

TROTSKYIST BULLETIN

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Theses on the Early Stages of Party Building

International Executive Committee, July 1992

1 Introduction

1.1 The LRCI reaffirms its general understanding of the stages of party building contained in section 7 of *The Trotskyist Manifesto*. The following document attempts to explain in more detail the concrete tasks of the earlier stages of party building. Whereas the LRCI has laid an international programmatic foundation for its work it has no direct experience of party building beyond the stage of small fighting propaganda groups. We have, of course, the imperishable legacy of the revolutionary Comintern for these later stages, but we cannot as yet enrich and develop this with the fruits of our own experience. The situation is different for the stages of founding and building propaganda groups which participate as much as they can in the class struggle. We have taken as our guide the theory and practice of Trotsky in the 1930s, but we have also drawn lessons from the negative example of his epigones: Moreno, Mandel, Healy, Cliff, Lora and Robertson. At the same time we must critically draw on more than a decade of our own experience, its successes and its failures.

1.2 The LRCI has always understood the centrality of programme and the necessity of fighting for this programme in the struggles of the working class and its allies. But programme itself can become a useless fetish if it is not related to the construction of a revolutionary combat organisation. Party building is a highly concrete task. It is an art which cannot be mastered apart from practice, but an art that must be guided by scientific principles. We must try to understand and systematise these principles. A revolutionary party cannot be improvised. The Bolshevik party arose out of three Russian revolutions. It experienced the general rehearsal of 1905 and the February 1917 revolution, tempering itself and welding itself to the masses. The revolutionary party can only be called such if, before the revolution, it has been able to understand the laws that determine the evolution of society and its role in that evolution.

1.3 The different stages of party building merely combine in differing proportions the elements of propaganda, agitation and organisation. Moreover, none of these stages is a watertight compartment. Tasks which properly predominate in a later stage cannot be subordinated at all times during the earlier stages. Conditions of heightened class struggle or revolutionary events may imperatively demand that for a whole period even an initial nucleus of cadres should throw itself totally into the mass struggle. But in such circumstances the organi-

sation must not lose sight of the real objective relationship of forces which may require it to return to a propaganda circle existence once the situation passes.

1.4 But if such advances are possible, so too are retreats. A large organisation may be obliged to return to prior stages and repeat the activity proper to them, because of objective pressures (major defeats of the working class) or because of its own tactical mistakes (including splits). Not every revolutionary party will therefore either have to pass through every stage or pass through it only once. When we talk of different stages of party building we must not suppose that they have to be worked through in the correct order with no leaps forward or retreats. Revolutionary or counter-revolutionary situations or prolonged non-revolutionary periods which give rise to rapid growth or collapse, to splits and fusions, in reformist, centrist and revolutionary organisations mean that there can be no *evolutionary* course for building a revolutionary party. Nevertheless, each stage does have its own general features, its own special type of publication and activity.

2 Essential Features of the Leninist Party

2.1 At every stage of its construction certain fundamental principles of the Leninist Party are applicable. Foremost is the primacy of the programme as the defining feature of the organisation—"programme first". On the basis of the programme, the members are able to measure the revolutionary consistency of the leadership. On the basis of the programme the party educates its cadres and trains them to be principled leaders of the struggles of the working class and the oppressed. The programme is a route map which charts the essential landmarks on the road to working class power. It is a scientific summation of the lessons drawn from the essential features of capitalist society in its major forms, the lessons drawn from the history of victories and defeats in the workers epoch long fight to overthrow imperialism. It is a strategy for winning the class struggle through the use of a series of inter-related tactics.

2.2 Through acceptance of this programme members are recruited into the party. To be a party member there are three requirements, as the Bolsheviks insisted: agreement with the party programme, the party statutes and its general line; disciplined activity in a branch or cell, and payment of a regular sum to the party treasury.

There should be a period prior to full membership of training, education and selection. Comrades who wish to join the party should usually pass through periods as a supporter and as a candidate member (with all rights except the right to a decisive vote). The criteria for selection will vary in different countries and conditions, in legal or illegal conditions, during periods of defeat or of mass upheaval. But when selecting comrades we should place great emphasis on criteria such as loyalty, dedication, honesty and understanding of the party's main positions. The proletarian members, especially those from oppressed strata like women, blacks and immigrants should have a shorter period of testing and a different education and training than members from a petit-bourgeois background. Nevertheless, the party must not tolerate any indiscipline or conceit, even from the most prominent worker leader. We should try to promote an atmosphere and environment in the party that make it easy to integrate comrades from these sectors. Inside the organisation there must be no discrimination between comrades of different classes, sexes, nations or races. Everyone must be treated equally. Everyone is a comrade.

2.3 On the basis of this fight for the programme within living struggles, the party is able to develop and enrich its own programme. The revolutionary programme is not a Dead Sea scroll. It is a living thing, constantly being tested and corrected, as Trotsky put it, in the light of experience, the supreme criterion of human wisdom. Only if it is put to this test will its correctness be proved or its errors remedied. The experience of the Bolsheviks after the February revolution demonstrates the centrality of this understanding of programme, the party programmatically re-arming itself through testing and correcting its old formulae in the heat of revolutionary struggle. Struggle without a revolutionary programme will either lead to defeat or will degenerate into an accommodation with the old order, no matter how militant the struggle begins. But a programme that is not constantly developed on the basis of struggle will degenerate into a mere catechism. By translating this world programme into national, local, sectoral and conjunctural action programmes, the party seeks to win the masses. In short, it seeks at every stage to fight for its programme in the working class movement. The form in which this fight takes place must, however, vary according to the size of the organisation, its ideological tasks and the state of the class struggle. But in the imperialist epoch such a perspective must be part of the make-up of every organisation which intends to go beyond revolutionary thought into revolutionary action.

2.4 The Leninist-Trotskyist party must not only be internationalist in its organisation and its programme. Its cadres must be active internationalists, combating and uprooting the national prejudices and chauvinism inherited from capitalist society. In the imperialist epoch this means it must educate all its members to see their "national" work and struggles from the perspective of the world revolution. In the imperialist countries this means communists must strive to assimilate the viewpoint of the workers and oppressed masses of the semi-colonial world and of the degenerated workers' states and to

regard their "own" imperialist fatherland as the main enemy. It means championing the struggles of these workers against imperialism and fighting to win solidarity with them from the workers of the imperialist metropolis. Likewise in the semi-colonial world it is the internationalist's duty to ensure that the justified hatred of imperialism, and indeed of its social chauvinist "labour lieutenants" in the imperialist countries, does not lead to a lack of understanding of, and solidarity with, workers' struggles in the imperialist countries.

2.5 Internationalism cannot take firm root and stand the pressures of wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions without strong international fraternal links and ultimately a democratic-centralist organisation. This international organisation alone can develop a truly international programme and a world perspective. It must, by internal education, debate and by the circulation of its cadres between countries, reach a situation where all of its cadres feel themselves first as members of the International and then, flowing from this, as members of one of its national sections.

2.6 The essential organisational principle which enables the party to carry out all aspects of its work is democratic centralism. Centralism means that the party can act with a single will, with military precision wherever and whenever battle is joined. Without such discipline no cadre or organisation has the right to call itself Bolshevik. Yet this discipline is not blind, unthinking or mechanical. Centralism is not a matter of a one-way traffic of orders from the centre outwards. Each local cell passes back not only information but also its own opinion and analysis. The leadership is thus kept in touch with the fronts of struggle, with the views and moods of the vanguard and the masses. At the same time, by subordinating themselves to the broader and more general outlook of the national and international centre, cadres can overcome parochial and national prejudices.

2.7 Whilst centralisation is vital to defeat the power of the bourgeois state, the revolutionary party cannot copy the type of discipline of a bourgeois army. Blind obedience does not train revolutionaries. It can breed bureaucrats as Stalinism did for fifty years, by enforcing the atomisation of cadres and by prostrating the rank and file before an all-powerful and self-perpetuating clique or a "leader". It thus brought discredit on the Leninist party, identifying democratic centralism with bureaucratic despotism. Against this we counterpose the fullest measures of proletarian democracy. The leadership must be elected by and answerable to the membership. This must happen regularly, after a period of the fullest discussion, in an assembly of the members or their delegates where both individuals and groupings are free to criticise the outgoing leadership. The leadership itself must be built in each section and internationally on the basis of accountability and inclusiveness. Leaderships are not clubs for the politically wise, they are instruments of the revolutionary class struggle. As such they are based on the principle of inclusiveness. Members with a widely differing range of talents and experiences need to be included in the leadership so that it is able to incorporate organisers, agitators, theoreticians

cians, writers, active workers and the oppressed, including the youth.

2.8 There must also be discipline *within* all leading committees. Whilst all members of them have a right and a duty to take issues on which they find themselves in a minority to a higher body, this must itself be accompanied by the loyal carrying out of the existing decision so that the party's action is not disrupted. To lose a vote, to be in a minority, is not the greatest of all evils. Tomorrow may prove in practice that the minority was correct. Loyal arguing even an incorrect position may help the party to improve a correct but one-sided position. The absolute condition for the party to correct its own mistakes is loyal criticism.

2.9 All leaders and all members have a right to appeal to the membership at large, especially during a pre-conference period and to form factions or tendencies if they think it necessary to do so. When such temporary internal groupings are formed on a clear platform, it is fundamental that the majority allows the widest democracy and free access to discussion in the branches and the internal bulletin. Nobody should be repressed, subjected to censorship or penalised for expressing these differences. The minorities must in return behave loyally to the organisation, operate entirely within its discipline, and should not plot together with the enemies of the party. Only thus can there be a sound and healthy discussion. However, as Trotsky said, factions are a "necessary evil"—they are not, as some of his epigones such as the USFI believe, a sign of the political health of an organisation.

