1969 Cuban debt was only $269 million. By 1982 it had soared tenfold to $2.9 billion and by the end of 1988 it had leapt to $6.4 billion. Faced with the impossibility of meeting the debt, Castro announced in 1986 that hard currency imports would be halved in the following year. As a result the Cuban economy contracted by 3.7% in 1987.

While none of these economic blows were as bad as those suffered in the rest of Latin America they were a severe jolt to the prestige of the Party and the morale of the population. By the late 1980s the modest aim was to hold living standards at 1984 levels.

Even before the crisis Party congress of 1986, the strains were resulting in differences within the CCP. Recognising the onset of an economic recession, and realising that this implied new austerity measures for the population, the CCP leadership had to recognise the menace of the growing agricultural private sector and the bribery and corruption it spawned. The private sector might have improved the amount of agricultural produce available at high prices by diverting state crops, but they inflamed discontent among the workers. The private sector and black marketeers prospered while rationing was extended in state shops.

By 1989 Castro and his inner clique had already begun their policy turn. Their initial target was JUCEPLAN and what they described as the creeping dangers of "market socialism". When fully in force the SDPE would have institutionalised economic decision making, transferring it from Castro and his inner party group to JUCEPLAN and the managers of state enterprises. In 1984 Humberto Perez, economist and head of JUCEPLAN as well as Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, was demoted following the formation of a "Central Group" which included Castro's entourage.

In May 1985 Perez defended the role of JUCEPLAN and argued that the implementation of necessary reforms had been hindered by "mechanisms which conspire against the necessary and possible decentralisation of economic and technical decision making at enterprise level".[8] These "mechanisms" were the Castro group!

One month later Perez was dismissed from JUCEPLAN. At the end of 1987 he was removed from the Central Committee of the CCP and publicly criticised by the Politburo.

What does "Rectification" involve?

"Rectification" was launched with the closure of the "Free Farmers" markets in May 1986. Years later a blue print or comprehensive model of what the "Rectification" means has yet to be published. In a speech marking the thirty-fifth anniversary of the attack on the Moncada barracks, Castro summarised many of the themes of Rectification.

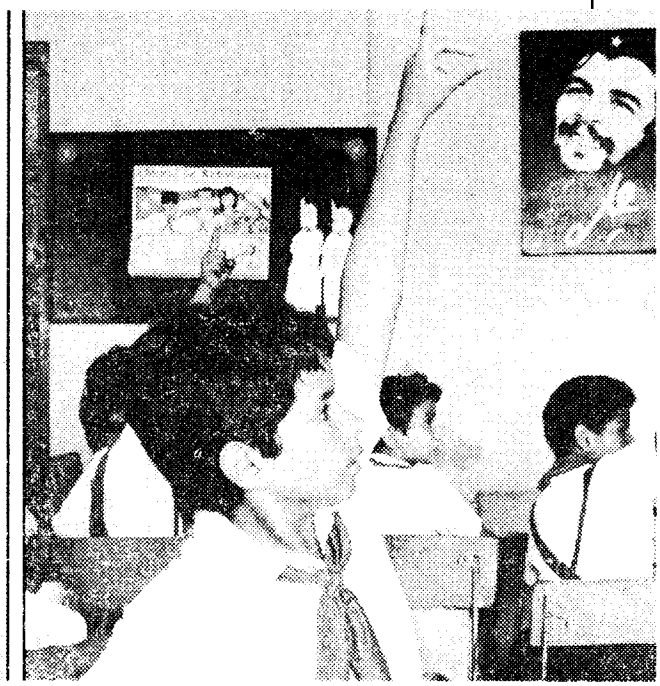
He openly attacked the method behind the SDPE and its planned decentralisation as involving "the negation of the party". He also attacked the growth of private enterprise in the first half of the 1980s, based on peasants, street vendors, middlemen, truck drivers, housebuilders etc. These, he argued, represented a potential new "bourgeoisie with capitalist attitudes".

This "spoiled lumpenproletariat", as he called it, "was corrupting the masses". He also attacked the incorrect use of material incentives which led to "excessive wages" for work done and promoted labour norms which were too easy to fulfil. He bemoaned the decline in labour discipline and "voluntary labour". While the SDPE has been attacked it has also been made clear that Rectification does not replace the plan. The reality is that the bureaucratic plan and the market are in constant uneasy tension. At the same time as calling for a reinforcement of the plan, Castro has declared that plans cannot be "strait-jackets"!

The major target has been the private traders. As in the USSR and China, bureaucratic planning has shown that it is incapable of increasing productivity on a long term basis, especially in agriculture. Its inability to produce the quantity of desired goods leads to constant switches of policy. First it encourages the market in order to stimulate productivity, then it restricts it

8. Quoted in "Cuba's Economic Counter Reform: Policies and Effects", Carmelo Mesa-Largo, *Journal of Communist Studies*, Vol5 No4





The rhetoric of "Rectification"—Castro exhorts the youth to follow the example of Che Guevara

when the capitalist sectors start to alienate the workers and threaten the Party's position.

Under Rectification Castro promised to expand the role of state agencies to replace the "Free Farmers" markets, but the most likely outcome appears to be an expansion of the black market. There has also been a crackdown on private enterprise in industry. Between 1981 and 1986 63% of housing units were constructed privately. After 1986 self-employment was denounced along with private manufacturers.

To make up for the lost private production Castro has revived the "Micro-Brigades" as embodying the new spirit of socialist commitment. They are like the shock brigades of the Stakhanovite era in the USSR of the 1930s. They work double shifts of ten hours each, the last ending at 3.00 am. They disregard labour legislation, imposing their own discipline on their members.

The experience of such measures suggest they will have only a limited effect as far as the vast majority of workers are concerned. Unlike the vanguard workers, the mass of the working class will not have extra privileges. The shock brigade policy leads directly to growing austerity, rationing and reduced bonuses. Because of strict new rules on bonuses, average monthly wages dropped from 203 pesos in 1987 to 182 pesos by mid-1988.

The whip of labour discipline is being cracked harder. Already managers in some areas of the economy, like tourism, have been given greater freedom to hire and fire workers. This is a sop to the foreign bourgeoisie—especially the Spanish—who Castro hopes will lead a legion of foreign investors to his door. For the workers the cost is clear: state registered unemployment has nearly doubled from 3.4% in 1981 to 6% in 1988.

Conflict with the USSR

The most dramatic aspect of Rectification is that it has happened at the same time as developments in exactly the opposite direction within the USSR and Eastern Europe. While Castro was launching Rectification, Gorbachev was launching *perestroika* and *glasnost*.

The economic impact of *perestroika* was of particular concern to the Cubans. By 1989, with its growing inability to trade with the west in hard currency, Cuba was even more dependent on trade with the Comecon countries than it had been in the late 1970s. Eighty-seven per cent of Cuba's trade was with Comecon, 72% of it with the USSR.

The East European countries were increasingly demanding that trade be carried out in hard currency. Cuba's bus system was crippled for a period when the Hungarian factory which produced spare parts demanded to be paid in hard currency. Power failures are now even more common in Cuba as most of Cuba's electrical equipment is Czech in origin. Sugar mills using East German computer equipment are increasingly disrupted.

Even Soviet supplies have been irregular, either because of strikes or because the shipping companies—now with greater financial independence from the state—demand higher payments or payments in hard currency. Relations with Eastern Europe hit an all time low when Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria all signed a UN motion condemning Cuban violation of human rights after one of the CCP's recent crackdowns on dissent.

But Castro's fulminations against the restoration of capitalism are for domestic purposes only. The Cuban Stalinists' commitment to the idea of "socialism in one country" is utterly solid, even if it means accepting the restoration of capitalism elsewhere! In describing the likely outcome of the elections in Hungary and Poland in 1989 as a "victory for anti-socialist forces" Castro speculated:

"... are we perhaps witnessing the peaceful transition from socialism to capitalism? This is possible: we are not against it. We defend each country's and each Party's sacred right to independence."[9]

Castro's major criticisms are directed at what threatens him most: the possibility that the new Kremlin foreign policy will sacrifice Cuba on the altar

9. *Granma Weekly Review*, 6.8.89

of *détente* with the USA. In December 1988 Castro pointed out that:

"The news that there may be peace, that there may be *détente* between the USA and the USSR does not necessarily mean that there is going to be peace for us."[10]

Cuba has every reason to fear this, given that the USA has been stepping up its pressure on Cuba in the last period. The invasion of Panama was used to tighten the economic blockade. Cuban ships have been attacked by US coastguards on the pretext of "drug searches", while Czechoslovakia—under US prompting—no longer allows a "special interests section" of its embassy to represent Cuba in the USA.

All these pressures, together with thousands of petty harassments, are proof that the USA is serious about its aim of restoring capitalism. If it could crush Iraq on the other side of the world it will feel doubly confident that it can deal a decisive blow against Castro in the 1990s. Castro is right to fear the threat. Unlike the East European nations, there a large exiled Cuban bourgeoisie that for a third of a century has been seething with hatred for the *caudillo* that overthrew them.

This pressure has had a telling effect, especially in the realm of foreign policy. For years Castro has sought to accommodate himself to imperialism. He pressed the Sandinista regime not to transform Nicaragua into another Cuba. He urged the FMLN to create a national unity government with the bloody regime in El Salvador. He called on the Colombian guerillas to give up their arms and he advised the PLO to recognise the Zionist state of Israel. More recently, Castro went along with the wretched Angolan agreement to withdraw Cuban forces and accept the creation of a Namibian state acceptable to the South African apartheid regime.

Castro appeases imperialism

During the war against Iraq Castro voted in favour of the United Nations resolution that ordered an economic blockade to force Iraq out of Kuwait and get its monarchy restored. Moreover, he did not vote against the resolution which sanctioned the use of force. Unlike countries such as Algeria, there were no mass demonstrations in Cuba against the US led war.

Castro's moderation and dropping of even rhetorical internationalism will not decrease the appetite of US imperialism. It will only encourage them to press home their diplomatic and economic attack, since the result of all this pro-imperialist diplomacy is to further isolate Cuba from the workers and poor peasants in the semi-colonial world.

If this capitalist pressure is combined with a dramatic decline in Soviet aid, especially oil, it would have disastrous effects on the Cuban economy, pushing living standards and productivity back years. Even now the CCP is calling on Cubans to be prepared for a "special period in peacetime" if oil imports are cut from 12 to 8 million tonnes. All social development programmes will be halted—no further construction of schools, day care centres etc. Already rehearsals have taken place with dockers unloading by hand and clothing factories using footpedals to drive machinery. Plans have been laid to save energy by importing tens of thousands of extra bicycles from China, while 400,000 bulls and oxen are to be added to the country's 200,000 stock to replace tractors.

Would such a "special period" produce the kind of mass opposition to the regime that has been seen in Eastern Europe? It is here that we have to take into account the limited amount of *glasnost* that has been seen in Cuba so far. With a ready-made Cuban bourgeoisie backed by the US State Department ninety miles away, Castro fears that the slightest opening in the realm of free speech would produce a deluge of propaganda, leading to his downfall.

But he also has the example of Eastern Europe to ponder. In the USSR what started as a bureaucratic initiative by Gorbachev to shake up the bureaucracy had developed by 1987 into a flowering of popular and independent organisations which allowed national grievances and working class discontent to come to the surface. These new organisations took on such a scope and power that the ruling bureaucracy could not easily contain them.

The lesson cannot have been lost on Castro. In the middle of 1989 *Moscow News* and *Sputnik*, two organs of Soviet *glasnost* which were always sold out as soon as they appeared on Cuban news stands, were attacked in the Cuban press as peddling "bourgeois" ideas. Soon after, they were banned.

Castro has always tried to channel popular discontent with bureaucratism by adopting the mantle of "scourge of the bureaucracy". Castro can thus appear both as leader of the regime and as its major critic! In the eyes of many Cubans, especially the older generation who remember pre-revolutionary Cuba and the terrible conditions, Castro remains the popular leader of the revolution. The shortages, incompetence and inefficiency are often blamed on Castro's subordinates, the grey faceless bureaucrats. Castro carefully cultivates this view. Such criticism has to be kept within limits, never challenging the Party or its leadership's right to the monopoly of power.