2.10 Democracy and centralism do not exist in a fixed proportion to one another regardless of time or local conditions. At a time of pre-conference/congress discussion, democracy asserts itself over centralism to facilitate the fullest discussion. Contradictions must be freely expressed in order to be resolved. After a congress, and where combat and manoeuvre are called for, centralised discipline asserts itself. Under conditions of legality the party should produce bulletins for the members to promote education and internal debate. One type of bulletin should be strictly internal for expressing freely all inner party disputes. The members should not discuss internal problems of the group with non-members. In a separate type of bulletin, it is possible to reproduce articles that are not (yet) the line of the organisation, research articles and contributions from supporters or periphery. In certain circumstances it is possible to open the party's public press to inner party debates. This would normally be useful in times of relative stability when the party is not under strong attack from the state or repressed by enemy forces within the workers' movement. It could even be important in difficult circumstances like those which existed before the Bolsheviks' April 1917 conference when this was the only way of avoiding a split in the party and was also a means of mobilising the direct pressure of the party rank and file against the conservatism of the "old Bolsheviks". When a party significantly increases its forces it is often inevitable that some of its internal disputes will filter out. In such circumstances it would be better to conduct a loyal and healthy public

debate on the issues concerned. The party, however, is not a permanent discussion club. Especially in the intensified combat conditions caused by illegality, many of the forms of democracy are either impossible or very attenuated. It is here that the spirit of democratic centralism plays its most vital role—what Lenin called a "complete comradesly mutual confidence amongst revolutionaries", what we call loyalty. This is a solidaristic, collective, proletarian spirit based on the attitude "how can the party go forward?" It is in total contrast to the individual self-aggrandising, competitive attitude—in short, the petit-bourgeois spirit. To develop this loyalty and trust amongst comrades it is vital to fight against any cliquism, subjectivism and personal intrigues within the party. Loyalty can never be built on cynical diplomacy or paternalism by leaders towards the members. Proletarian loyalty can only be based on a democratic spirit and on a high-level political approach to all problems.

2.11 The worker learns this spirit of collective effort in the working class community, in the workplace, in the trade union. The party recruit of petty-bourgeois origin has to learn it in the workers' movement and in the party itself. However, an artificial "workerism", the cult of supposedly proletarian traits, are no solution to this problem. All too often these are not at all *class* characteristics but national or local, trade union or economic attitudes. Collective spirit requires from the non-proletarian strata that they adopt not only the formal political outlook but also the fighting practice of the working class. It means rejecting the outlook which stems from membership of a privileged class: arrogance towards the toilers and subservience towards the bourgeoisie and its agents. It means rejecting "democratic" public opinion and the moral values of the exploiters. It means sharing the conditions of struggle of the working class without assuming the right to command. The clearest test of this rallying to the camp of the working class is making disciplined proletarian politics the centre and purpose of one's life, subordinating all professional and personal interests to it.

2.12 As Lenin said in "What is to be Done", for the worker militant to become a professional revolutionary means transcending the outlook of the "trade union secretary" (or even the shop steward) and becoming a "tribune of the people". It means transcending the notion of the class struggle as primarily an economic struggle over wages and conditions, it means overcoming local and national restrictions and developing the skills of the revolutionary agitator and propagandist. In mastering these skills the worker clearly faces disadvantages, as compared to the petit bourgeois or intellectual. The revolutionary organisation, at whatever stage it is at, must recognise this and allocate special resources to help the revolutionary worker overcome the problems inherited from a lack of a lengthy formal education, the problems caused by having to sustain a family on a low wage, the problems of having to work shifts, and the problems of having to operate daily in a class whose cultural level is deliberately kept low by the capitalists. The value of the revolutionary worker to the organisation, even at the very earliest stage of its development, is that he or she

provides the organisation with a living link to the masses. Moreover, the revolutionary worker possesses advantages over the petit bourgeois or intellectual recruit. They are able to understand many of the most sophisticated Marxist concepts through an educational method which combines analysing their *own* exploitation and oppression and the development of their struggles against them.

2.13 Lenin insists that the party must be made up "chiefly of persons engaged in revolutionary activities as a profession". This does not narrowly mean just full-time functionaries, students and the unemployed; that is, only those who can devote most of their time to political work. Lenin is clear that it must include full-time workers as well. But it does exclude those only willing to spend "spare time" on politics. As soon as the human and material resources allow it, even the smallest of revolutionary groups should create a small full-time apparatus. This must play an important role at leadership level and, with growth, in the regional and local organisations as well. The accumulation of such professional revolutionaries—cadres who devote their whole time to party work—is indissolubly linked to the accumulation of party cadres in general. However, if the leadership becomes the preserve of a full-time bureaucracy this will represent a great danger to the party. Even the most revolutionary officialdom needs to be under the strict control of a leadership that has roots in the working class and other strata and which has a high level of revolutionary consciousness and training.

2.14 The entire activity of the party must result in the development of cadres. It must start from the unity of theory and practice but this unity is not given, it has to be fought for. Without theory and analysis, practice is short sighted, sacrificing tomorrow's tasks and gains to the ephemeral successes of today. Isolated from practice, theory rapidly turns into Byzantine dogmatism or impotent scepticism. The unity of theory with practice must infuse all areas of the party's work. Practical tasks must be analysed and given a perspective. Serious difficulties, inconsistencies and problems that arise during their implementation must be referred to theoretical analysis. As a method, this process must be familiar to the youngest party cadre. No absolute division into thinkers and doers must be allowed to fragment the party into one-sided interest groups. Any necessary division of labour must be kept within certain bounds, both for individuals and for collective bodies. Thus a leading committee must be "balanced", possessing individuals who have strengths and weaknesses that are mutually compensating.

2.15 The democratic internal life and debate of the party must itself be a permanent educator. For this reason internal disputes must be so conducted as to educate the membership. Demagogy, that is, arousing prejudices, utilising ignorance, spreading confusion, or dragging in extraneous issues, has the opposite effect. It de-cadreises, it breaks down loyalty, trust and ultimately disciplined effectiveness in action. The antidote to demagogy is education and training. Education must include familiarisation with the method and doctrine of classical Marxism. It must base itself on understanding dialectics

and historical materialism, Marxist political economy, the forms of the class struggle and the tactics and strategy summed up in our programme and its predecessors. On this basis further areas of knowledge must be built up, allowing for comrades to specialise in the differing spheres of agitation, propaganda or theoretical work. Regular educationals for individuals, groups or special schools are essential to raise the educational/cultural level of the party's cadres. Training cadres in the skills of writing, editing and printing is essential, as are the skills necessary for agitation and propaganda (e.g. public speaking). This training needs to overlap with practice in the form of the apprenticeship of inexperienced cadres with more experienced ones. Cadre training has a necessary craft or skill learning component, learning by observation and copying techniques. But cadres are not simply writers or interveners in discussion meetings. They are potential leaders in the class struggle. As such they must seek to establish or maintain their roots and activity within the working class. To achieve this end all of the above skills need to be complemented by training cadres within the labour movement. Learning how to relate to the struggles of the masses, to work within the mass organisations without appearing as an "outsider", learning how to combine unflinching commitment to revolutionary principles with practical flexibility inside the mass organisation—all constitute vital skills for the revolutionary cadre.

2.16 Cadre training and education has a particularly important role for the socially oppressed, those facing a specific discrimination as well as for worker comrades. Poor access to education and employment, lower incomes, lack of time due to socially imposed roles, attitudes which devalue the skill and abilities of these groups, can all form barriers to participation in the party. Yet comrades who face such barriers are vital to the party. They can promote the process whereby the programme of the party is informed by the experience of the oppressed. The party should positively discriminate in the allocation of resources to the cadreisation of such comrades and in this way promote the development of skills and confidence necessary for the members of the socially oppressed groups to participate fully in the organisation. The party must not allow cadre from oppressed groups to be ghettoised or restricted to tasks and activities which fit in with their socially stereotyped roles. All comrades should be educated and developed so that they can contribute to all areas of the party's work. The party should recognise that leading bodies at all levels need to incorporate their skills and experience. The most experienced comrades should demonstrate genuine modesty, recognising that they too can learn much from all the comrades. A new recruit coming to the party from the poorest sectors of the working class and the oppressed masses, even one who was illiterate, could from their own experiences teach a tremendous amount to any sensible leader.

2.17 But even such "positive discrimination" in the conscious development of comrades from socially oppressed groups will not—on its own—overcome the problems these comrades face. Under the conditions of class society it is impossible for even the most developed comrades

to rid themselves entirely of inherited prejudices and discriminatory habits and attitudes. A permanent fight needs to be waged against these obstacles to full involvement, not only in society at large, but also within the party itself. Giving the right to hold caucuses to comrades from the oppressed groups is one means to achieve this. Caucuses, which developed in the North American left, are meetings open to all the party members of the oppressed or discriminated-against group concerned and can be convened by individuals who feel that they are suffering from such oppressive behaviour or systematic discrimination and who seek to find the best means to address and solve these problems. Caucuses should have no right of veto on decisions within the party. This would simply remove from the majority the duty to discuss and decide on an answer to the problems. The important point is to convince comrades guilty of discriminatory practices of their errors, rather than seek to impose decisions on the whole membership.

2.18 Every healthy organisation has to practice criticism and self-criticism, whether of individuals or collective bodies. No party, leading committee or member could possibly be perfect or unerring. All of them, in the thick of the class struggle, receive different pressures and have to confront new phenomena. Every time they do this they are likely to make a series of mistakes. It is no declaration of weakness or stupidity to admit one's mistakes and to try to overcome them. The organisation has always to try to critically assimilate the experience of its own class, its leadership and its membership. It is thus indispensable to regularly make in-depth, self-critical balance sheets of the work of each cell, fraction or leading body of a national section or of the international organisation. We are not Stalinists who use "self-criticism" as a means of punishing individuals by forcing them to humiliate themselves. The best comrade is not the one who "makes no mistakes" (in fact, one who simply fails to recognise them). Quite the opposite. The best comrade is the one who sets a good example by openly recognising their mistakes, discussing the lessons of them and tries hard to overcome them. The organisation or the militant that fails to criticise their own mistakes is condemned to repeat them in an even more damaging manner in the future.

2.19 The party must be made up of professional revolutionaries as Lenin wanted. This means that it must be composed of cadres that devote their entire lives to revolutionary activity as their central aim. Only a minority of them, however, could or should be paid officials of the party. The size of this full-time apparatus will depend on the political conditions obtaining at any given period. A majority of the party's members must be militants that are involved in paid work, in production, which not only puts them in daily contact with workers but also enables them to generate the funds without which the party's activity would be impossible. It is very important to try to involve cadres from the working class and the oppressed strata at all leadership levels. They will probably have less culture and formal education than petit-bourgeois intellectuals but they will transmit to the party what is going on in the class or amongst the oppressed and will in return better transmit our line to

these sectors. This involvement will in its turn generate an improvement of our line, influence and organisation. We reject the idea of removing all or a majority of worker-leaders from their workplaces in order to dedicate them to full-time party activity. This would adversely affect our links with the class and damage the comrades concerned.

2.20 Every Bolshevnik organisation must be capable of carrying out its work in conditions of illegality and consequently must master the necessary conspiratorial techniques. It must learn to combine open and clandestine work. It must prepare itself to resist repression not only from the state but also from the fascists or from the bureaucratic agents of the bourgeoisie within the workers' mass organisations. In all conditions, no matter how democratic the country, it is essential to have some sort of illegal apparatus, security system, codes etc. Any comrade suffering repression from the state or the employers should be defended by the organisation. It is vital that comrades imprisoned or sacked for party work should be given material assistance and the whole national and international organisation should rally to the support of such class war prisoners. When a number of cadres are imprisoned it is important to build resistance cells within the prisons.

2.21 As Lenin said, the press should be the collective organiser of the work of the party. It should also be the collective work of the party and the channel through which the party conducts a dialogue with its immediate periphery and with the class at large. All the members should aim to contribute to the press and all comrades should sell it. When selling it the cadres should be able to show that they have a thorough knowledge of its positions and are able to argue for them in public. It is also important that leaders should regularly perform this task. It is important to focus on specific sectors of work, factories or other workplaces, using the sales to establish links with the working class, to convey information to it but at the same time to gather information from it. We should attempt to get even uneducated and hitherto unorganised workers to contribute their ideas to the party press through interviews, through reports of their problems and struggles. Industrial or factory reports should not only denounce abuses but give a concrete orientation to the struggle against them. In different periods, even during the stage of building a fighting propaganda group it may be necessary to have two types of press, one more agitational, periodic and popular, the other more theoretical and propagandistic. The latter type could even be produced in common with sections in other countries which speak the same language. Also it is necessary to have special leaflets, broadsheets addressed to specific sections of workers, peasants, shanty-town dwellers. Around such bulletins the party should attempt to create organisations of its periphery.

3 Stages in the Building of the Party

3.1 We generally characterise the stages of party building by the priorities the organisation has to address and

not by its size. Thus a primary cadre nucleus could be larger in numbers than a fighting propaganda group. Nevertheless, it remains a primary cadre nucleus if its central priority remains the reformulation of fundamental principles. Only by fulfilling these ideological tasks can it go on to develop a specific collective practice.

3.2 However, revolutionaries, at whatever stage of party building they find themselves in, are guided by the need to find a political terrain to operate on. This may take the form of entry into a larger organisation, entry into a significant campaign, involvement in united fronts, concentration on particular unions or parties etc. Wherever the best focus for revolutionary work is, revolutionaries need to be there. The reason for this is that without an audience for revolutionary ideas the tiny group will be condemned to stagnation and split, to demoralisation and even the abandonment of revolutionary struggle. Without an audience for our ideas, our ideas will become desiccated. Finding an audience implies some level of external work, even for the tiniest revolutionary group. The earliest stage of party-building is that of the initial accumulation of cadre; the assembling of a team whose main task is to write, publish and distribute propaganda. The elements of democratic centralism needed at this stage are collective work and discussion, the carrying out of majority decisions. At this stage, there is unlikely to be much distinction between a "leadership" and a "membership". An initial nucleus must be built of co-thinkers, theorists and polemicists and be capable of creating a distinct ideological trend in combat with opportunist and sectarian tendencies. Theoretical work and propaganda for Marxism and its programme are an integral part of the class struggle. To compare it negatively with "practical work", to agitation, to trade union or immediate political mass struggle is a sure sign of philistinism and opportunism. This work is essential at all stages of party building. But during the earliest stages it has a pre-eminent role as the party-building nucleus sets out to create its own national and international programme. It is also vital during all major turning points of the class struggle when it becomes essential to re-assess and re-evaluate the period and its tasks. But just as comparing theoretical work and propaganda negatively to "practical work" reveals philistinism, disdain for practical work and an absolute counterposition of theory and propaganda to practical activity in the class struggle betoken a passive, sectarian spirit. It reveals a reluctance to get involved with the "day to day" struggle; underlying that reluctance is disdain and a lack of revolutionary will.

3.3 The key targets for recruitment by a tiny group whose tasks are necessarily heavily oriented to propaganda, are cadres—pre-existing or potential. Such cadres may be found in a variety of locations depending on the nature of the class struggle and the socialist movement in a particular country. Experienced working class militants, critically thinking members of centrist organisations, militant youth propelled into their first struggle and acquiring an appetite for a revolutionary world view, left reformist or Stalinist workers educated by their parent organisations but dissatisfied with their pro-capitalist actions, revolutionary nationalists disillusioned

with the betrayal of their hopes by their petit bourgeois or bourgeois leaders, students and intellectuals whose access to intellectual life is choked by a dictatorship—all of these provide potential recruits for the small nucleus. But from whatever quarter recruits are made the task of the nucleus is turn these recruits into rounded cadre, even at the expense of being obliged to limit the scope for agitational work of the workers and youth it recruits or disappointing the literary ambitions of the petit bourgeois or intellectual recruits who are not yet "party intellectuals" and have a proprietorial attitude to their literary work and believe that they alone possess all the answers. All must become cadre capable of carrying out some aspect of the organisation's propaganda work

3.4 The key task is to produce regular theory and propaganda. The essential literary weapons of a primary cadre nucleus striving to establish itself are a theoretical journal or review, or a regular series of in-depth pamphlets or even books which not only defend the revolutionary traditions of Marxism against the Stalinists, social democrats and centrists but are capable of innovation and developing theory. The nucleus must address the principle questions of the national and international class struggle. Even in the context of a grouping which has already made important conquests at the level of re-elaborating the programme, each new national section has the responsibility, in collaboration with its international co-thinkers, to tackle the theoretical aspect of the class struggle in their own country, leading to the production of an action programme. Clearly, this does not mean that the small nucleus is freed from the obligation of engaging in practical work. It does mean that the practical work which is undertaken is directed towards assisting the fulfilment of these essential propaganda tasks and as such is temporarily subordinated to them, except in circumstances where the character of a practical intervention, in a mass revolutionary struggle for example, poses the possibility of the rapid recruitment of cadres.

3.5 If the creation of a new revolutionary nucleus occurs through the development of a faction or tendency within a centrist and or a reformist organisation, then it is likely that the starting point will be criticism of the latter's tactics and method, developing into a full critique of the organisations "programme". Factional struggle leading to a substantial split of a number of cadre is the optimum starting point for the creation of a new organisation.

3.6 The primary cadre nucleus, however small, must concentrate its polemical fire not only on the mass misleaders of the workers' movement. It must devote special attention to the centrist would-be leaders, even if some of the centrist organisations are quite marginal to the masses and their struggles, if they represent a serious obstacle to the initial nucleus' development into an active propaganda group. For it may well be that from these rival grouplets, or from strata which know the ideas of these groups, will come the first recruits that will bring about the transformation of the primary nucleus into a fighting propaganda group.

3.7 The next stage, that of a *fighting propaganda group* continues many of the tasks of the preceding stage but it puts as central to its tasks the carrying out of widespread and systematic propaganda for these ideas. It concentrates on applying them to a range of key issues. It is concerned not only with fighting to create a programme but with fighting to win adherents to it. For most of its cadres their tasks are not theoretical work but propaganda work. Disseminating and explaining a propaganda group's positions occupies more time than creating them.