Castro has even been prepared to sacrifice leading figures in the Party and state machines in order to preserve his reputation. Such campaigns are necessary to show the workers that even those in top positions are not immune from the new measures. They also ensure that the lower bureaucrats and any potential opposition elements toe the new line. The most dramatic example of this tactic was the arrest and execution in July 1989 of General Analdo Ochoa—one of Castro's right-hand men—along with three officers of the Interior Ministry, for corruption and drug smuggling.

Reverberations from Eastern Europe

The effect of seeing so many Stalinist dictators fall from power has made the CCP reflect upon its situation. In the run-up to the 1991 congress the Politburo has explicitly turned its back upon the need for "una-

10. Quoted in *New York Times*, 11.1.89

nimity"—once the touchstone of "democratic unity"—and promoted the idea of a diversity of view. The limits of this discussion are sharply defined. In June 1990 the Politburo set out the parameters of the discussion: defence of socialism under the leadership of a single party.

This has all the hallmarks of the limited *glasnost* of 1985-87 inside the USSR. Can it burst beyond these boundaries? To date, the pre-Congress discussion has been confined to the existing institutions of popular consultation, although it is clear that they have been a forum for airing of grievances. Little pressure for change has been reflected in the CCP announcements. There has been talk of removing the restrictions on travel and broadening the scope of direct elections, but these are the only faint echoes of the mass movements of 1989-90 in Eastern Europe.

There are real obstacles in the way of a rapid extension of *glasnost* from below inside Cuba. There is the usual Stalinist repression and harassment of any dissidents, a process that inhibits collective discussion and organisation outside of the established channels. But certain aspects of the situation in Eastern Europe are absent in Cuba. For example, there is little in the way of a stable pro-western intelligentsia.

Years of persecution and self-imposed exile (there are a million Cubans in the USA) have helped Castro by removing one transmitter of the bourgeois democratic virus. Apart from a handful of human rights activists there is no sign that the intelligentsia poses a serious threat.

Within the working class there is little evidence of a desire to break with the official trade unions. The reasons for this are not hard to fathom. A majority of older Cubans still identify and support the regime. Unlike some of the countries in Eastern Europe that compared their countries' performance with the advanced countries of Western Europe, most Cubans contrast their conditions with those of present day crisis-torn Latin America. Also Castro is the only Stalinist dictator still in power who was the leader of an anti-imperialist revolution. This gives him infinitely more moral and political authority than a Ceaucescu or a Honecker.

Cuban youth and the USA

Many younger Cubans—and 50% of the population is now under 25—have their eyes fixed ninety miles away on the USA. Some are fired by the illusion that they too can follow their uncle and become a millionaire in Miami, a prospect cynically retailed by the CIA-funded Radio Marti TV station.

But many are genuinely aggrieved and impatient with the bureaucratism which ensures that many young couples have to wait years for the chance of their own home when they believe they can it have it quickly in the USA.

Such false and real hopes make an explosive cocktail which could ignite given a dramatic drop in living standards. The CCP's response to any mass movement of discontent is clear; it endorsed the crushing of the Democracy Movement in Tiananmen Square. There can be no doubt that the Cuban Stalinists would mete out similar treatment to protesters in Havana.

It is possible, however, that the Cuban government will not be put under such enormous economic and political pressure, at least in the short term. The immediate threat of a dramatic cut off in all Soviet aid, or of an ultimatum to trade only in hard currency, seem to have receded. In January 1991 a new twelve month deal was signed between Cuba and the USSR which talks of a "transition" period to allow Cuba to adjust to the coming changes.

The Castro regime has powerful allies within the Soviet military, the hand of which has been strengthened during the winter power struggles inside the Kremlin. A group of top Soviet generals recently visited Cuba and pledged their continued co-operation with the regime. Cuba has always been a major strategic gain for the USSR; the military will not abandon it easily.

Cuba still provides a huge sophisticated military base—the Lourdes installation—vital for electronic surveillance of the USA. Soviet long range reconnaissance aircraft fly from here along the eastern seaboard of the USA, while Cuban naval facilities allow the Soviet navy a strategic presence in the Caribbean.

To give all this up would enormously strengthen the USA in relation to the USSR in global military terms. The USA's destruction of Iraq in the Kremlin's own backyard is not lost on the Kremlin generals. This is the tragic result of waving the white flag in the Cold War. The USSR has gained little from its capitulation to the White House, so why needlessly surrender another pawn?

Whatever the outcome of the inter-bureaucratic power struggles in the USSR, it is clear that the gains made in the Cuban revolution—the smashing of the Batista dictatorship and the expropriation of the capitalist class—are in grave danger. The workers of Cuba have every interest in refusing to line up behind either Rectification or some kind of Cuban *perestroika*.

The twists and turns of the Castro regime can only be explained by the endemic problems which result from the application of Stalinist bureaucratic planning to a relatively backward economy.

Of all the degenerate workers' states only China has shown such dramatic swings of policy, as the Stalinist ruling caste has sought a way out of the intractable crisis of its system of blind planning and bureaucratic mismanagement. In both Cuba and China, the successful defence of the gains of the revolution, as well as the possibility of extending them, depends upon a strategy aiming at the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucratic castes. Power must be placed in the hands of the urban and rural workers.

Above all the crisis of bureaucratic planning must be resolved by mobilising the workers to seize control of the planning mechanisms and bend them to the democratic will of the workers' organisations—workers' councils. Only in this way can the inventiveness, commitment and imagination of the workers be harnessed to move towards the construction of a truly socialist society.

Starvation and repression in Peru

Introduction

We print here a translation of an article from Poder Obrero, the Peruvian section of the LRCI. The article was written in November 1990, when the new Peruvian President, Fujimori, had been in office for six months. The shock winner of the June 1990 election, Fujimori rapidly implemented an IMF-imposed austerity plan which led to huge reductions in public spending, a massive fall in real wages and an unprecedented slump.

Fujimori—a university teacher and one-time TV presenter—set up his Cambio 90 ("Change") party in 1989. From the outset its chief role was that of a vehicle for Fujimori and his particular brand of neo-liberalism. As he himself has said:

"I began with the idea of organising a political movement. What should I call it? . . . I don't know if it took me three or four months to find a name, but finally I found it: Cambio. Now I had a name, but nothing else."

Fujimori builds support

Casting around for allies, Fujimori roped in a series of rightist politicians—including leaders of right wing protestant sects—who felt that a cosmetic alternative to the leading bourgeois coalition, Fredemo, should be presented at the presidential elections. As a series of economic austerity packages ("Fuji-shocks") over the last nine months have shown, Cambio's programme is no different from that of Fredemo.

At Christmas Fujimori gave the masses an unwelcome present: a new austerity package which cut subsidies on food, transport and services even more savagely than previously. At a stroke petrol prices rose by 63%, gas by 90%, groceries by 60% and public transport fares were simply doubled. In the first two months of this year inflation was 28%, or over 200% per year. The price of petrol has soared, costing 3000% more than in June 1990, making it the most expensive in the world. There are plans to sack tens of thousands of public sector workers and to privatise 90% of the 250 state enterprises.

The imperialists' plans are simple: they want low inflation so that the private sector can be certain there will be economic stability and no sudden devaluations nor any need for "emergency methods" in the near future. To "stabilise" the economy they have insisted on a programme of privatisations, public sector sackings and cuts in education, health and social services. And all this is against a background of falling GDP and soaring unemployment, which has now reached the astronomical figure of 80%.

Prescriptions cost 500% more than when Fujimori came to office. The lack of elementary health care for the vast bulk of the population, and the decaying or non-existent infrastructure, coupled with government cynicism and corruption, has led directly to the recent outbreak of cholera. This has already claimed hundreds of lives and blighted tens of thousands of others. The imperialists are pleased: their new lackey is doing his job better than they dared hope. The misery and death caused by their policies mean nothing to them.

This disastrous situation for the Peruvian masses could not have come about without the active collaboration of the leadership of the Peruvian workers and peasants—the "left" parties and the trade union bureaucracy. The process of capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe and the Soviet bureaucracy's capitulation to imperialism have led to a turn to the right by the Stalinist-influenced Peruvian left. The trade union leaders and the left parties have refused to organise a fightback and have accepted the government's austerity plans.

Indeed, it was the class-collaborationist policies of the leaders of the labour movement which led to Fujimori's victory. Workers' resistance to the austerity programme of the previous President, Alan Garcia, had been curbed and weakened by the leadership. Faced with a second round choice between Fujimori and the Fredemo candidate, Vargas Llosa, virtually all the labour movement organisations called for a vote for Fujimori, who they thought would be a "lesser evil".

The "left" and Fujimori

One of the main Peruvian left groups, the Partido Unitario Mariateguista (PUM) argued that Fujimori was really on the side of the people, and called on him to tax the rich, promote health and education, defend workers' salaries against hyper-inflation, etc. They wrote:

"We do not believe that what the Cambio 90 candidate has said up until now contradicts these fundamental points, which will take the economy along populist and nationalist lines."

Swept away by this opportunist—not to say treacherous—line, Hugo Blanco, leader of what remains of the Peruvian section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, threw himself behind Fujimori's candidacy.

Only Poder Obrero argued from the first round that all the candidates were bourgeois and pro-imperialist, calling for a spoilt ballot and for the organisation of an

indefinite general strike against impending austerity. The correctness of this position has been shown over the last few months.

The government's austerity programme has caused enormous discontent. Workers have gone on strike, especially in the textile, oil, chemical, education and state sectors. There have been demonstrations and marches on the Presidential palace, as well as mass looting in which the masses by-passed the market and instituted their own form of food distribution. Despite the courage and determination shown by the working population, the labour leaders have been consistently timid. They have refused to organise a general strike against austerity and have restricted themselves to calling for a national day of action and limited demonstrations, even failing to seriously mobilise for such a feeble "fightback".

The role of the military

Whilst the labour leaders prevaricate, Fujimori is busily strengthening his ties with the military. The sectarian Maoist guerillas of Sendero Luminoso are the target of vicious repression by the Peruvian army, which Fujimori has given a free hand to act as it sees fit. The result has been a massive increase in human rights abuses and repression against the workers.

Torture, mutilation, arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killings and disappearances have all become routine. Over 20,000 people have been killed since Sendero started their guerilla war, the overwhelming majority of them at the hands of the military, either through the "special units" or the right wing death squads.

The number of "Emergency Zones" within which the army exercises absolute control has increased: over 65% of the population is now subject to arbitrary military rule. The army has also increased its weight in Fujimori's cabinet and is the subject of direct imperialist funding: in 1990 the USA gave $63 million in military aid as against a mere $3 million for development!

In order to consolidate the forces of repression around his rule, Fujimori has begun a purge of the police and armed forces: more than 150 police officials have been sacked. When Fujimori was asked why he had sacked the Admiral of the Fleet, he brushed the question off. "A President doesn't need to give explanations", he said.

The Peruvian masses are facing a historic turning point. The growing economic crisis will force them to take action against the bosses, their government and their imperialist backers. The growing strength of the military shows that a successful fightback will require the clearest and most determined leadership.

The current labour leaders have shown themselves to be spineless class collaborators. They will lead the masses to bloody defeat. The only way forward for the Peruvian workers and impoverished masses is through the building of a revolutionary party, committed to fighting for a programme which can organise the workers, defend their interests and lead them to victory.

That is the focus of the work of our Peruvian comrades, carried out in conditions which are becoming increasingly dangerous but which make their work all the more vital and urgent.

Fujimori's attacks and the crisis of leadership

Since mid-1988 Peru has been in a pre-revolutionary situation. There is a massive economic crisis which even the bourgeoisie recognises is the worst this century. Hyper-inflation and stagnation have simultaneously been ravaging the country. The number of unemployed and partially employed has grown to almost 80% of the working population. At the political level Peru has witnessed the collapse of both the government and the main traditional parties.

For the first two years Garcia's APRA government had wide popular support. The failure of its populist policies led to the implementation of a series of pro-IMF packages which deepened the economic crisis. A government which initially enjoyed massive popular support ended up being the most hated regime in the country's history. Large-scale corruption became endemic. The traditional bourgeois and reformist parties fell into disrepute. The treachery of the labour leaders resulted in a political vacuum, which was filled during the 1989 and 1990 elections by new "independent" capitalist politicians. Inside the security services there have been outbursts of mutiny, taking the form of movements for trade union rights, and strikes within the police force.

Another characteristic of the pre-revolutionary situation has been the development of widespread struggles among workers, peasants and the poorest sections of the masses. In 1990, for the first time in the country's history, there were four national strikes. Last year also saw the greatest number of strikes and working days lost for a decade.

The national strike in July was very effective and paved the way for a return to the type of action seen in 1977 (a day of action on 19 July 1977 unleashed a wave of political strikes). There were a series of disputes which turned into indefinite all-out strikes in various sectors (mining, textiles, etc). Regional general strikes also took place. These movements became isolated and were held back by the counter-revolutionary labour leaders.



An increase in political and social violence is yet another feature of the pre-revolutionary situation. Guerilla warfare and counter-insurgency are becoming more widespread. Armed rebellion by these petit bourgeois forces has reached its highest point.

Any pre-revolutionary situation is necessarily a transient phenomenon. It must either lead to a revolutionary period, to bloody repression by means of totalitarian counter-revolution, or be dissipated by the triumph of "democratic" counter-revolution which in turn opens up a period of political stabilisation.

To date the pre-revolutionary situation has not been transformed into a revolutionary crisis. This is mainly due to the counter-revolutionary role of the leaders of the workers' and popular movement. Despite the economic crisis and the increasing violence, the leadership have done everything possible to cripple the actions of the proletariat, the only class able to successfully combat the reactionary offensive.

The Peruvian left, heavily influenced by Stalinism, has been consistently opposed to the strategy of a revolutionary proletarian dictatorship. Either because of parliamentary or military cretinism, the left has blocked the fight for an anti-capitalist programme. It has opposed organising a united indefinite general strike with a national strike committee. It was against the building of soviets—workers' and popular councils with elected delegates subject to recall by rank and file assemblies—and would not call for independent militias and unions for the rank and file in the armed forces.

Attempts to dissipate the pre-revolutionary situation

Faced with the various austerity packages the left has refused to organise such an effective fightback which would be the only way to defeat the reactionary onslaught. By their policy of isolating strikes, calling disorganised days of action without the participation of the rank and file, or, like the Sendero Luminoso guerillas, of decreeing "armed strikes" without the involvement of the unions, the "left" demobilised the masses and became as discredited as the regime they claimed to be fighting.

Thanks to this treachery the strikes and mobilisations were crippled and the right wing was able to present itself as the only viable alternative to austerity.

The petit bourgeoisie is a vacillating class which in times of crisis shows ever-greater mood swings. When hyper-inflation, food shortages and chaos engulf society, the middle classes demand order and stability. The proletariat could become a pole of attraction for these layers by showing that it is able to take resolute action and has a programme for an alternative system which would eliminate the anarchy of capitalism. When the labour leaders hold back the workers' movement and do everything possible to betray strikes and rescue a dying system, they impel many desperate petit bourgeois into the arms of reaction. If, because of its leadership, the proletariat is incapable of offering the middle classes an end to chaos, the reactionaries will propose their classic solution: putting an end to strikes and "saving" the country by shoring up the capitalist system.

The left has not only disorganised and demobilised the workers. Increasingly it has also taken on board the monetarist recipes of the reactionaries and the IMF. The rightward drift of the left made it so unattractive that in the second round of the presidential election the masses ended up polarised around two different neo-liberals. The bourgeoisie did not need a bloody coup to end the pre-revolutionary situation.

Because of Stalinism's global turn towards capitalist restoration, and the rise of the democratic-liberal counter-revolution, imperialism can now carry out its economic shock programme without resorting to Pinochet-style repression. The model which is increasingly being adopted is that of the "militarised democracies". They are trying to put an end to the pre-revolutionary situation by means of a democratic constitutional counter-revolution backed up by a strong army.

The debacle of the national strike against the "Fujishock" has revealed that the country is now a long way from a revolutionary situation. A frustrated pre-revolutionary situation can lead to a period of stabilisation. The final phase of this process will require a series of defeats for the workers' movement

and victories for the government. However, this process is not yet complete.

It is also possible that the stabilisation plan will collapse and the masses will be radicalised, uniting in struggle. In these circumstances a revolutionary situation would be not far off.

One of the problems facing the new government is the need for a new austerity programme. The sharp increase in the value of the dollar and the pressures of the IMF have led to talk of a fuel price rise of 60%, massive redundancies in the state sector. Sections of the ruling class are worried that such a programme would provoke social chaos and that the masses would not accept it.

Perspectives for the current strike wave

In the coming weeks and months we will see a series of sectional protests and strikes, coupled with attempts at stabilisation by the new regime. This will be a decisive period for the government. It is possible that there could be a new explosion of mass discontent, focused around strikes and workers' demonstrations. The key question is the future of the current strike wave. If the strikes are isolated, sold out and stifled, it will herald a period of reactionary democratic consolidation.

Fujimori has decided to confront this wave of strikes and protests (by CITE,[1] IPSS,[2] public services etc) with a mailed fist. He has ordered large-scale sackings and a ban on the right to strike in key sectors. In this way he hopes to deliver a massive blow against the whole of the labour movement.

After a two week strike the workers at IPSS were defeated. The APRA and United Left (IU) leaders did everything possible to prevent it. Once it had begun they tried to isolate and hold it back. In this context the government felt strong enough to threaten mass sackings and the placing under military control of IPSS in order to intimidate the strikers.

The occupation at Carbolan[3] was isolated with no generalised national protest. Even an attempt to support the occupation by blocking traffic on the main road failed. Making a mockery of the law, the forces of repression entered and used brute force to break up the occupation. Not surprisingly, the strike in the state sector has continued to be weak.

The labour movement is riddled with contradictions. On the one hand there is the undoubted anger of the workers. It is often expressed in frustration, demoralisation and resignation. Sometimes the anger spills over and explodes into action, but the trade union bureaucracy consistently isolates the struggles.

Substantial sections of the working class have no confidence in the leaderships of the CGTP, the ANP and the small trade union federations. They are not attracted by the half-measures and the holiday protests proposed by the bureaucracy. The workers are not prepared to risk their security or a Sunday's pay,[4] simply to take part in the pathetic "actions" which the bureaucracy calls in a vain attempt to look good in front of the rank and file.

On the other hand, the crisis and the repressive violence has increased the militancy of some struggles. In various sectors (Carbolan, the ministries, La Union,[5] Lusa[6] etc) the workers have taken over their workplaces. In civil construction, the state sector, chemical factories, IPSS etc, workers have taken the lead in a series of marches which have involved the building of barricades and clashes with the police and army.

Another new phenomenon is the organisation of mass meetings out of the trade union federations. These have taken place amongst workers in the paper, cardboard, footwear, plastics, chemicals and textile industries. This new and positive development permits has increased rank and file democracy and participation in the strikes. It is a trend which must continue, culminating in an all-union central mass meeting.

The biggest obstacle to these movements is the demobilising activity of the union bureaucrats. When Fujimori launched the anti-strike law and prepared other anti-working class legislation under the guise of "anti-terrorism", the CGTP and ANP should have organised tens of thousands in a massive protest against the laws. But the leaders remain paralysed. The CGTP and ANP leaders do not seek to unite the struggles whilst the union leaders linked to the IU and the UDP are trying to push the strikes and assemblies into an isolated and sectional dead-end.

The CGTP has sent a letter to Fujimori seeking an agreement with him to amend his austerity programme. CADE[7] and *El Comercio*[8] have sent greetings to Checa and Patho.[9] The CGTP and CTP bureaucracies want to go to the IMF headquarters in order to plead with them not to impose quite so severe an austerity programme. The ANP celebrated its third anniversary with a rally so small it looked more like a family gathering! This indicates a substantial decline in its support. Instead of organising a united national fightback, the CGTP and ANP bureaucrats are trying to pacify the workers with a set of feeble half-measures.

During the last strike wave rank and file militancy should have been built on with assemblies and marches with the IPSS, CITE, construction workers and others being organised. But the unions leaders prefered not to go down this road. They wanted to prepare themselves for government office.

After taking part in talks with the government, one of the CITE representatives told the press that they understood the problems of the Treasury! They insisted that the CITE workers and the ministry could "do business", but that the government had to understand their point of view.

The starting point for a working class position is not to make concessions to the "Fuji-shock", but rather to mobilise the masses behind the strike wave, and demonstrating the government's intention of keeping wages low so it can pay half the national budget to the IMF. But such a strategy would have meant transforming sectional and economic strikes into a centralised political movement. This was the only way to defeat the President—for whom most of the labour bureaucracy voted.

1. Peruvian state sector union which organised more than 500,000 workers

2. Peruvian Social Security Institute, which employs 40,000 workers

3. A subsidiary of the German multinational Pelikan

4. The Peruvian six day working week includes pay for Sunday. A day's strike means losing Sunday's pay as well

5. Biggest Peruvian textile company, with over 15 factories

6. Pharmaceuticals plant

7. Annual conference of the Peruvian bosses

8. Peruvian bourgeois daily newspaper

9. Stalinist leaders of the CGTP

The current strike wave should have had the miners' strike which was due to begin on 15 August as its rock solid base. But the reformists pressed for it to be delayed. There has still been no concrete call for strike action! Meanwhile, important sections such as Hierro-Peri and Sider-Peri were subject to the threat of plant closure and mass sackings.

The bureaucracy called on workers to have confidence in Fujimori. When he was elected they tried to influence his choice of ministers. Pressure from the IU kept Helfer and Azcueta in the government. Even the radicals of the PUM pressed for a minister (Ugarteche) connected to their own organisation. When the "Fujishock" was announced the labour traitors demobilised the mass movement. Now they are trying to limit the remaining strikes to economic and sectional demands. If Cambio 90 manages to continue consolidating its anti-working class measures and defeats and disarms the strikes, then a period of relative stabilisation will emerge.

The guerillas have also contributed to the demobilisation. All of the various factions are opposed to the general strike, to the workers and to the building of soviets. The assassination of bourgeois figures does nothing to advance the destruction of the ruling class. Indeed, it provokes repression and tries to sow the belief amongst workers that their struggles cannot put an end to the system, but that only a brave and righteous few can come from outside and rescue them. Both Sendero Luminoso (SL) and the MRTA guerilla organisation are completely wrong on the trade unions. While the MRTA supports the bureaucracy of the ANP, SL calls for the complete destruction of both the ANP and the UDP.

The government's anti-union plans go hand in hand with increased militarisation. New massacres and the discovery of mass graves are being reported all the time. Disappearances, such as that of Castillo, are continuing, together with attacks on left leaders (e.g. the attack on Diez Canseco's house). Meanwhile the government is planning to sack thousands of workers. These attacks will go hand in hand with major repression.

We must beat back these attacks and campaign for a united fightback by workers, peasants, students, villagers, the unemployed and the oppressed. This would open the way for the building of soviet-type organisations and a National Action Committee, with delegates elected and recallable by rank and file meetings, and the launching of a general strike. Turn the reactionary offensive into a proletarian offensive!

Militarised democracy

This government has been legitimised under cover of a legal and constitutional system based on universal suffrage. Unlike a military dictatorship, parliamentary democracy can integrate left, union and peasant leaders. They feel increasingly obliged to moderate their language and activity. This is due as much to the pressure exercised by social democracy and Stalinism's sharp right turn on a world scale, as to their own need to cling on to office, mayoralties and other crumbs from the system.

Instead of using open and brutal repression, under "democracy" the bourgeoisie benefits from a more selective and professional repression which creates fewer enemies. In exchange for token power—which does not affect the real power of the bourgeoisie—the "left" sees itself as part of the institutions of the capitalist state and collaborates in its defence with the police and army.

Even if the armed forces do not have total control over the government, as in the case of military dictatorships, they are not subject to the hazards of political office. Yet they maintain all their privileges and powers behind the façade of a civil president. Although the military chiefs are obliged to bow to press and public opinion when criticised for their "excesses", a militarised democracy gives them an invaluable advantage. They can rely upon substantial support for their bloody actions. Under the pretext of "eradicating terrorism", every legalist and reformist ends up closing ranks in support of the forces of repression as the "defenders of the nation".