3.8 A regular publication is essential to a fighting propaganda group. This should appear on at least a monthly or bi-monthly basis. The sales of the publication in various spheres of activity and propaganda are the means of winning members. The publication must be centred on and subordinate to the central tasks of a fighting propaganda group. The group must not be tempted backwards into purely theoretical tasks or forwards into the illusion of producing a mass popular paper. The publication should be the servant of the group's activities. For a sizeable fighting propaganda group a theoretical journal must take up the tasks of programmatic elaboration and ideological combat. Mass popular agitation, when needed, should usually appear in the form of leaflets or broadsheets. The paper is before all else an instrument of propaganda, of patiently explaining our ideas to an (unfortunately) small number of people.

3.9 At this stage, the membership must be able to argue and to educate, to polemicise against other groups, to conduct patient explanatory work for the group's politics and to win cadres for the group. A central goal for the conducting of propaganda is the building of the groups' own education or discussion circles into which contacts and sympathisers are drawn and out of which members are recruited. If this is not possible then the principle means will have to remain intervention into the larger centrist (and even reformist) groups' or parties' public meetings and activities. The propaganda group's objective is not only individual recruitment but a process of winning whole groups, generating opposition factions within centrist or sectarian groups leading to splits of these groups and fusion with the revolutionary organisation. Where there is a tradition of significant centrist organisations, that will generally mean that the first recruits will in all likelihood be won from their ranks. Elsewhere other fields for recruitment must be found and prioritised.

3.10 The fighting propaganda group also has to involve itself in the key and central struggles of the working class. In normal circumstances a fighting propaganda group must recognise that its agitation and focused propaganda in everyday struggles is primarily of an exemplary character; that is, an example of how it would act everywhere if it had greater support. In exceptional circumstances, in favourable local conditions, it may be possible to compete for leadership. The group must provide teams to support worker militants' exemplary work. This method has the added benefit of allowing non-proletarian members to be steeped in proletarian life and struggles. These steps are necessary precisely because of the importance of making the young fighting propaganda

group more proletarian and preparing for a further stage when it can qualitatively and quantitatively increase its proletarian composition, its weight and its influence in the class. The organisation's objective in these struggles is to root its cadre in the experience and methods of the living class struggle, to develop its collective strategy through learning from the working class (and other oppressed strata) and to recruit the advanced militant elements to the fighting propaganda group. More regular and systematic areas of work must be organised by fractions where possible—trade union work, work in reformist parties, work in popular committees. The propaganda group should never follow the opportunist method of taking control of these organisations' apparatus behind the back of the masses and then plundering its resources for party purposes as the Stalinists and the centrists have often done.

3.11 Where the fighting propaganda group does not have worker cadres within the mass organisations involved in struggle, it is forced to intervene "from outside" by promoting solidarity actions with the struggle, by issuing leaflets. But this is a weakness; once a substantial number of cadres has been assembled and trained, a "turn" must be made to more agitation, to work in and around the mass organisations. At this stage the fighting propaganda group may seek to place non-industrial workers into industries that are important for the class struggle. This is likely to be most fruitful when the organisation is also directly recruiting a number of industrial workers. At this stage the aim will be to create propaganda circles that can attract substantial numbers of workers or better still be centred on workplaces. The revolutionary tendency must grasp the specific difficulties faced in recruiting, holding, educating and training cadre, where poverty, long hours of work, and difficult living conditions exist. These difficulties weigh particularly heavily in the early stage of transition from an ideological current of two, three or so comrades into a fighting propaganda group of 10-20 or more. Recruits with excellent credentials as thinkers, fighters and organisers who in a wealthier country could be stable cadres, even leading cadres, are often driven out of political activity by economic need, and family crises related to economic need.

3.12 To direct a larger group with more diverse tasks, a more highly structured leadership system is needed. A smaller Political Committee/Bureau (PC/B) will always be needed initially to supervise not only day to day activity but also publications. The creation of a separate editorial board involves a division of labour which is only desirable at a later stage. When such a body is created, it must be politically subordinated to the leadership. But a small political executive will no longer be sufficient. The group will also need a larger and sovereign leadership body, that is, a National or Central Committee. This should aim at being inclusive of the different areas and types of the group's work. When electing this body the group should also try to represent the different areas and regions where the group has cells or branches. It needs to select its members from amongst the group's best journalists, full-timers, theoreticians, trade union militants, activists amongst the oppressed, as well as ensuring a

proper representation for women, youth, and national or racial minorities.

3.13 To "escape" from the limits of the fighting propaganda group into a *small cadre party stage* more than organic piecemeal individual recruitment is needed. For this to occur one or more of a number of qualitative leaps must be effected. One of these could be the direct qualitative expansion of the fighting propaganda group in a revolutionary situation where long term-systematic propaganda and cadre selection and training enables it to link up with the radicalised masses who take up its slogans support its press and whose activists are consequently attracted in large numbers to its ranks. Thus the organisation can become well known and a significant point of reference in the workers' movement. Another transition is through fusion with a much larger leftward moving centrist organisation and its transformation into a revolutionary vanguard party, or a favourable split of revolutionary elements from a left reformist or centrist party resulting in a quantitative/qualitative leap. For this to take place various types of entry tactic into left parties may be necessary. These could include total entry into a reformist or centrist organisation, aiming at the formation of a large "revolutionary" fraction or tendency leading to eventual expulsion. Other united front tactics could help the transition from fighting propaganda group to cadre party, including the creation of a sizeable revolutionary tendency in the trade unions, peasant, student or urban poor organisations, or in movements of the oppressed in which the fighting propaganda group gains the leadership and "fuses" with or recruits a whole layer of its most active militants.

3.14 The small cadre party—if it is worthy of the name—must embrace within its ranks at least a representative cross section of the vanguard of the class. These will be drawn from rank and file trade union representatives, the leaders of the community organisations, prominent representatives of the united fronts of struggle. In such a party the work should be concentrated on the working class. Proletarianisation of the ranks and of the leadership is critical. After around a decade of building the SWP (USA), after it had reached the size of a small cadre party able to intervene in mass struggles and even to win leadership in them (Minneapolis), Trotsky proposed that it should overcome the pressure of petit bourgeois intellectual dilettantism within its ranks. He proposed that each non-worker should be obliged to win a worker for the party in a certain number of months, and if they did not succeed should be reduced to the status of a sympathiser.

3.15 The revolutionary organisation should pay particular attention to the most concentrated and organised sectors of the industrial proletariat; those who by their economic weight and degree of concentration as a class are the strongest enemies of the capitalists and who constitute the axis of the vanguard of the class. The workers' districts, those around the mines and the big factories, and the towns and cities dominated by them, have always proved to be crucial in the development and radicalisation of the class and of potential recruits for the revolutionary party. The revolutionary organisation

which is serious about proletarianisation must strive to establish close links with the factories, agro-industries, mines and other enterprises. It must build cells in these districts or towns and undertake a daily systematic agitation and propaganda aimed at the workers.

4 International experiences—differences of tradition and terrain

4.1 In the process of creating an international democratic centralist organisation we will have to take into account and transcend national peculiarities. The breaks in the revolutionary tradition, the latest and longest lasting for thirty years or so, have exacerbated the problem. To this must be added specific national problems. The viewpoint of a communist coming from an imperialist country dominated by unbroken decades or centuries of legality and largely trade unionist "class struggle" will be different to that of a communist even from another imperialist country which has experienced fascism, Stalinism, illegality and severe repression. National labour movements dominated by social democracy or Stalinism or even by a bourgeois "liberal" party like the US Democrats will generate different kinds of bias. This is even truer for those semi-colonies where mass unemployment and poverty is the norm, where health and education services are scanty, dictate differing relations between the intelligentsia and the working class between men and women. So too will it be in the Stalinist states still based on the old repressive bureaucratic plan or where they now face liberal marketising regimes attacking the conditions and gains of the masses or fomenting inter-ethnic conflicts. Of course, these differences also exist between semi-colonies or degenerate workers' states varying with the level of economic development, religious and cultural background, the history of progressive struggles by the working class, peasantry and urban petty-bourgeois. In addition, the main enemies within the mass movement could be completely different (e.g. large social democratic parties, monolithic Stalinist regimes, nationalist or religious multi-class movements).

4.2 The task of an international revolutionary organisation is to recognise these differences, locate and assimilate what is valuable and progressive in each and every national working class and revolutionary tradition. But at the same time it must criticise and reject what is harmful and reactionary. Our aim is to create, or rather to recreate, a truly international communist culture and global practice. The lead in this must be taken by the international central bodies (a frequently meeting International Secretariat (IS) and a regularly meeting International Executive Committee (IEC) which must see this fusing process as just as vital a part of their work as the programmatic work. A strong representation of the national sections is vital not only at the congress and on the IEC but also, as far as is possible, on the IS. To this end the IS, whilst it is bound to be resident in one country, must seek to regularly draw into its work leading comrades from other sections for whole periods. In addition IS members must visit the sections regularly, staying long enough to get a real experience of the condi-

tions of work, the abilities and needs of the cadres. Furthermore, revolutionaries should imitate the healthy tradition of the early Comintern whereby no section, not even the multi-million membered Bolsheviks, tried to dominate the international, ensuring that no section provided more than 30% of IEC members.

4.3 The sharing of international experience should not be restricted to the international leadership. It should extend to the national leaderships and where possible the membership too. Interchange of comrades, sometimes for extended periods, can help overcome language difficulties and forge living bonds of comradeship between all the sections. Organisations at different stages of party building can absorb invaluable lessons from the history and experience of others. By working in other sections, their cadres can learn lessons that they would have to wait years to learn on their own national terrain.