In the case of Peru, the armed forces have been acting with complete impunity since the reimposition of parliamentary rule. During the last eight years of "democracy" 20,000 people have been murdered for political reasons. This figure is higher than during any of the military dictatorships over the last fifty years of our history.

The character of the new government

The Fujimori regime is unique as compared to previous Peruvian constitutional governments or other parliamentary regimes in Latin America. Cambio 90 is in a minority in Congress, does not hold office at either mayoral or regional level and has no base. It is an outfit without principles, programme, traditions, ideology or structure. It has never called a single conference. It is an improvised movement whose leaders have only recently met each other. It is full of contradictions. In this curious mixture the will which prevails is that of the all-powerful figure of Fujimori.

This is a party which has taken office without occupying a single ministry. All the ministerial portfolios have been given to technocrats and "independent" professionals. Three are occupied by bourgeois groups who pretend to be socialist. This is a government of no particular party. It has a strong cultish tendency and is centred on a presidential style of government.

Fujimori is trying to continue with the method that brought him to power. Faced with a wide variety of social and political forces, he is trying to play them off against each other.

Despite its democratic and parliamentary origin the government is developing bonapartist features. Bonapartism is a regime in which the executive is the supreme power. Parliament is deprived of authority or reduced to an ornamental status. The supreme head of state takes on huge powers and is supported by the military-police bureaucratic state apparatus. He tries

to set himself up as an arbiter between the different classes and factions, making deals in order to reinforce his rule.

From the moment he took office, Fujimori has tried to develop ties with the three most important reactionary forces in society: the army, the church and the IMF. Although ostensibly elected as the president of the whole nation, Fujimori has offered himself as the champion and defender of these specific sectors. He went to the IMF headquarters and even visited the Japanese emperor! He has since put into action a pro-IMF programme more brutal than even many Fredemo supporters would have believed advisable.

Fujimori lives surrounded by the military elite. He has given the army two cabinet posts and he has carried out a purge in the Peruvian National Police (PNP) and other parts of the state repressive apparatus in order to consolidate the absolute domination of the army over the armed forces.

He has sought to distance himself from the evangelists who did so much in his campaign. He has applied the austerity programme with such vigour that it has earned him the applause of the church, to whose clerical organisations (Caritas etc) he has given control of the charities.

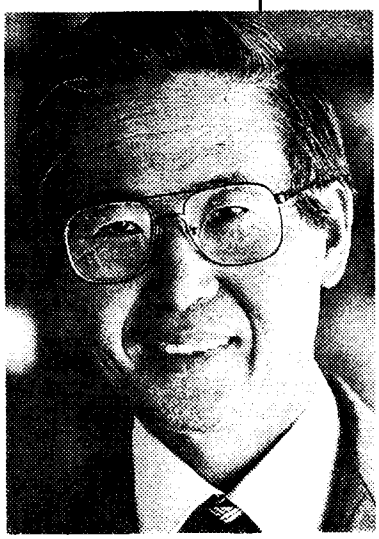
Fujimori has a "*shogun*" complex. This was the name given to the Japanese imperial system where all power lay with the emperor. With the support of the armed forces "our" authoritarian president seeks to be the faithful servant of the world's emperors, grouped together in the IMF.

Fujimori does not want to be subordinate to any party or organisation. The *shogun* tries to be all things to all people, without committing himself to any one grouping. At any moment he could turn one way or another. He is capable of seeking alliances in this or that sector, then making another turn. He has admitted that he has confidence in nobody and that he does not even tell his wife of his intentions. It is he alone who takes the decisions and changes his plans and his teams.

Fujimori consistently tries to orient to a specific social or political force, benefiting from its support and influence. When he has taken advantage of them and they are no longer useful for his new line, he breaks with them. He tears up agreements and divides his former allies into those who wish to remain close and those who go over into the opposing camp.

When Fujimori started his movement he wanted to base himself on thousands of evangelical activists. Then he decided to sacrifice them in order to ingratiate himself with the Catholic church. The evangelist lobby has not been able to build a definite and identifiable movement.

Fujimori was also helped into office with the support of the APRA and the IU. He had barely won the election when he allied himself with the conservative right by offering them the premiership. His initial choice was De Soto (founder of the rightist "Liberty" tendency from which he has since parted company) and an ex-Minister of Belaunde, Grados Bertorini. Finally the post went to the Fredemo supporter Hurtado. Fujimori was thus able to split Fredemo and the IU. He tried to isolate and destroy the "Liberty" wing of Fredemo which had viciously attacked him and to attract sections of the AP[10] and PPC[11]. From amongst the supporters of Bedoya, Amiel is inclined towards the new president and Borea does not want to lose his domination of the right wing opposition to the ultra-liberals.



Fujimori

He has offered the education portfolio to Pease, who declined in favour of another member of his own party, Helfer. To oblige Ugarteche to leave his own team he drove a wedge between the PUM and the rest of the IU. Having promised Helfer and Azcueta positions of responsibility in the government, Fujimori launched his austerity programme. This created new splits in the IU. Having used the IU as a left cover, he has the luxury of dispensing with them.

Fujimori initially sought support from the AP; then he turned to a pact with APRA. This has been sealed with a shameful pardon for the perpetrators of the prison massacres. The outcome of all this was the fragmentation of the AP.

Fujimori is balancing on a tight-rope, leaning first one way, then another. He plays his opponents off against each other. He won the left's support by pointing to the Fredemo bogeyman. Then he won the backing of the right by calling for unity against chaos, the proletariat and "subversion".

When Fujimori won the election, various left publications maintained that the new government would be very weak and that this would permit a mass offensive. They pointed to the fact that Cambio 90 did not control any municipal or regional councils, not even an employers' organisation (with the exception of APEMIPE[12]) or trade union centre, and argued that it would govern with only a small parliamentary presence, without a properly structured party and without major direct influence in the higher echelons of the judiciary.

But this apparent weakness has been Fujimori's major strength. He owes nothing to any economic or party-based group. This enables him to manoeuvre all the better, doing all manner of deals and leaning in this or that direction.

The bourgeoisie needs different types of government for different situations. The populist approach of APRA helped the bourgeoisie hold back the rise of the left and subversion which was quite strong in 1984. Two years of growth followed (1985-87). But with the change in the situation at home and abroad, a neo-liberal programme was imposed. The problem was, how to carry out such a programme? Garcia's APRA government set out on this road but did not feel that it had the authority or the strength to pursue it to the end. Garcia preferred to leave government

10. Accion Popular, a moderate bourgeois conservative party

11. Partido Popular Cristiano, a right wing conservative party led by Luis Bedoya

12. Small and Medium Industrial Association of Peru

before his image became too tarnished. He has recently made a semi-populist turn with Vasquez Razon.

The Peruvian bourgeoisie decided that whoever was elected, the new government had to assure "insertion into the world financial order", that is to say, leave populism behind in order to apply the privatisation programme of the IMF. The problem was knowing which type of government it would need to take this step.

The Llosa alternative

The economic programmes of Vargas Llosa and Fujimori have many points in common, but the style of government had to be different. Vargas Llosa sought a clear mandate for the harsh imposition of a monetarist and liberal programme which would lead to open confrontation with the workers' movement and the guerillas.

Vargas Llosa is not a fascist, nor has he ever been one. The reformists used this label in order to justify their support for whichever other bourgeois reactionary—e.g. Fujimori—was standing against him. Vargas Llosa's project was inspired by the "Thatcher revolution" in Britain. Thatcher's regime maintained formal democracy while adopting extremely harsh privatisation and anti-union measures.

The British Conservatives had a number of advantages which our native copycats could not rely upon. Thatcher had a solid and disciplined parliamentary majority. She had a national party with a substantial party apparatus. She also benefited from a crooked electoral law which enables a party with only 40% of the votes to gain 60% of the seats in parliament.

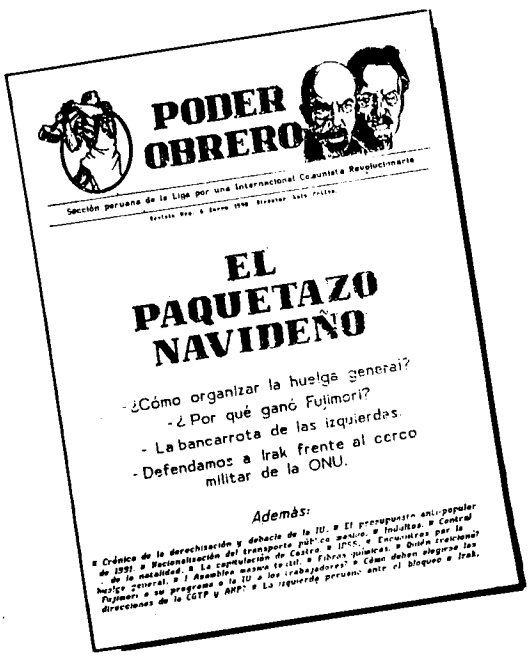
Thatcher was only able to get power and popular support for her privatising measures because she had been preceded by a treacherous Labour government. The bankruptcy of the Labour Party coupled with the absence of a mass revolutionary party, demoralised wide layers of workers, weakened the image of the trade union movement and facilitated the reactionary offensive.

In contrast, Vargas Llosa could not rely on a party. There was very little possibility of winning an absolute parliamentary majority. Fredemo was a fragile coalition of diverse and hostile parties and interests headed by a non-politician. The workers' movement was weakened but had not been exhausted through a period in office. The opposition which Fredemo would have faced would not have been as moderate and reformist as that of British social democracy. Faced with massive crises or serious violence and unable to control parliament or the ruling parties, Vargas Llosa's messianism could have ended up being a cure worse than the disease.

Compared with Fredemo's plan, Cambio 90's austerity programme has raised prices and savaged the social welfare programme. However, Fujimori has managed to prevent any major social upheaval. His secret stems from having taken office with the support of the left and having persuaded them to participate in his team. He has further generated an image of national salvation and unity having quietened and then isolated the "radicals".

Fujimori has no need of a party. He has no interest in calling a congress of Cambio 90 nor does he have to subordinate himself to any party organisation. He tries to be the "perfect" independent in keeping with the image of a great "father of the nation". He can call a meeting of the best technocrats and change them when he pleases. He owes favours to few.

The President has been given the nickname Karate Kid because of the way in which he hits out this way and that. This style is part of his political nature. Fujimori, at the same time as building bridges for current or future agreements with various sectors, is insisting on keeping his distance. He can make temporary agreements with anyone but will make a permanent alliance with no one.


PODER OBRERO

Sección peruana de la Liga por una Internacional Comunista Revolucionaria

EL PAQUETAZO NAVIDEÑO

- ¿Cómo organizar la huelga general?
- ¿Por qué ganó Fujimori?
- La bancarrota de las izquierdas.
- Defendamos a Irak frente al cerco militar de la ONU.

Además:

The programme of the new government

The government's action is very much influenced by the new turns in the world situation. The degenerated workers' states are being dismantled to open the way to capitalist restoration. The most industrially developed post-capitalist state—the GDR—has been totally absorbed by capitalist Germany. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and various republics of the USSR and Yugoslavia, openly bourgeois anti-communist movements have formed governments. The USSR is falling apart. Vietnam is adopting increasingly pro-capitalist policies. Albania is the Stalinist museum of Europe.

The Venezuelan austerity programme produced the food riots in Caracas. The Bolivian austerity programme produced a five-week general strike by the COB which was extremely effective in the first two

weeks. The capitalist offensive in Argentina continues to generate violent popular resistance and the Chilean austerity programme was imposed by a bloodthirsty dictatorship. But how has the "Fuji-shock", which has been worse than many of these, been imposed with such little resistance?

The key answer to this is the criminal policies of the left and union leaders. They demobilised and demoralised workers' struggles against the APRA government's pro-IMF austerity. Then they created illusions in Fujimori, whose cabinet included an IU leader. When Fujimori's "super-shock" was unleashed, with wages being cut by 50% and prices soaring by 400% at a stroke, the CGTP and ANP leaders did not have the political authority to call for a strike against the new government for which they had recently voted and built support!

Instead they organised a mini-demonstration in work time, then changed the time of the strike a few days beforehand, all with the intention of blocking a real fightback against the Fuji-shock.