4.4 The cadres of an international tendency in different countries, widely scattered around the world and speaking and reading different languages cannot be left to absorb knowledge of the work of the other sections by accident. Regular international internal bulletins, translation of important articles and reports, reading and monitoring of all the sections' press, special discussions in every cell and branch and periodic national schools are all needed to keep up a high international cadre level

4.5 The combined efforts of the international tendency can modify and shorten the early stages of party building for those who join later. Firstly, once an international programme and tendency exists, no new tiny grouping has to surmount the theoretical/programmatic tasks alone. If another section is in existence that uses the same language then a tiny initial nucleus does not have to put all their efforts into publication of the whole range of material that an isolated group would have to do. Even a group that does have a heavy burden of translation in order to use the key documents of an international tendency has the advantage of a programmatic starting point. In addition smaller groupings can gain the benefit of a model on which to base cadre training and leadership structures.

4.6 Poverty puts a severe limit on the apparatus for the production of publications, for administration and for travel. This can be and should be overcome by a substantial re-distribution of resources within the international tendency from the larger groups in the wealthier (imperialist) countries to those groups in the poorer semi-colonial countries. In a period of mass class struggles and major opportunities it will be vital for such sections to receive all sorts of contributions, both material and political. This could help lead to a substantial growth in the membership and impact of the organisation. There are, of course, political limits to this aid which include regard for the necessary self-respect and self-reliance of comrades in these countries who do not wish to duplicate the "dependency" of their bourgeoisie. Moreover, however internationalist the spirit of giver and recipient, even in the healthiest organisation the recipients may come to feel politically pressured by total dependence. In unhealthy organisations (including in degenerate "Trotsky-

ist" ones) this has been used to undermine political opposition, to split and to manipulate. This must not happen in our ranks. To be in receipt of large sums from abroad may be used by political opponents (e.g. Lora) to slander the sections. Therefore financial support has to be related to overcoming truly major obstacles.

4.7 The Stalinists and all too many of the "Trotskyist", i.e. centrist, Internationals are grouped around a dominant "mother section" that concentrates in their hands all the central powers of the international and is its permanent centre. The international becomes a mere collection of satellites around this mother section, sometimes subordinated to the supreme leader of this section, his views and ambitions, imitating his methods and even his mannerisms. Sometimes these leading sections try to re-enforce and justify their role by claiming that they already are or are about to become the centre of the world revolution, that they are about to become a mass workers party or even that they are on the eve of seizing state power. (Nahuel Moreno in Argentina, Guillermo Lora in Bolivia and Gerry Healy in Britain). Whilst isolated national Trotskyism is a terrible deformation, this "colonial Trotskyism" is even worse because it seeks to dominate, corrupt and manipulate other sections. Every healthy revolutionary international should try to have a leadership that is as international as possible in its composition, its practice, the location of its meetings and the maintaining a clear distinction of its international centre from the apparatus of the largest national section.

4.8 In an international tendency security and the tasks of legal and illegal work become a current task of every section and of the international centre. The sections in countries enjoying stable and wide-reaching legality must use this for the international tendency as a whole. It must host conferences and meetings, publish materials, undertake research, theoretical and literary work that can draw on the bourgeoisie's accumulated resources (libraries etc.). At the same time they must learn the techniques of illegal/conspiratorial work, firstly in order to protect comrades in countries where democratic freedoms are non-existent or weak and unenforceable. A rediscovery of Bolshevik/Leninist practice with regard to the combination of legal and illegal work is one of the vital tasks of an international tendency. This must be based on a fraternal critique of inherited traditions—habits and methods carried over from the various centrist traditions from which the groupings came.

4.9 If an international tendency is to overcome the degenerate Fourth International's legacy of federalism it needs not only an international leadership which has the trust and confidence of the sections, an international programme, perspectives and tactical resolutions to guide it. It must also lead the whole tendency in common actions, common campaigns, on a world scale. Initially such work will be modest. It must always be realistic. It must not slip into bombastic appeals or phony campaigns and conferences that mobilise nobody but a few dupes who will be speedily undeceived by the evident lack of any outcome or results. The USFI, Lambertists and Morenoites are past masters of this method of bluff. Exposure is usually not long in coming. But events like

important wars, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary events or crises in the reformist or centrist world currents all present opportunities for an organised international intervention. Thus campaigns in all the sections' countries can be launched to save class struggle prisoners, to fight for solidarity strikes and boycotts. Delegations can be sent to international events, rallies and conferences. Where the tendency has the strength it may even initiate such events. Above all it is the task of the international leadership and the sections working together to make propaganda in as many languages as possible for our programme and organisations and against our centrist/reformist opponents.

4.10 The task of the international tendency is to coordinate and harmonise the growth of the international sections. If one or more sections is advancing rapidly and scoring important successes it is vital for all sections to learn the lessons of this and apply them. Nor should we scorn using the "prestige" of these successes in other countries, providing we never lie or exaggerate or "compensate" for weakness in one country by a complacent belief that our comrades in country X are strong and growing. Likewise, if a section is weak, stagnant or in a crisis, this is a matter for all the sections and for the international leadership which must intervene to discover the causes and find (if possible) the remedies. This criticism must be honest and undiplomatic but at the same time comradely and constructive. Resistance to criticism on grounds of national pride and prestige either by sections or by the international leadership is anti-Leninist and anti-internationalist.

4.11 With the co-ordinated activities of the tendency as a whole we can send cadres from other sections to help build a new section and help it become a fighting propaganda group. However, both our own experience and that of centrist/sectarian currents suggests that "parachuting" cadres from the outside and calling the subsequent grouping a "national section" is doomed to failure. For a section to be rooted it must have a core of cadres "native" to the country concerned, able to speak and write its language and conversant with its labour movement and class struggle culture. But, on the other hand, a small band of "missionaries" can win cadres or aid the development of a faction inside a centrist organisation. The international leadership has to carefully prioritise and organise such ventures combining an ability to seize openings with more long term planning based on the importance of certain countries (e.g. a major imperialist country or a semi-colonial country rich in struggle and revolutionary experience). Last but not least the whole tendency must ensure that in the process of growth and extension the central co-ordinating and controlling bodies and apparatus remain or become ad-

equate to their increased responsibilities.

4.12 If the objective of the fighting propaganda group in each country is the foundation of a revolutionary party, (perhaps via the stage of a small cadre party of thousands rather than a mass party of tens or hundreds of thousands), then the task of an international fighting propaganda tendency is the foundation of a new "international party of world revolution". There is no preordained size or organic relationship to the proletarian vanguard that can determine when such an international should be founded/declared. A particularly critical international conjuncture (world war, crisis, world revolutionary/pre revolutionary situation) may necessitate the jumping of stages and the "proclamation" of a tendency that is disproportionately weak with regard to the tasks of an international. But in these circumstances the rapidity of events, the focusing of the vanguard fighters' attention on the competing banners (programmes) may make such a "proclamation" justified (just as Lenin wanted to break with Zimmerwald/Kienthal whilst the 1914-18 war was still in progress and as Trotsky founded the FI in 1938 with small forces). But outside of these conditions a protracted struggle for our programme against degenerating centrism may require "a long march" that could involve an independent fighting propaganda international tendency, or entry into centrist or reformist internationals as a revolutionary faction.

5 Conclusion

We recognise that the above theses do not provide all of the answers to the question of how we build mass revolutionary parties. They are provisional and confined to the early stages of party building that the Trotskyist movement has been historically limited to. We recognise that there are whole dimensions to party building, particularly at the stage of mass organisations, that we have not elaborated upon. We are merely drawing a balance sheet of what we believe to be both the positive and negative lessons of the struggle to build a revolutionary international since the time of the Comintern's degeneration in the 1920s. In that sense are these a beginning, a series of markers, rather than a manual on party building.

We are not dogmatists and we recognise that in the practical field of party building we have much to learn, and much to incorporate into our theses. However, a start must be made in order to guide our tendency away from the errors that have led other tendencies to dissolution or degeneration.

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the threat of imperialist intervention

International Secretariat, 21 July 1992

1 The Bosnian capital of Sarajevo has been subjected to a cruel and unjustified siege. Its 300,000 residents are without regular supplies of water, medicine and food. Whole suburbs have been cut off for months without relief. Buildings are pounded day and night by heavy artillery and rockets. Similar attacks on other towns are taking place across the whole republic. The Serb militias, including the fascist Chetniks, armed and backed by the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav army, have seized and are attempting to annex a huge part of Bosnia against the wishes and national rights of the Muslim and Croatian communities who make up 60% of the population. They are attempting to realise the reactionary project of a Greater Serbia by "ethnically cleansing" the areas that prevent the establishment of a large compact area to the west of the republics of Serbia and Montenegro.

2 The Croatian army and paramilitary forces, including the forces of Dobroslav Paraga's fascist HOS militia, are doing the same—though on a smaller scale—against the Serbian communities in Western Herzegovina. Franjo Tudjman's government in Croatia has a parallel project of national aggrandisement at the expense of the Serbian and Muslim inhabitants of the region. It is more than likely that they have a secret agreement to carry out this partition. On the other hand, the Bosnian Muslim leadership under Alija Izetbegovic unleashed the whole war by attempting, with EC and US backing, to impose independence on the Serb minority in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He called a referendum without the support of the Serb community or its leaders, in violation of the Constitution which demands the agreement of all three nationalities on all constitutional changes. The referendum was boycotted by the Serbs. Nevertheless, despite the almost total boycott of the referendum by Bosnia-Herzegovina's 32% Serb population, the government went ahead with declaring independence and was immediately recognised by imperialism. This foolish act, inspired by EC imperialism for its own purposes, gave the Serbian nationalists their pretext to unleash a war to create a "Serbian Republic of Bosnia". Because of the intermixed populations this project could only be realised by driving out large numbers of the Muslim population. They inhabit strategically placed regions which obstruct Serbian communications lines and militarily defensible areas which are seen as "necessary" for the annexation of the whole of northern, eastern and

central Bosnia. Since the war began Izetbegovic and his regime have set out to systematically embroil imperialist forces in the war. He is now calling for massive imperialist military intervention to smash the Serbs.

3 All workers, all socialists, must oppose these reactionary nationalist projects from whichever side they come. The bitter fruits are already there to see: hundreds of thousands of refugees, unknown numbers of dead, horrific killings and pogroms not seen in Yugoslavia since the Second World War. The nationalists have no democratic mandate from the peoples of the region for their policies. Only fear, intimidation and mass murder have enabled them to carry them out. In Belgrade, and in Sarajevo when there was the opportunity, tens, if not hundreds of thousands have demonstrated for peace and for the resignation of the nationalist and Stalinist criminals who unleashed this carnage. The continuation of these leaders' projects can only lead to intensified national oppression, to even worse pogroms, more forced population transfers and a speeded up restoration of capitalism. All this will happen at the expense of the living standards, jobs and social gains of Croat, Serb and Muslim workers alike.

4 The current crisis, with all its attendant human misery, is a direct result of policies pursued by US and European imperialism aimed at the restoration of capitalism in the former Yugoslav republics. Over the past two years the imperialist powers have not had a uniform policy on Yugoslavia. For a whole period the USA, Britain and France promoted a policy of capitalist restoration based upon the maintenance of a Yugoslav Federation. For years they crippled the Yugoslav economy with debt repayments, giving rise to economic crisis, rivalries and national antagonisms. Their aim was to promote the economic collapse of the degenerate workers' state and force the restoration of capitalism. They hoped that the restorationist federal government of Ante Markevich would be able to push through the necessary measures to break state and social ownership of the large scale means of production, speed privatisations and mass redundancies. But they underestimated the fragmentation and weakness of the Titoist bureaucracy which was unable to act as a solid social instrument for this project.

5 The Slovene, Croat and Serb bureaucrats, with nothing to offer the restive masses, and faced in 1987-89 by a mass strike wave, turned to nationalist demagoguery

and calls for secession from the federation or carving a "Historic Croatia" or a Greater Serbia" out of the old federation. This process led to the rise of Milosevic in Serbia and then Tudjman in Croatia. It also led to the emergence of Izetbegovic in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Due to the crisis of working class leadership, the absence of a revolutionary internationalist party ready and able to lead Yugoslavia's workers in a political revolution against the Stalinist-Titoist bureaucrats and against the anti-communist opposition who wanted to restore capitalism, the proletariat was unable to stem the tide of national chauvinism and prevent the slide into reactionary nationalist civil war.

6 The newly strengthened and assertive German imperialism had a different perspective to the US and to its major EC partners. With historic links and aspirations in Slovenia and Croatia, Germany encouraged Croat and Slovene separatism. Surreptitiously and through stealth, they initially armed the Croats, hoping to cut away these economically advanced regions and to bring them into a relationship with the German-led EC as semi-colonies. In contrast, up to June 1991, the US and its British shield-bearer tried hard to preserve the federation and blocked recognition of the seceding republics. So too did French imperialism, fearful of seeing the new German giant flexing its muscles so soon after unification. But the tide of developments was on the side of German strategy. The Serbian Stalinist bureaucracy was not so intransigent and obdurate because it was defending the workers' historic gains but because its survival in Serbia now depended on its espousal of the most extreme Serb nationalist claims and objectives. Milosevic would stand or fall by whether he succeeded in the attempt to seize Serbian control of the enclaves in Croatia and then in Bosnia. This objective clashed with imperialism's plans. Milosevic's obduracy eventually convinced the US-Franco-British bloc that their unitary-state strategy was bankrupt and that there was no alternative to supporting the division of Yugoslavia. Instead they have now adopted the German plan to ensure the completion of the restoration process, first in Slovenia and then in a larger and economically viable Croatia. This means sealing off backward Serbia, where the Stalinist-Titoist bureaucracy still has a total grip on power (though in alliance with monarchist and fascist elements) and awaiting the effects of economic crisis which will eventually bring the downfall of Milosevic. They then hope to get a "democratic" fast-track restorationist regime that will do imperialism's bidding. The Serbs' major crime in the imperialists' eyes is not that of the horrors committed by the Chetnik butchers or the army bombardments. It is their control over the rump of the Federal army, which has enabled them to seize most of the Muslim-dominated buffer zone that the US and EC imperialists hoped to place between Croatia and Serbia.

7 But differences still exist amongst the imperialists about how deeply they should become militarily embroiled in Bosnia. On 10 March, shortly after recognising Bosnian independence the US announced a new policy of "collective engagement", that is, that it would act together with the EC imperialists, using as far as possible

the United Nations to impose the new world order on the Balkans. French imperialism suddenly adopted a forward interventionist stance both diplomatically and even militarily, sending attack helicopters to Sarajevo in the wake of Mitterrand's visit. In contrast, for the moment at least, Britain is less than enthusiastic about a massive military intervention and has claimed that it will take hundreds of thousands, not tens of thousands of troops to carry this out. But these differences over ways and means could be rapidly overcome if US imperialism decides that for the sake of the credibility of the whole "new world order" it is necessary to wield the big stick. In this case the others will fall into line.

8 The United Nations, the European Community, NATO and the USA appear in the disguise of disinterested peacemakers. They are busy casting the Serbs as the sole aggressors. The millionaire owned media has launched a near-racist campaign against the "barbarous Serbs" and their "subhuman" atrocities whilst playing down or ignoring similar atrocities committed by the other nationalist forces. The United Nations, with the European Community and the USA as the driving force, have launched this propaganda war in preparation for a possible military intervention. A meeting of European ministers on 27 June called on the UN to take "all necessary measures" to open Sarajevo airport. The imperialist powers claim that military intervention is aimed solely to bring "humanitarian aid" to the people of Sarajevo. This is a brazen lie! The EC and the USA are not civilised by-standers forced to play the Good Samaritan. Their only pretext for intervention is the suffering of the Bosnian people. The imperialists have to appear as a fire brigade going in to put out the flames of nationalist hatred. Yet it was they who lit these flames. They are the fire-raisers, the arsonists, not the fire-fighters. Their intervention will only spread the conflagration, perhaps to the entire Balkan peninsula. The EC in particular encouraged the rise to power of the "nationalist" Muslim Party in Bosnia, through promises of economic support and recognition of independence, and the arch-reactionary project of cantonisation of the republic along ethnic lines—the Lisbon plan. In a deeply intermixed republic this could only be realised through forced population transfers. It was an open invitation to the Chetniks, the HOS militias and to the Muslim irregulars to begin the ugly process that became known as "ethnic cleansing", that is, acts of terror to drive minorities out of the villages and towns where they and their ancestors had lived for centuries. Innocent Serbian, Croatian and Muslim workers and peasants have been the victims of this plan for the "solution" to the Bosnian question. The main criminals, standing behind the Chetnik, HOS and Muslim militia pogromists are the Carringtons, the Kohls and the Mitterrands.

9 The very idea that the imperialists are acting on altruistic or humanitarian motives is a sick joke. The idea that they are defending the integrity or self-determination of Bosnia-Herzegovina is laughable. Bosnia-Herzegovina was meant to be a buffer zone to cut the Serbs off from the best ports, the economically profitable parts of former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the war aims

of the Serbian leaders—in Serbia proper as well as in Bosnia—are not progressive ones which socialists can support. They are for the creation of a Greater Serbia which will mean the expulsion of the great majority of the Bosnian Muslims or their intensified national oppression, along with that of the Albanians of Kosovo and the Hungarians of the Vojvodina. Moreover, this project would almost certainly lead to a general Balkan conflict drawing in at least Albania and Hungary and possibly Bulgaria and Greece. The Milosevic regime and the Mladic-led army of the “Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina” are pursuing the policy of creating a Greater Serbia based on annexation of territories to which the Serbs have no conceivable democratic national right.

10 The siege of Sarajevo, and the attempt to bombard and starve it into submission against the overwhelming desire of its population, Serb as well as Muslim and Croat, is an utterly reactionary act which we condemn unconditionally. We support the defence of Sarajevo against its capture by Serbian army or irregular forces, just as we support the defence of Serb majority towns or villages against attack by Croat or Muslim militias. We would support the breaking of this siege by the forces of the population of the city including those of the Bosnian armed forces. But at the same time we oppose the intervention of French, Canadian and other forces under the UN banner or any other. The existing force is not in reality there to protect the democratic rights of the citizens of Sarajevo, nor to assure them food and medical supplies. They can do neither except by agreement with the Serbian leaders. They can, however, act as agent-provocateurs to justify a further intervention. They could prove to be the advanced guard of a major military intervention against Serbia which, if it occurs, would alter the nature of the conflict.