A revolutionary situation implies an extraordinary political, social and economic crisis. The ruling classes cannot govern in the old way and the masses cannot carry on in the old way. While the exploited continue to carry out mass actions and create organs of dual power, society polarises, the regime decomposes and the bourgeoisie needs to change its form of rule.

Although elements of a revolutionary situation exist—notably the massive economic crisis—the counter-revolutionary role of the leaders of the IU, CGTP, ANP and SL, have to a remarkable degree held back the mobilisation of the revolutionary class, the workers, and its allies among the poor.

Various currents, from the PUM to the PST, claim that the situation has been, and continues to be, revolutionary. But in their programme they all deny this characterisation. If they were to follow through the consequences they would have had to pose crucial tasks and slogans that spring naturally from all revolutionary situations—general strike, soviets, factory occupations, unions for soldiers etc. But they demand none of these. Today both the PUM and the PST not only fail to call for a general strike, but even for a national 24-hour strike. They may wear a "revolutionary" mask over their opportunist and economistic politics, but in practice they waste their combativity in sterile manoeuvres and voluntarism.

ERRATA

The following paragraph was omitted from *Trotskyist International 4*, p17, after the fourth paragraph on the growth of religious and separatist ideas in the Ukraine:

"The nationalities crisis is not restricted to the USSR. It has also erupted in other degenerated workers' states. Yugoslavia is now in a state of disintegration. The Serbian Communist Party, led by Slobodan Milosovic, is seeking to reconstruct Yugoslavia under strong Serbian rule, smashing the smaller nationalities like the Albanian population of Kosovo. In the midst of this chaos the Communist Parties of Croatia and Slovenia want independence. They want to separate the most industrialised regions from the rest of the country and prepare the restoration of capitalism and the creation of a bourgeois democratic regime. In Bulgaria, ethnic Turks have been driven out in a wave of racism."

In *Trotskyist International 5*, p17, a paragraph was mistakenly included in the seventh paragraph of the section on Bolivia which characterised the period after 1985-86 as one of "historic and unprecedented defeats". The correct position was contained in the previous paragraph, which described 1985-86 as "one of the heaviest defeats the Bolivian proletariat has suffered since the 1952 revolution"

On page 18, the following paragraphs were omitted from the beginning of the section on Peru:

"In the last two years of the 1970s Peru went through a profound revolutionary period. In 1978, general strikes forced the military regime to call elections to a Constituent Assembly in which the left parties won one third of the seats. The "Trotskyist" bloc, headed by Hugo Blanco, was the strongest in terms of votes.

However, instead of calling on the masses to build workers' and peasants' councils and struggling for power, the left indulged in a prolonged bout of parliamentary cretinism.

They betrayed the mass struggles and ended by splitting and presenting five rival candidates in the 1980 elections. This opened the way for Belaunde, the candidate of the bourgeois Accion Popular, to capture the anti-dictatorship protest vote. Once elected, he of course applied pro-IMF austerity measures.

At the same time, in 1980, the Sendero Luminoso guerilla movement began its campaign and a new popular front movement, Izquierda Unida (IU—United Left), was formed. The IU paralysed any fight back of the unions by its total support for the reactionary "democratic" state.

The Sendero guerillas provoked state repression and even attacked the workers' movement itself. In this situation the rival bourgeois nationalist party, APRA, under its new leader Alan Garcia, used anti-imperialist demagogy to help it stage a powerful recovery. It won nearly 50% of the vote in the 1985 elections.

For the first two years Garcia carried out a populist strategy of high government spending that stimulated strong but artificial economic growth. In the end this "miracle" collapsed into hyper-inflation. The APRA resorted to vicious austerity measures and to bloody repression that reached genocidal proportions in some areas.

A pre-revolutionary period opened in 1988, but its development into a revolutionary struggle was again blocked by the IU who refused to mobilise the masses in an all-out general strike against austerity and repression. Instead of building workers' councils to organise this struggle they turned the Assemblea Nacional Popular—a gathering of trade union and popular resistance bodies—into a mere talking shop.

Concentrating on working for an IU electoral victory, the reformist leaders demoralised the mass movement. This in turn favoured the growth of a new right wing movement (Fredemo), on a strong neo-liberal economic programme, led by the writer Mario Vargas Llosa.

In alliance with the older conservative parties, Vargas Llosa outstripped the IU in popularity. It proceeded to split into two wings, both headed by minor capitalist forces, both competing with one another in moderating their programmes. The total discrediting of the APRA and the "left" created an electoral vacuum which was to be filled by Alberto Fujimori."

Working class action to defeat imperialism

Victory to Iraq!

The massive bombing of Baghdad and hundreds of Iraqi "targets" has begun. Operation Desert Storm is at this very moment laying waste whole tracts of Iraq with tens of thousands of tonnes of bombs a night. This "surgical strike" will soon give way to bloody carnage as the land forces advance.

The Iraqi armed forces and people are being bombarded by forces from the biggest coalition of imperialist powers and personnel since the Vietnam War. The blockade and sanctions can now be seen for what they really were: a holding operation by the imperialists in order to get time to assemble the war machine. Sanctions were always intended as a prelude to armed conflict, as a softening up process, as a necessary overhead cost of gaining broad political support among all the imperialists and the wavering Arab regimes opposed to Baghdad.

But now the diplomatic charade is over. The carefully choreographed opposition in the US Congress came to its predictable end—support for war. Despite the semi-pacifist bleatings of the official opposition to the ruling governments in the USA and in Europe, the war has called all the dissidents to attention; they now drop their half-hearted and half cynical protests and replace them with unconditional backing for "our boys". Now the conflict has broken out nothing will be too much for these people to accept: increasing call-up of civilians; censorship of the media, repression against the far left, immigrant and exile communities, attacks on the right to demonstrate in opposition to this war.

The shells and missiles are not raining down in order to defeat tyranny. In countless countries tyrants as bad and worse than Saddam Hussein have been installed and kept in power for all of this century by British and US imperialism against the democratic wishes of the population. While the Iraqi Ba'athist regime utilised its relationship with the Soviet Union to increase its room for manoeuvre with the imperialist powers, it is nevertheless tied, economically and politically, to the imperialist system. Saddam was armed to the teeth by imperialism for most of his conflict with Iran. The imperialists applauded him for his brutal crushing of the Communist Party in Iraq. He was supplied with the technology to enable him to launch poison gas attacks on the Kurds. He is in power today because of the imperialist money and arms given to him yesterday.

The original text of this resolution was adopted by the LRCI on 17.1.91. The LRCI then accepted amendments from its symnpathising organisations and also approached the International Trotskyist Committee and the Liaison Committee. They also submitted amendments, some of which we accepted. The process of seeking agreement was interrupted by the end of the war. The amended text printed here is the position of the LRCI alone.

No democracy in Kuwait

The war against the Iraqi people is being prosecuted in order to defend "democracy". But the state of Kuwait was the opposite of democracy. It was not created by the action or wishes of its population but by the stroke of a pen of its erstwhile British administrators; its ruler—the Emir—presided over an autocratic regime without meaningful elections and by depriving the great bulk of its working population of citizenship.

Moreover, the actions of the USA over the years in Guatemala, Chile and Grenada, its attack on the Cuban revolution, and its eleven year onslaught against Nicaragua reveal all too clearly that democracy, social reform, or any attempt to assert national independence will be ruthlessly snuffed out should they threaten the economic and political interests of US and European imperialism.

The grand coalition against Iraq is stuffed full of dictatorships and semi-dictatorships. Why does Britain's government ban television reports on the real nature of the Saudi regime that it is out there "defending"? We are not allowed to hear about the repression and deaths that are the hallmark of Saudi "justice", or the unelected nature of the Saudi ruling family, or the absence of democratic rights in Saudi Arabia.

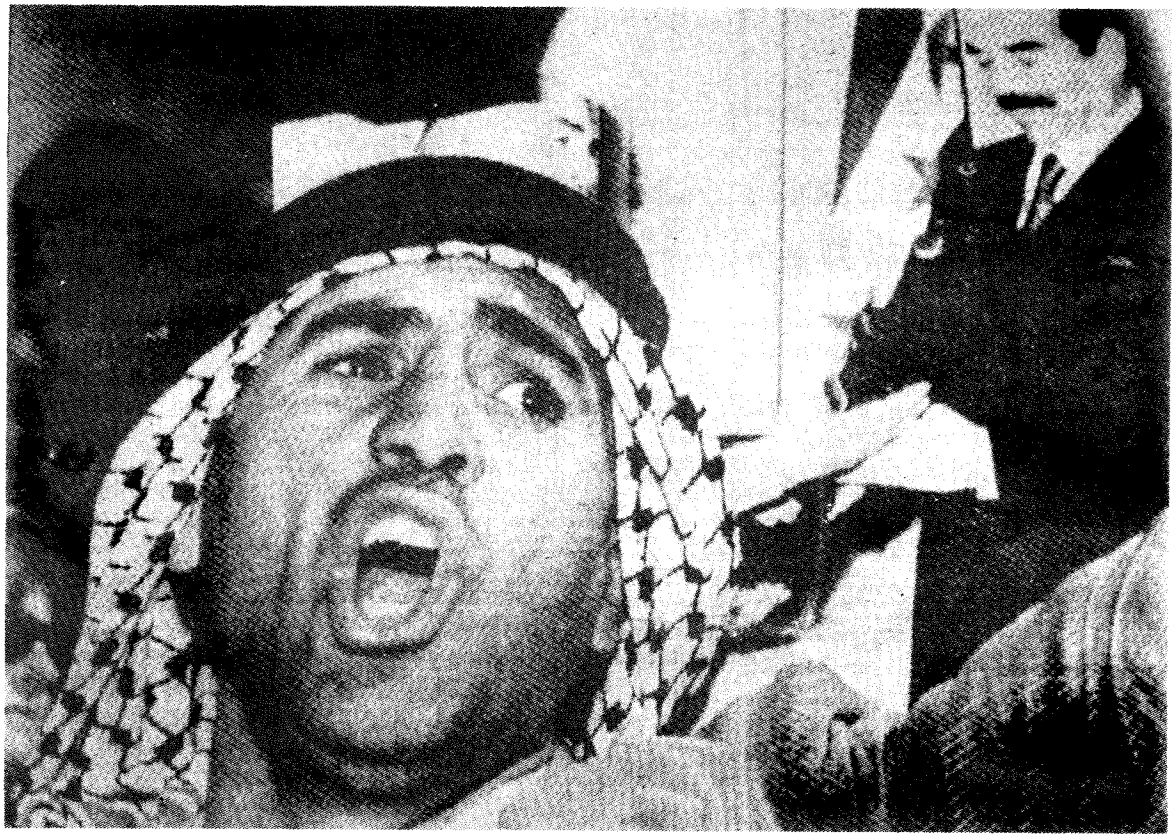
Gorbachev's backing for imperialist intervention has made it possible for imperialism to use the United Nations (UN) fig leaf. The imperialists have seized the opportunity created by the crisis of the Stalinist system, the Soviet bureaucracy's international retreat and its need for western economic aid, to launch a war in the Middle East which would previously have been impossible. This Soviet policy is a development of its counter-revolutionary pursuit of "regional settlements".

We condemn Stalinism's support for sanctions and its complicity in the war, which ultimately poses a threat to the Soviet Union itself, not least because of the confusion it has created in the international workers' movement.

Imperialism's war aims

The USA and Britain were the two imperialist powers hell bent on a war with Iraq. Their aim is not to liberate the inhabitants of Kuwait from dictatorship, but to establish political and military supremacy in the Gulf, secure cheap oil supplies for the west and establish a new world order of exploitation and oppression.

Even the public statements of Britain and the USA make it clear that re-conquering Kuwait is only part of this grand design. Before her fall Thatcher made clear that a defeated Saddam would have to face reparations and a war crimes tribunal. Major is equally determined



Palestinian supporter of Iraq

to achieve the same war aims. Bush, who said "Saddam is worse than Hitler", has made clear that he wants to secure a permanent military presence in the Gulf, restabilise the area for US oil companies and destroy Hussein's regime. By their opportunist diplomacy the other EC powers, led by France, seek to minimise their costs and maximise their future political benefits in the wake of an Iraqi defeat.

The re-conquest of Kuwait by the imperialist armies would "free" Kuwait for continued imperialist exploitation. The rich Kuwaiti ruling class will be free to live their international playboy lifestyles. The big oil companies will be free to drain the oil-fields of this British created city-state. The general staffs will be free to utilise military installations in this strategic part of the Gulf. None of this will give freedom to the workers and poor within Kuwait.

Imperialism does not want, does not care about, democracy in the Middle East. Its policy of plundering the region's oil reserves and obstructing the balanced industrial and agricultural development in the Middle East, as in Africa, Asia and Latin America, fosters dictatorships. Their rule, free from the niceties of democracy, is often imperialism's best guarantee of stability, profits and the continued enslavement of those countries. This is why Britain and the USA have said nothing about restoring democracy in Iraq. They will establish another dictatorship, but one more pliant and responsive to their needs.

The Palestinians

The crusaders for "democracy", weeping crocodile tears for the oppression and occupation of Kuwait, are rightly scorned by the Palestinians and their sympathisers throughout the Arab world. These forces realise that imperialism's brutal refusal to link the issues, its forty year toleration of the oppression and occupation of Palestine, its failure to implement the half-hearted resolutions wrung from the UN; all this shows what sort of solution they are planning after the defeat of the strongest Arab military power.

Should the US-led forces crush Iraq, then any Palestinian settlement directed by the victors and their Arab puppets would be one enormously favourable to the Zionist state. On the other hand, any victory for Iraq, or even a stalemate, would weaken the Zionists and their masters. For this reason the imperialists hope to keep the Zionist expansionists on a tight leash for fear of provoking a massive upsurge throughout the Arab world, one that could topple the Mubaraks, Assads and Fahds. Thus Saddam's attempt to link the struggles—no matter how hypocritical and self-serving his motive—is justified. The struggles are, and should be, linked in deeds and not in words. Moreover, in any conflict between Israel and Iraq, started by either side, we are with Iraq and for the defeat of the Zionist state.

Opposition to the war

Even after five months of an unremitting propaganda war barely half the population of the USA and Europe accept the need for this death and destruction. Millions of people took to the streets in Europe on 12 January as the deadline for war approached. Millions of workers in Spain, Italy, France and Germany have taken strike action in protest at the war; in Turkey the general strike movement has taken a position of opposition to the war. The biggest protests for decades have been seen in many cities and small towns in the USA. The reason for the scale of opposition and the lack of enthusiasm for this war is that many understand or sense the lies with which their rulers justify this war.

At present this movement is mainly limited to protest and retains illusions in the possibilities of a "peaceful settlement". It is essential that the movement be turned into one of action against the war.

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Only the working class, whose objective interests are directly opposed to imperialism, can lead that struggle. The fight for industrial action, including strike action, against the imperialist war effort must be central.

The workers in Britain, the USA and the other countries of the coalition, do not have the slightest interest in supporting their rulers' war. It is their war, not ours. A victory for their armies will not benefit us one bit. It will strengthen their rule. It will enable them to impose their will throughout the Middle East and the rest of the semi-colonial world. It will provide them with vast profits. It will bring them nearer to their goal of a new world order of exploitation where the exploited and oppressed are powerless against the imperialist military machine.

Working class internationalism demands that we should not simply sit back and say "a plague on all your houses". Iraq is a country that has long been oppressed by imperialism. Iraq is in hock to imperialism to the tune of $30 billion. Its oil wealth during the 1970s was incapable of breaking the chains of servitude. All its major industries are dependent on imperialist investment. And the profits the western bosses repatriate from those investments starved Iraq of the funds that could have enabled it to develop and diversify its economy. Even its ability to produce oil exists courtesy of the technology of the imperialist powers. And, as Saddam himself observed, Iraq is dependent on the imperialists to buy its oil.

The complete dependency of Iraq on imperialism is qualitatively different to the interdependency of the imperialist economies with one another. It is the dependency of a subordinate nation, an oppressed nation, one whose development is deliberately stifled by imperialism.

Defeat imperialism, defend Iraq!

It is in our interests to bring about the defeat of the imperialist armies and their Arab puppets locked in battle with Iraq by ruthlessly pursuing the class struggle at home. The governments who direct these armies are our main enemy.

A victory for Iraq would be a blow to imperialism. It would weaken their world rule and sabotage their plans for a new, oppressive world order. That is why it is the duty of working class internationalists to do everything in their power to bring about the victory of Iraq in this war.

This will astonish many workers, even those revolted by the prospect of war. How can we support the victory of the "Butcher of Baghdad", the oppressor of the Kurds? The defence of Iraq against imperialism in no way implies that we politically support the regime of Saddam, that we support the invasion of Kuwait or that we excuse his monstrous crimes against the Iraqi workers and poor peasants, and against the Kurdish people. Revolutionaries have always argued for the overthrow of this dictator, well before the bosses' media made him their pet hate figure.

But today, he is not the main enemy of the Iraqi and Gulf region masses. Imperialism poses a far greater

threat to them. Victorious imperialism will intensify their exploitation, their misery and their oppression. Until the threat of such a victory is removed, a war by Iraq against Britain, the USA and the coalition will be a justified war.

It is in the direct interests of the Iraqi and the Kurdish people to defend Iraq against imperialism without for a minute abandoning their just struggles for national freedom, democracy and class emancipation. In the war they should propose a military united front against the attacking imperialist forces. In practice this would require that the regime cease all repression against the progressive forces.

But what ever the regime's actions against progressive forces, imperialism remains the main enemy whilst the armed conflict continues. It is from within the war effort that forces must be rallied to overthrow the Ba'athist regime and create a workers' and peasants' government. Proceeding towards an armed insurrection to achieve that goal during the course of the war with imperialism will have to be considered in the light of the need to secure a military victory against the main enemy—imperialist forces in the Gulf.

We call for independent workers' and peasants' mobilisations against the imperialist threat, and warn the Arab masses that the Iraqi bourgeoisie is incapable of carrying through the struggle to the finish—let alone liberating Palestine. We fight imperialism not by holy war but with the methods of the class struggle.

It is vital that workers face up to the real issues at stake in this war. It will cost the lives of thousands. And after the working class youth has spilled its blood, sustaining horrific physical and mental scars, the world's rulers will patch together a peace in the plush surroundings of the international conference centres.

We have to fight in the working class and anti-war movements for a real understanding of the character of this war, and to break workers of the imperialist countries from chauvinist prejudices and pacifist illusions.

It is vital that we build a movement to bring this war to an end through workers' action—action aimed at crippling the war machine of Bush and Major and forcing imperialism to retreat from the Middle East forever.

- Stop imperialism's war against Iraq! US and European troops out of the Middle East!
- For the military victory of Iraq against imperialism!
- Defeat US, imperialist and allied forces. Victory to Iraq! Down with the UN!
- No sanctions! Break the blockade! Send aid, including military aid, to Iraq!
- No to conscription and call-up! Not a penny, not a person for the armed forces ranged against Iraq!
- The labour movement in all countries supporting the "allied effort" must oppose the war effort! Strike against the war! Boycott all war work! Workers' action to stop the transport of weapons and troops to the Gulf and military production for the imperialist armies!
- Youth and students, protest against this war! Boycott lessons, occupy the colleges!
- Defend the right to protest against this war! No internment of exiles! Defend Arab and Muslim communities against racist attack and state repression! Reject all attempts by imperialist governments to impose military discipline on the working class and further attacks on civil and democratic rights!
- Soldiers—don't die for big oil! Fraternise with your Iraqi brothers and sisters! Turn your guns on your officers!
- Turn this war into real war against imperialism. the Iraqi government must nationalise all imperialist holding and support the right of all Kurdish people to self-determination!
- Arm the population of Iraq; arm the Palestinians! Victory to the *intifada*!
- Support the anti-imperialist mass movements, and for the overthrow of all capitalist regimes in the region!
- The self-determination of the peoples of the Middle East cannot be obtained under the leadership of bourgeois nationalists or Islamic clerical reactionaries, only through a revolution led by the proletariat!
- Within Iraq revolutionaries fight for freedom of independent working class organisation, defence of religious rights, mobilisation of women for their full emancipation, and the building of a revolutionary Leninist-Trotskyist party!
- Down with Soviet collaboration with the imperialists. Demand the Soviet Union gives full military support to Iraq!
- For international working class solidarity against imperialist war!
- For a United Socialist States of the Middle East!

LRCI resolutions

The situation in Lithuania and the tasks of Trotskyists

Adopted by the International Secretariat of the LRCI, 11 April 1990

The Baltic countries—Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia—have become a central arena in the struggles for national self-determination and against Great Russian chauvinism in the USSR. The national question has become a central question of the proletarian political revolution. The Baltic states were violently occupied and annexed by the Soviet Army as a consequence of the reactionary Hitler-Stalin pact. Since then these countries have been nationally oppressed, with a Russian-dominated ruling bureaucracy making all important decisions concerning the Baltics on behalf of the Kremlin.

By 1987 the striving for national independence, provoked by this oppression and unleashed by the regionalisation and de-centralisation of *perestroika* as well as by *glasnost*, had led to the establishment of broad popular front movements. These movements were initially formed as a bloc between pro-*perestroika* Stalinists and secessionist nationalists.

As the crisis of the USSR has deepened and the conflict between the oppressed peoples and the central administration has unfolded, so the former have lost ever more ground to the increasingly strident restorationist nationalists. This has particularly been the case with the Sajudis in Lithuania, although it is a tendency which is being replicated elsewhere in the minority republics.

The right of self-determination

Sajudis has become the central voice of the Lithuanian people, pushing for separation from the USSR and the formation of an independent state. As revolutionary communists we unconditionally support the right of national self-determination up to the right of state secession. Lenin established the fact that nationalism, stimulated by national oppression, could not be overcome simply by appeals for the necessary international unification of the working class.

The proletariat of the oppressor nation (in this case the Russian) must first give the oppressed nationality or nation the unrestricted right of national self-determination. Only in this way can the foundations of a voluntary and equal federation between two peoples be laid. Our aim, therefore, is the transformation of the USSR into a voluntary federation of peoples on the basis of democratically planned property relations.

Trotskyists do not demand state separation as a matter of principle. However, we do defend unconditionally the oppressed nation's right to secede. We are in favour of bigger associations of states which make possible a better development of the productive forces. The only way to a revolutionary solution of the national question is the common struggle of the working classes of the oppressed and oppressor nations. This is the quickest way to smash the Stalinist bureaucracy, the common oppressor.

Relating to the national question

Sometimes national oppression can lead to such deep resentment that the nation concerned struggles for secession. In 1938 when the Ukraine was in just such a situation Trotsky developed the slogan "For an Independent Soviet Ukraine!" In such cases, if revolutionaries completely oppose the strivings for independence of an oppressed nation by opposing secession, they objectively give aid to the Kremlin bureaucracy.

Our task must be to relate to the justified struggles born out of this oppression and at the same time fight against the restorationist nationalist leaders. Therefore, in keeping with the methods developed by Lenin and Trotsky, wherever it is clear that the oppressed masses are striving for independence we raise the slogan "For an independent workers' state."

National oppression in the Baltics has now led to the first confrontation in Lithuania. The overwhelming majority of Lithuanian people want to secede from the USSR and found their own state. What character do the different forces involved in this conflict have?

The Kremlin bureaucracy under Gorbachev wants to build up the Baltics as a market economy bridgehead from which they can develop good trade links to imperialism in general and the Scandinavian lands in particular. Gorbachev has actively encouraged the transition to capitalist relations of production under the control of the central Russian bureaucracy. The new law on independence for the Soviet republics requires a two-thirds majority to vote for independence. This has to be confirmed after five years in order to become operative and then it has to be ratified by the supreme Soviet. Gorbachev wants to hem in independence with as many restrictions as possible, tying Lithuania to Moscow.

To allow an immediate separation would set a precedent for all the other oppressed nationalities in the USSR. To show any weakness in the face of these secessionist demands would undermine Gorbachev's stand in relation to the conservatives within the central bureaucracy.

The nature of the Lithuanian nationalists

Sajudis is a heterogeneous petit bourgeois nationalist force which has gone beyond a simple uncritical identification with the bourgeois Lithuania of the inter-war period. Its February 1990 election programme unequivocally espoused the denationalisation of the Lithuanian economy. Forces within Sajudis range from Stalinists, social democrats and Christian democrats to semi-fascist elements.