11 Up to the present this conflict has retained the character of a reactionary nationalist war on the side of the Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian regimes, their armies and paramilitary forces. *Reactionary*, because all their war aims involve annexation, national oppression and the restoration of capitalism. *Reactionary*, because they set workers against one another and threaten to engulf the entire Balkans in war. *Reactionary*, in that they give the pretext for imperialism to intervene and impose a “new order” based on capitalist exploitation and semi-colonial servitude. However, any episodic clashes between the still largely token UN forces and the Serb army and militia forces besieging Sarajevo should not lead revolutionaries to take sides. In such clashes we remain defeatist on both sides. Neither side is defending a progressive cause. We argue that the best (and in the long run the only) form of defence that it is in the interests of the citizens of Sarajevo to mount—that will defend the national rights of all Bosnia’s people equally and impartially—is the extension of the multi-ethnic local defence squads of Sarajevo into a well armed workers’ militia and the dissolution/disarmament of all the nationalist-communist militias and the federal army (YPA).

12 However, if the imperialist forces—whether under NATO or United Nations guise—intervene in Bosnia in force waging all-out war to crush the Serbian armed forces and ultimately to overthrow its planned property relations, or to submit the Serbs of Bosnia to a Muslim-Croat regime that would oppress them as cruelly as they have been oppressing Muslims and Croats in the areas they have conquered, *then* Serb resistance to this onslaught would take on the character of a legitimate, anti-imperialist defence of the remains of the workers’ state and of democratic national rights. In such a war between Serbia and imperialism revolutionaries would give full military support to Serbia, and seek by all the means of the class struggle to impede and hamper the imperialist war effort. They would fight to prevent the Muslim and Croat peoples tying their fate to that of imperialism, for if they fought with imperialism against Serbia then we would have to stand for their defeat, though not of course for their resultant national oppression. We should support the Serbian side in such a war despite the presence in its ranks of the Chetnik fascists, but we would also have to agitate against all annexationist aims and—the better to prosecute the anti-imperialist struggle—for the speedy overthrow of Milosevic and his nationalist-fascist allies and the creation of a workers’ government.

13 An imperialist imposed “solution” to the crisis of ex-Yugoslavia without the agreement of the Serbs is extremely unlikely. Although imperialism proved its armed might in the Gulf War, it did not attempt to take the struggle into “enemy territory” where armed sections of the population would have opposed it. Precisely because the Serbs are not the sole culprits in the bloody nationalist war, even bombing Belgrade would not resolve the Bosnian crisis, and the imperialists know it. Hence their reluctance to engage in a major war. In the absence of any decisive action by the working class of the ex-Yugoslav federation against both the nationalists and the imperialists, it seems inevitable the Bosnia will be divided. An immediate possibility is that no side will be able to impose its will, with the workers and peasants of Bosnia caught in the fire—essentially a continuation and degeneration of the current situation. Sooner or later, however, the imperialists will allow the Serbs and Croats to divide Bosnia and impose their armed control, with all the attendant suffering and destruction that this will entail. The bloody tragedy being acted out in the Balkans and the even more appalling round of “ethnic cleansing” which could accompany any nationalist “solution” makes the fight for a workers’ alternative to the current leaderships all the more urgent.

14 The UN and EC supplied aid to Sarajevo and other besieged cities in Bosnia-Herzegovina prepares the terrain for a future imperialist intervention by suggesting to the world working class that the nationalists are “inhuman” and by tying the besieged populations to imperialism both ideologically and materially. If the local populations do not follow imperialism’s wishes, aid will be cut off. Workers in the ex-Yugoslav federation and in the imperialist countries must demand that all aid is given without strings and without compromising the independence of the masses with regard to imperialism.

Supply lines must be maintained by armed militias of the local population, not the UN. Food and medicine must be distributed by armed committees of workers and peasants drawn from across the communities, not by imperialist charities or supposedly neutral UN "agencies".

15 Throughout Europe, social democracy is playing a leading role in encouraging the masses to support the current intervention and in preparing the possibility of a counter-revolutionary war. In France, the Socialist Party is completely behind the government's policy. In Austria the "Socialist" mayor of Vienna has called for volunteers to go to Bosnia to fight the Serbs. In Britain key figures of the reformist left such as Tony Benn have called for imperialist sanctions against Serbia and for UN intervention. As in all major conflicts, social democracy is paving the way for the imperialists' war plans. Where economic sanctions are imposed, and humanitarian aid is despatched, military actions are rarely far behind. The working class must break with the actions of its reformist leaders. Proletarian internationalism demands that we must oppose all imperialist sanctions and any military intervention in the region. We demand that all the victims of the imperialists' policies, all refugees and victims of the civil war, must be allowed free entry to EC countries.

16 The increasingly belligerent attitude of the EC creates the need for a united campaign of all working class organisations across Europe against intervention and war. This means that the entire labour movement,

the unions, internationalist left-wingers in the labour, social-democratic and "Communist" Parties, the peace campaigners and far left organisations must unite in common action against intervention with rallies, pickets and demonstrations on the broadest possible scale. The imperialists must be given a clear message. We should fight for such a united front around the following slogans:

- Down with economic sanctions, naval blockade or military intervention. Imperialist hands off Serbia!
- Open the EC and other state borders to refugees from the Yugoslav war!
- Down with the reactionary nationalist war in Yugoslavia! Support for all forces fighting the war and defending all nationalities against pogroms and mass expulsions!

Each of these demands can be the basis of specific common actions with all or parts of the ex-Yugoslav community. In a situation short of an all-out imperialist war, it would be best if an on-going campaign could be based on all three issues. Campaigns based on all these slogans, or on any one of them, must take place with all forces (including nationalists) who are prepared to put the demands of the united front at the centre of agitation and are prepared to guarantee and enforce freedom of criticism of the united front partners and respect workers' democracy.

17 In the event of an all out war by imperialism against Serbia, revolutionaries will attempt to get the widest working class and progressive support for the defence of Serbia and indeed for a victory of Serbian forces over those of imperialism and its allies. In that case the principled basis for united front action against intervention should be at least:

- Troops out of Bosnia-Herzegovina/ Fleets out of the Adriatic!
- No sanctions against Serbia-Montenegro!

The only real solution to the present crisis, which has as its root cause the restoration process begun and supported by US and EC imperialism, is for workers' political revolution in all the former Yugoslav republics.

- Replace all the national chauvinist, restorationist regimes with workers' and peasants' governments!
- Fight for a Socialist Federation of Balkan states!

Workers and the Stalinist/fascist bloc in Russia

Article from *Rabochaya Vlast* No 3, LRCI bulletin in the CIS

The Russian Communist Workers Party, and the several other neo-Stalinist parties who have been organising a regular series of demonstrations against Yeltsin and the break up of the Soviet Union represent not the "faction of Reiss" but in fact the faction of Butenko; that is, a fascist-oriented final stage of the degeneration of Stalinism.

As "National Bolsheviks", some of them believe that only a return to the old style Stalinist dictatorship can preserve or restore a state within the borders of the former USSR; hence the portraits of Lenin and Stalin. But others use these symbols only as the thinnest disguise for their goal of a state capitalist imperialist Russian Empire. Despite their conflict with Yeltsin they represent merely an alternative version of capitalist restoration and counterrevolution. They are not *at the present* the main danger.

But after a few weeks or months of social upheaval they could re-emerge as the social force offering an invitation to a military-bonapartist dictatorship or even themselves be the launching pad for a Stalinist/fascist putsch. It is vital that the working class movement escapes from the clutches of Yeltsin and Co without falling into the hands of Makashov, Ampilov, Andreyeva et al.

So far the latter have not attracted the masses of ordinary workers. Their movement remains one of embittered ex-party functionaries, pensioners and unemployed bureaucrats. Doubtless they have many sympathisers in the army and the police, but they are not willing to declare themselves yet. Real working class resistance, still very local and fragmented, remains under trade union leadership even if critically supportive of the Yeltsin and the other republican regimes. It is to this workers' resistance—however limited—that we must orient. We must argue for the Moscow and St. Petersburg Federations of Labour, the miners' trades unions, the Federation of Independent Unions, etc to organise mass demonstrations and strikes against the price rises, the privatisations and for higher wages etc. We must fight for all these workers' organisations to break with Yeltsin and to struggle to bring down his reactionary regime.

Fascists

We cannot give the slightest political support to the demonstrations organised by *Trudovaya Rossiya* with open participation by the fascists of *Pamyat*, *Nashi* and the "Liberal Democrats". Those who have done so (the Spartacists) are guilty of the betrayal and soiling of the stolen banner of "Trotskyism", a function they previously

performed in the DDR in 1989-90. We must make it clear that genuine Trotskyists will have nothing to do with the purveyors of anti-semitic filth nor will they march shoulder to shoulder with the *Pamyat* blackshirts and monarchist anti-semites.

On the other hand, revolutionaries should intervene where possible amongst any workers attracted to these protests around the following themes and slogans:

- No common demonstrations with the *Pamyat* and *Nashi* fascists, monarchists and bourgeois nationalists! Drive the chanters of anti-semitic slogans off any workers' demonstration!
- No platform for fascism, on the streets, in the meeting halls, at the hustings! Defend our Jewish fellow workers! Antifascist militias should smash the neo-fascist groups and anyone who attempts to defend them!
- Defend the right to self-determination of all the peoples of the former USSR! Defend the rights of all minorities!
- No return to the dictatorship of Stalin or Brezhnev! For the workers' democracy of Lenin and Trotsky!
- Down with Yeltsin, Rutsokoy and Co! All power to a workers' government based on workers' councils!
- No to privatisation of the the factories and mines by the nomenklatura, the mafia and the "co-operators"!
- Stop the sell-out of all the "independent" states to the IMF, the World Bank and the European, American and Japanese imperialist monopolies!
- For an emergency workers' plan to solve the present crisis and to create a democratically planned economy!
- Arm the workers! For a democratic factory based militia: No to a military coup or a Stalinist or fascist putsch! For proletarian political revolution!
- For a Bolshevik—not a Stalinist—party, internally democratic but dedicated to the fight against restoration be it capitalist or bureaucratic!