The majority split from the Lithuanian CP around Brasauskas is still a Stalinist party with a restorationist programme similar to the PDS (GDR) or USP (Hungary). It represents that wing of the bureaucracy which hopes to save its privileges through the re-introduction of capitalism. In order to secure a modicum of popularity the minority wing of the CP took part in the foundation of Sajudis too. Both of them ultimately want to found an independent state with capitalist property relations. On the basis of capitalist restoration they promise economic prosperity through a federation with Latvia and Estonia with strong economic ties to Finland. This project, however, is illusory through and through. The future of a bourgeois Lithuania would be that of a semi-colony dependent on one or other imperialism.

What then is this conflict really about? It is not about capitalist restoration in itself. The differences of opinion between the Kremlin and Sajudis on this are simply about the timing and form of its realisation. No. The conflict is about the Russian bureaucracy maintaining control over the process of independence and continuing the Russian prerogatives in Lithuania, in a way analogous to Finnish-Soviet relations after 1945.

For the moment, the imperialist countries have adopted a restrained position. Not one of the leading western states has yet recognised the independent state of Lithuania declared by Sajudis. On the one hand they support the growing deterioration of the USSR. On the other they want to maintain Gorbachev in power and prevent a conservative-Stalinist putsch. On this basis an imperialist intervention in the Baltic in the event of a military advance by Soviet troops against the Lithuanian nationalists is extremely improbable.

We are in favour of the recognition of Lithuania's independence by all other states including bourgeois states. But we do not call on bourgeois governments to take action against the USSR through economic sanctions, boycotts or diplomatic manoeuvres. We would oppose any such actions by bourgeois governments and condemn them as attempts to promote restoration. The main focus of our struggle is to urge the Russian and other Soviet proletariats to stay Gorbachev's hand, to recognise Lithuania's independence and to force the Kremlin to withdraw its troops.

In Lithuania Trotskyists are confronted by the problem that the overwhelming majority of the Lithuanian proletariat is nationalist and united behind the bourgeois Sajudis. The task of revolutionaries, therefore, must be to differentiate between the progressive and the backward elements of this consciousness and to open the way to the transition to revolutionary class consciousness. While we unconditionally support the struggle for independence against the Stalinist bureaucracy, at the same time we fight to break the Lithuanian proletariat away from its bourgeois leaders. In doing so we raise the slogan, "For an independent workers' State of Lithuania!" In addition a sovereign workers' Lithuania would re-negotiate its economic and military treaties with the USSR.

In the present confrontation in Lithuania we fight on the side of the oppressed nation against the Soviet army of occupation. We support the right of all Lithuanian conscripts not to serve in the Soviet Armed Forces (SAF). The presence of the Soviet troops not only directly suppresses the Lithuanian right of self-determination. Every day they forcibly maintain the Moscow bureaucracy's power encourages nationalism and creates ever more fanatical anti-communists. Although at present there is no campaign against the Russian minority in Lithuania this could rapidly change in the course of an escalating civil war. Lastly, the nationalism called forth by the Russian occupation obscures every class contradiction and thus binds the Lithuanian proletariat to the domestic bourgeois leaders.

In order to prepare the ending of the Stalinist occupation and ease the way to the political independence of the proletariat, we demand the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Lithuania and the whole Baltic region. The Soviet troops should be disarmed and their military equipment should be given over to a Lithuanian workers' militia. Without the building of a workers' militia the Lithuanian proletariat will continue to be completely at the mercy of Stalinist despotism. Such a militia would organise working class men and women as members of a class, not, as in traditional bourgeois armies, as individual citizens. Approximately one third of the troops in Lithuania are Lithuanian. It will be essential to split them from the SAF in order to build a Lithuanian workers' militia. At the same time we are in favour of intervening among the Russian sections of the Soviet troops, fighting for fraternisation and to spread the ideas of the proletarian political revolution into the whole of the Soviet Union.

The present threat of intervention

In the present struggle against the threat of Soviet military action against the Lithuanian independence movement, and in the event of a civil war, we fight against the Stalinist oppressor and are ready to make strictly limited united front actions (joint demonstrations against nationalist oppression and for the with-

drawal of Soviet troops, limited military agreements in the case of armed confrontations with the Kremlin) with the nationalist forces.

A military defeat of the Lithuanian independence movement by the SAF would not only consolidate the national oppression. It would also destroy any possibility of an independent workers' movement developing and would drive the masses into the arms of fascist elements.

By contrast, the political revolution must transcend the struggle for national independence through the building of an independent workers' movement and the proletarian seizure of power. In countries which have been nationally oppressed by the Kremlin bureaucracy it is entirely natural that the political revolution starts with the struggle against the Stalinist occupier. Only sectarians would be surprised that, after decades of brutal national oppression and Stalinist rule, deep illusions in bourgeois democracy exist.

Revolutionaries must stand alongside the Lithuanian proletariat in its legitimate struggle for national independence, while fighting against bourgeois forces to build an independent workers' movement and an internationalist revolutionary workers' party.

The other Baltic republics

Estonia and Latvia are also nationally oppressed by the Russian bureaucracy. Bourgeois nationalist popular front movements (and in Estonia the "general citizens' committee") have been built in reaction to this. In contrast to Lithuania, however, there are stronger, mainly Russian speaking, minorities (30-40%). These form the core sections of the Estonian and Latvian working class, sections of which are organised around the Stalinist "Interfront" grouping. However, other sections remain neutral or even side with the separatists. This was evidenced by the recent elections in both republics. During the last elections Interfront mobilised against the politics of the Baltic nationalists.

The movement is dominated by the Russian bureaucracy and acts simply as the agent of the Kremlin bureaucracy in the fight against Baltic independence. The fact that its "anti-separatist" propaganda is often peppered with "internationalist" and "socialist" phrases in no way alters its reactionary character. It is precisely this Gorbachevite bureaucracy which was, and is, the initiator of the market economy reforms. So long as the Interfront acts simply as the fifth column of the bureaucracy against the national right of self-determination, we cannot support it despite its proletarian social composition. This in no way excludes united fronts in the event that the Interfront actually does fight against restorationist measures.

The task of Trotskyists is the fraternisation of the workers of the Baltic nations with all other national minorities, ultimately overcoming all nationalism in the process. Therefore, the Russian workers of the Interfront must be broken from the Russian bureaucracy and won to support for the Baltic peoples' right to self-determination. Only collaboration between the Baltic and the Russian workers on this basis will provide a firm foundation for the struggle against the threaten of capitalist restoration.

For the defence of planned property!

The Lithuanian proletariat is threatened by the danger of capitalist restoration from both the Gorbachevites and Sajudis. The central task of Trotskyists is to mobilise the workers against this menace, to fight tenaciously against every measure attacking the planned property relations. The workers' movement, independent of the bourgeois forces, must build workers' councils as organs of struggle and of future power. In the fight against capitalist restoration united fronts, even with Interfront, are possible. On this question there can be no compromise with the bourgeois Sajudis. Our objective is to create an independent workers' movement which will fight every restorationist measure, as well as politically opposing the bourgeois Sajudis leadership, in the confrontation with the Stalinist army of occupation.

Despite possible limited united front actions with the bourgeois nationalists, revolutionaries must develop uncompromising propaganda and agitation against the restorationist politics of Sajudis and the growing threat to the working class that they represent. We must warn the Lithuanian workers that the bourgeois forces are ready to negotiate a deal with the Russian bureaucracy if they are faced with the danger of a working class and an independence movement running out of their control. Lithuanian bureaucrats and bourgeois alike fear an independent proletariat a thousand times more than they fear the Kremlin bureaucracy. The danger of a sell-out of both national and proletarian interests is, therefore, very great!

Trotskyists link the building of such an independent workers' movement to the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the proletarian seizure of power. Only workers' power in a Lithuanian workers' state could secure self-determination and prevent the capitalist restoration measures which would bring the impoverishment of the Lithuanian proletariat. The Russian and Polish minorities must both be granted their full democratic rights for national language and cultural expression.

The basis of a Lithuanian workers' state would be a democratically centralised planned economy in which all decisions would be discussed and decided from bottom to top by workers' councils. However, we are under no illusions that such a workers' state in Lithuania could survive for very long if the revolution did not spread to the USSR and other countries—indeed, ultimately world-wide.

Trotskyists are the greatest enemies of the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country" the fruits of which can now be seen in the world-wide collapse of Stalinism. We fight for the internationalisation of the revolution because socialism can only be realised on a global scale.

Workers' power is impossible so long as there is no Trotskyist party in the Baltic countries. Such a party must be armed with a programme which commits it to

the overthrow of the bureaucracy and to the proletarian political revolution. That will necessitate the most determined struggle against all steps in the direction of capitalist restoration. Although a proletarian party is internationalist through and through and rejects all nationalism, it unconditionally recognises the right of self-determination for oppressed nations.

Against the fake "emancipation" of women and Gorbachev's reactionary "back to the home" slogan we pose the full socialisation of domestic labour as the precondition for the full liberation of women.

Our goal is the building of a workers' state as the basis for the international expansion of the proletarian revolution. Socialism can only be realised world-wide. Such a party can only exist as a section of a new revolutionary communist International. The LRCI has dedicated itself to the building of such an International.

- Self-determination for the Lithuanians and for all the Baltic peoples!
- Withdraw the Soviet army of occupation!
- For an internationalist struggle against any Kremlin inspired blockade against the Baltic states.
- For immediate recognition of Lithuanian independence by all states! No to any campaign of sanctions by imperialism to help restore capitalism!
- Build a workers' militias!
- For an independent workers' movement open to Russian workers!
- Down with the anti-working class deal threatened between Sajudis and Kremlin!
- For proletarian political revolution! Down with the Stalinist bureaucracy! For workers' power in the Baltic workers' states!
- For a federation of independent workers' states of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia!

Against the Soviet crackdown in Lithuania!

Adopted by the International Secretariat of the LRCI, 15 January 1991

The bloody assault on the TV station in Vilnius that left fourteen dead indicates that a decisive shift has taken place within the Soviet bureaucracy. Taking advantage of the diversion of world attention due to the impending imperialist holocaust in the Middle East, and of the USA's continued need for the USSR's agreement in the Security Council, the military and the KGB are set on coercing the nationalities that have refused to accept Gorbachev's new centralist federation treaty. But events in Vilnius and Riga portend an even more far-ranging change. The inner bonapartist clique around Gorbachev finds the limited democratic rights known as *glasnost* increasingly intolerable.

The military and KGB clampdown on the Baltic republics is not only a test-bed for the suppression of the movements for national rights and independence throughout the USSR; it is preparing the way for the destruction of freedom of speech, assembly and organisation throughout the USSR. In particular it threatens the newly emerging labour movement with the loss of the right to strike, to organise unions and political parties free of the bureaucratic dictatorship.

Such a presidential *coup d'état* was prepared by the majority of the Supreme Soviet which gave full powers to Gorbachev in December. Most of the so-called radicals and reformers were involved in this spineless capitulation. Their pretext was that the impending economic catastrophe required the forcing through of "economic reform"—further and decisive restorationist measures. Gorbachev, they believed, was their only hope. If he were to fall, the reformers fear that Kryuchkov and Yazhov could carry out a bloody restoration of unbridled party dictatorship. This would have as one of its first consequences the halting and reversal of "economic reform" and could even lead to a new outbreak of Cold War with imperialism. The "radicals"—deputies from impotent parliaments and the "governments" without state forces—thus surrendered their only possession: their sham sovereignty. The pitiful thousand or so people who heeded the radicals' call to demonstrate in Moscow against the bloodshed in Lithuania demonstrates the bankruptcy of these politicians.

The KGB and army chiefs claim that the intervention is aimed at preventing the restoration of "the bourgeois system". But there is not the slightest evidence that the Sajudis government planned an armed insurrection against the Soviet forces, or contemplated pogroms against, or the oppression, of the Russian and Polish minorities. Certainly Landsbergis and Prunskiene are restorationists. But they have neither the state power nor the economic wherewithal to implement capitalism in the short term.

Their stated programmes are not in fundamental contradiction to those of the Kremlin. In fact, as the fall of Prunskiene's government demonstrated, none of the authorities—local, regional, republican and all-Union—dare even carry through a fundamental price reform, for fear of a mass explosion. Just such an explosion was about to engulf Sajudis, thanks to Prunskiene's economic measures. Landsbergis, fearing the overnight dissipation of the nationalists' mass base, moved rapidly to oust the luckless Prunskiene. This contradiction between the Sajudis leadership and its mass base probably encouraged the military to strike there and then in order to test the ground for a future coup by Gorbachev or a successor.

This legal *coup d'état* is not a defence of the planned economy and the dictatorship of the proletariat against capitalist restoration, any more than was Jaruzelski's

1981 crushing of Solidarnosc in Poland or Li Peng's bloody carnage in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Bureaucratic conservative counter-revolution, whilst it may temporarily slow or modify the moves to restore capitalism, can wreak even greater damage on the proletariat, the only living force capable of defending the workers' state.

It would destroy the class conscious proletariat's attachment to the workers' state, which would be finally identified with a bloody despotism of the privileged generals and bureaucrats. It would have to destroy the organisations and combativity of the Soviet proletariat and nationalities built up over the last five years. The brutality and carnage that this would entail would do more than any other single crime of Stalinism to destroy what remains of the gains of October 1917.

In Lithuania, and increasingly in the other Soviet republics, a majority of the working class identifies its primary interests with national independence. If the Kremlin brutally suppresses these legitimate national demands, the result will be the consolidation of the alliance of the Lithuanian workers with those restorationists who they consider to be pursuing independence. The only way to break the working class from this alliance is to grant full national independence. The class consciousness of the Soviet proletariat is low and confused as a result of over sixty years of Stalinist dictatorship and economic bungling and corruption, especially with regard to the defence of planning. Only freedom and democracy for the workers, the collective farmers and the nationalities will enable the toilers to learn the key lessons of struggle. Workers' democracy will permit the proletarian political vanguard to re-form around a Trotskyist party, committed to the defence of gains of October 1917 and the total destruction of the Stalinist dictatorship, that is, to a thoroughgoing political revolution.

That is why Trotskyists and all working class fighters must defend the Lithuanian people's right to self-determination, and the right of all the USSR's nations to separate statehood if they so desire it. The defence of the planned property relations and the workers' state is not identical with the continued unity of the USSR; indeed, it is most certainly incompatible with the continued existence of a forcible union of peoples, a Russian "empire". Lenin and Trotsky were not the founders or defenders of this bureaucratic parody of a "free federation of peoples". Its true father was Stalin.

The bloody massacres of the Gorbachev era—Georgia, Azerbaijan and now Lithuania—and his deceitful and bullying attempt to force the nationalities to stay within a centralised federation has fatally weakened any potential for co-operation and fraternity. That can only be restored if the proletariat of the USSR and particularly the Russian workers take up the battle for the right to free, immediate and unhampered secession. The trade unions should immediately call on the whole of the Soviet proletariat to launch a general strike to end the attacks on the Baltic states, to bring an end to Gorbachev's Presidential dictatorship and fight for the establishment of a regime of workers' councils.

Internationally the proletariat must fight for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all SAF and KGB troops from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

- Down with the bloody butchers of Vilnius! Soviet troops out now!
- Hands off Lithuania, Latvia and all republics desiring separation!
- For an independent workers' state in Lithuania!
- Down with Gorbachev's coup!
- For proletarian political revolution!
- No imperialist sanctions against the USSR!
- Defend the USSR against imperialist intervention!

Solidarity with Lithuania!

Adopted by the International Secretariat of the LRCI, 22 April 1990

We fully support the right of Lithuania to secede from the USSR and create an independent state. We condemn the actions of the Gorbachev government in the USSR which is attempting to prevent the recently elected government of Lithuania from exercising its right to secede. We condemn the strong-arm tactics of Gorbachev in the economic blockade and the use of troops within Lithuania. We call on all states to give immediate recognition to Lithuania as an independent state. We condemn the hypocrisy of the US and British governments in particular, who are refusing to recognise Lithuania. We recognise the right of Lithuania to seek provision of those goods which the USSR is blockading, notably energy sources, and we condemn the hypocrisy of bourgeois governments in refusing to supply free credits. These goods must be given without conditions as Lithuania has no hard currency.

We call on workers to support the right of the Lithuanians to secede. We call on workers to refuse to handle those goods which were destined for Lithuania but have been re-directed by the USSR as part of the economic blockade. We see this as elementary solidarity in the context of this specific action by the USSR. We are, however, opposed to any bourgeois governments imposing any diplomatic or economic sanctions against the USSR or using force to take supplies into Lithuania, all of which we would take as being actions hostile to the degenerated workers' state.

On the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel

Adopted by the International Secretariat of the LRCI, 22 April 1990

There is a systematic campaign to encourage Soviet Jews to emigrate from the USSR. This exodus is based on the realities of anti-Semitism in the USSR, today and in the past, carried out by the Stalinist bureaucracy and rabid chauvinists such as Pamyat. The exodus is being greatly encouraged by international Zionist organisations. Many Soviet Jews are therefore emigrating to Israel. The major imperialist countries hypocritically espouse "human rights" yet refuse to allow the immigration of "refugees"—including Jews—who wish to enter from the USSR. The USA has imposed immigration quotas on Jews. We must condemn this hypocrisy and demand an end to all immigration controls in these countries. We support the right of all workers to free movement across national state boundaries, including leaving the workers' states.

However, we do not support the right of Soviet Jews to settle in Israel. We recognise it as a legitimate goal of the Palestinian struggle to prevent mass colonial settlement in the Occupied Territories and in the whole of Israel. The Zionists seek to use mass emigration from the USSR into Israel to further colonise the occupied lands and undermine the *intifada*.

We must oppose this project and support the struggles of the Palestinians directed against the existence of the Zionist state and its forced settlement of Jews on Palestinian land. We must oppose any guaranteed land rights or job security for Soviet Jews in Israel. Combined with the fight for the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate to the major imperialist countries this will undermine the reactionary Zionist project whilst protecting individual workers' rights.

Declaration of fraternal relations between the LRCI and the Communist Left of New Zealand*

March 1991

1. Relations between the Communist Left of New Zealand (CLNZ) and the LRCI were established in February 1990. During a series of written exchanges between June and December areas of political agreement and disagreement were identified.

The main areas were: the nature and role of the labour aristocracy in the imperialist democracies; the method of analysis of the crisis of the capitalist world economy and the consequences for perspectives and programme; the nature of social oppression and tactics towards the movements of the socially oppressed; the degeneration of the Fourth International and the tasks of Trotskyists today; the creation of the degenerate workers' states after 1947; imperialism and the socio-economic character of New Zealand; work in the trade unions; nature and present character of the New Zealand Labour Party (NZLP); the differences between the united front and popular front; the application of the right of self-determination towards Maori.

These discussions took place in recognition of the fact that the CLNZ regarded the LRCI's programme as a revolutionary programme and both the CLNZ and the LRCI regarded it possible and necessary to move towards fusion by means of the CLNZ entering into the democratic centralist framework of the LRCI.

2. Further discussions took place between representatives of the two groups in early 1991. On the basis of these discussions we can outline the following areas of agreement and areas for further discussion:

a) There is substantial agreement between the CLNZ and the LRCI on the question of Maori liberation. Both agree that Maori are an oppressed nation, one that was forcibly subordinated within an oppressor nation's boundaries, and that revolutionaries must support the right to Maori self-determination. We support this right but do not advocate secession. We support this right even though Maori do not agree on the precise meaning of self-determination.

It is clear that the slogan of the right to self-determination is not counterposed to demands for revolutionary integration and that in fact the two are complementary. This also leads to agreement on tactics. Maori have the right to political and legal equality under capitalism, and to practice their culture and language free from discrimination and repression. We support Maori land claims against the state and commercial interests. Competing claims of Maori and pakeha workers to land and private property can only be resolved by transcending private property in a workers' republic of Aotearoa.

We believe that Maori have the right to defend themselves against attacks from the state and from racists. We argue amongst the working class for support for self-defence squads to counter state and racist attack. While we support Maori against state dis-

* The CLNZ is now known as "Workers Power (New Zealand)"

crimination we oppose the call for a separate Maori justice system which merely strengthens the state apparatus and control over society.
While understanding that true liberation and self-determination will only be possible under socialism we recognise the necessity of Maori to become a significant part of the revolutionary vanguard in the working class. To achieve this we argue for the right of Maori to caucus in trade unions and political organisations, including the revolutionary party.
b) On the history of the Fourth International the LRCI and the CLNZ agree that the process of programmatic degeneration set in after 1948 and reached a qualitative point at the 1951 Congress; no side in the 1953 split represented then, nor in their various fragments represents today, revolutionary continuity with the programme of 1938. Both sides agree that the slogan that should be used in the next period is "for a new Leninist-Trotskyist International".
However, the CLNZ considers that the LRCI does not take sufficient account of the degree of bureaucratic centralist degeneration in the internal regime of the Fourth International during the war, and considers that by 1946 this degeneration effectively prevented the ability of minority forces in the Fourth International to correct the subsequent programmatic degeneration. This will be further discussed.
c) On the political economy of capitalist crisis in capitalist society substantial progress was made regarding the theoretical tools necessary, and the method of abstraction to be employed, in the analysis of world economy. CLNZ wishes further discussion on this. Agreement was reached on the necessity to concretise the analysis as much as possible in terms of tempo, duration and depth of any crisis. Discussion has begun and will continue on the precise nature of the world economic crisis and cyclical upturn in the 1970s and 1980s and the consequences for the 1990s.
d) On the character of the New Zealand economy and state it was agreed to jointly examine the following theses developed in discussion: that the history of New Zealand evidenced a passage from British settler-colony to semi-colony. Its economy functioned essentially to cheapen the elements of constant and variable capital in Britain by the export of agricultural goods. But through the existence of differential rent on the land, industrial protectionism, and at a later stage the British "bequest" of semi-colonies in the South Pacific, New Zealand enjoyed the advantages of an advanced semi-colony that sought to make the transition to an imperialist nation state in the years 1940-70.

However, manufacturing capital soon came up against the limits of the national market and compelled the export of capital and commodities abroad. But since this presupposed the opening up of New Zealand to foreign capital a process of imperialist penetration of the country has deepened. Consequently, despite the clear imperialist benefits that New Zealand derives from its relations with the South Pacific islanders and the super-exploitation of that workforce there and in New Zealand, essentially New Zealand remains an advanced semi-colony. The New Zealand state, increasingly weakened in relation to its foreign rivals, finds itself more and more under the stewardship of Australia. This characterisation is subject to confirmation on the basis of further joint research.
e) On the nature of the NZLP, the LRCI recognises that its organic links with the working class, as expressed in electoral support, membership and relations with the trade unions has become severely weakened. The CLNZ believes that the link has been destroyed, that the NZLP is no longer to be considered a bourgeois workers' party and that critical support for the NZLP at the last (October 1990) election was impermissible. This does not however preclude the NZLP restoring the organic link with the working class under certain conditions while in opposition.

The LRCI wishes further discussion on this. Both sides agree in principle that in the absence of a critical support vote or the standing of revolutionary candidates that the tactic of sponsoring and fighting for class struggle workers' candidates would have been preferable.

3. Fundamental agreement exists on the analysis of the creation of degenerate workers' states after the second world war as outlined in *The Degenerated Revolution*. Broad agreement exists on the causes of the present crisis of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the USSR and the tactics to be applied to this situation. Discussion on the underlying nature of blind planning and its causal effect on the crisis of Stalinism will continue.

Complete agreement has been recorded on the tasks of revolutionaries in relation to the Gulf war and solidarity work as codified in a joint statement of 17 January 1991. [see p54]

Discussion on the nature of the united front work, especially as it applies to rank and file work in the trade unions and inside the bourgeois workers' parties, has also allowed for a high level of principled accord to be reached.

On social oppression the CLNZ concur with the MRCI theses on women's oppression [see *Trotskyist International* 3, Summer 1989] excepting certain differences over the world historic defeat of "mother right" among Australian aboriginals, and the extent and significance of domestic violence in the working class family.