Confusion on the left

The existence of the Stalinist/fascist demonstrations has led to major confusion amongst the far left in Russia and internationally. Some, like the Spartacists or *Workers Democracy* (Militant) are, for different reasons, completely opportunist towards these demonstrations.

If we ask these groups their attitude to the Stalinist/Fascist bloc in Russia they will answer that they are against the demonstrations. But the problem is they will not admit this in their press. The Spartacists began by applauding the demonstration of a few thousand under

the leadership of the RKRП on 7 November 1991 as "90,000 for Lenin", and despite the organised presence of Pamyat and the other neo-fascists, were proud to have carried the banner of the Fourth International on that day. Later they changed their estimation of the class nature of the demonstrations, but they give no clear account or evidence to prove that this change had really taken place. It took place in their heads, they realised they had made a bad mistake, but refused to publicly admit it.

As late as March 1992, Militant, the British sympathisers of the *Workers Democracy* group, were praising the Stalinist demonstrations as essentially progressive. They recognised the reactionary character of the Nashi/Pamyat participation and the fact that this systematically occurs in collusion with Trudovaya Rossiya. But they refused to characterise the whole demonstration as reactionary. On the VDNKh demonstration the flag of *Workers Democracy* was carried along with the Stalinist, fascist and Tsarist flags. In a report of the 9 February demonstration Militant said that "Only one speaker, from the RKRП, made any attempt to offer any way forward by demanding a general strike". How stupid! the RKRП is the driving force behind the Stalinist/Fascist bloc, and one of its key figures is the openly anti-semitic General Makashov.

Of course, Militant and the Spartacists will argue that they polemicise against the leaders of Trudovaya Rossiya in their papers. But they never make clear the reactionary nature of these demonstrations, which revolutionaries cannot support.

The other extreme, sectarianism, is represented by the Socialist Workers Union (linked with *Workers' Press* in Britain). This group rejects any need to intervene in the milieu of the Stalinist/Fascist bloc. They see no sense in trying to address workers attracted by the anti-capitalist rhetoric of Trudovaya Rossiya. In reality they are afraid of actively fighting against the reactionary consciousness gripping those workers who support it. They prefer to sit at home when these demonstrations occur. They are right to refuse a bloc with the Stalinists and Fascists. But how do we build a force independent of that bloc, capable of splitting away Stalinist workers? By fighting for it and arguing for it. Despite the fact that we do not support these demonstrations we have to go out and show the working class that real communism has nothing to do with the ideas on offer from the organisers. The Socialist Workers Union doesn't fight fascism and Stalinism in the CIS, it is only afraid of them.

Forcibly expel the fascists

Revolutionaries should not of course oppose the neo-Stalinist parties being drawn into united fronts of struggle against restoration measures, but we must prevent them bringing in their fascist allies. If the Stalinists raise their anti-Semitic or Russian chauvinist slogans we should agitate for them to be forcibly called to order or expelled from the action, demonstration etc. In practice the leading lights of Trudovaya Rossiya would be the first to defend the fascists, and their thinly disguised Brezhnevite version of anti-Semitism, their call for the forcible reintegration of the USSR gives them much political common ground with the fascists and

nationalists. Needless to say, revolutionaries should not support any demonstrations called to support "Yeltsin and Democracy". Unlike the situation in August 1991 it is Yeltsin who now has state power. It is his militia and his KGB that are repressing the anarchists and the left today and will repress striking and protesting workers tomorrow. If Yeltsin sends his troops and militia to repress the Stalinist/fascist demonstrations, rallies and press, revolutionaries have to fight for the working class to condemn every restriction on democratic rights. But workers should only actively defend the rump Stalinist parties when they are not in an active bloc with fascists. Where the Stalinist/fascist bloc organises joint defence of its demonstrations (as when on one recent demonstration the badge of the defence guard was the St. Andrew's Cross of the Christianisation of Russia) we will not actively defend them. We demand a break with fascists and anti-Semites before we will join in the defence of such demonstrations. We do not demand a state ban on the fascists, but we will never defend them against one.

A new coup?

Yeltsin's regime is at present the main enemy of the democratic rights of the workers, the nationalities and the intelligentsia. He is obliged to disguise his Bonapartist rule behind a facade of parliamentarism and to leave real rights in the hands of the masses only because of the weakness of his power and because of the potential strength of the masses. But this strength is still hampered by illusions in Yeltsin. Revolutionaries must concentrate on all tactics which will break those illusions as rapidly as possible.

Revolutionaries must make clear what their attitude and tactics would be towards any new military coup, especially if, by the time it occurred, the masses saw the army as saviours from the hell of the shock therapy. No more than in August 1991 could we support such a coup, because it would lead to the restoration of a military-Stalinist dictatorship.

Even if the coup makers were to slow or even halt many of the restoration measures or patch together what elements of the bureaucratic command economy they could in order to preserve their privileges, this would at best be a temporary measure, as events in China after Tiananmen Square showed. The price would be terrible indeed for the working class and its historic objectives.

First, the main aims of the generals and marshalls would be the "restoration of order" in the republics (i.e. the overthrow of the non-Russian nationalist governments that refused to collaborate with them). This would almost certainly lead to war in some cases. The military regime would undoubtedly crush the independent workers' organisations, ban strikes and demonstrations, muzzle the press and arrest all their political opponents including their Trotskyist ones.

There can be no question of supporting the seizure of power by the army. But does it flow from this that faced with a coup attempt we would defend the governments of Yeltsin, Kravchuk et al? No! They are not a lesser evil than the generals. In the first place their likely response even to the threat of such a coup would be to ban strikes, demonstrations and the Stalinist parties and press. They are carrying out the restoration of capitalism and we too

wish to see their downfall—but at the hands of mass workers' action and their replacement by a workers' government based on 1917-style workers' councils.

In the face of any coup attempt we should fight, as in August 1991, to defend the democratic rights of the workers and the nationalities. But now Yeltsin is no longer the figurehead of democratic and independent working class opposition but the head of the regime that is forcing through the most savage programme of restoration. A united front with him is not necessary.

In the case of those states that have seceded from the old Union we should support their people's resistance to any re-imposed central domination by the Soviet Armed Forces. We should defend the independent workers' organisations right to exist and organise, and indeed oppose the closure by the military of all mass political parties and movements apart from those of the fascists and pogromists. And of course, in all probability, it is they who would benefit from the neo-Stalinists' special protection.

Down with anti-Semitism!

Article from *Rabochaya Vlast* No 4

Nearly a century after the first anti-Semitic pogroms of the Tsarist Black Hundreds, the pioneers of twentieth century fascism, these same forces are raising their head once again.

At the turn of the twentieth century the development of capitalism was accompanied by a process of driving the peasants off the land, mass unemployment, hunger and exploitation. Anti-Semitism was an attempt to blame all these evils not on the Tsar and the capitalists in general, but solely on the Jews. A few Jewish capitalists and financiers were picked on and their power and wealth were exaggerated out of all proportion. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Jews were workers, artisans or small traders, cruelly discriminated against and oppressed by the regime. They were co-sufferers—along with the Russian workers—of the tyranny of Russian tsarism and the exploitation by large-scale Russian, French and British capital. That is why Frederick Engels called the evil nonsense about a “world Jewish conspiracy” the “socialism of fools”.

Now, as the process of restoring capitalism (the “market economy”) takes place, it is no surprise that anti-Semitism is once again showing its ugly face on the streets of Moscow.

What is surprising is that people who carry the red flag and portraits of Lenin should applaud these modern Black Hundreds, share demonstrations and platforms with them, buy their filthy press and allow it to be sold alongside papers that claim fidelity to the Bolshevik heritage. Lenin was an implacable enemy of anti-Semitism. Before 1917 the Bolsheviks fought its ideas and physically drove it off the streets wherever they could. In 1917 and thereafter the Bolshevik government suppressed these arch counter-revolutionary forces with an iron hand. Many Bolshevik leaders were Jewish—Sverdlov, Kamenev, Zinoviev and Trotsky. They were known and trusted revolutionary leaders of the Russian workers, not allies of the Rothschilds in some bizarre conspiracy. Later, with the triumph of Stalin and the imposition of his dictatorship that led to the death of millions, some elements of the old anti-Semitism were revived. After 1948 these were given the name “anti-Zionism” as a cover.

This new anti-Semitism does not fall from heaven. Many of the fascist and monarchist leaders have either crawled out of the rubble of the fragmented ruling bureaucracy or have been sponsored and encouraged by the old elite and the KGB. If anyone still needs proof of the criminal anti-working class politics of the Stalinists, then the growth of anti-Semitism out of their ranks, the

conscious exploitation and encouragement of anti-Jewish hatred in Russian society, speaks loudly for this. It is no accident that all kinds of monarchist and fascist anti-Semites found fertile ground in the bureaucratic apparatus.

Just as the Russian aristocracy tried to direct the anger and frustration of the petit bourgeoisie and the more backward workers onto the Jews, nowadays fascist leaders try to direct the anger of the people towards ethnic minorities, “democrats” and the Jews in particular. They consciously blind the people by blaming a supposed “Jewish world conspiracy”, responsible for all the growing misery. However, in fact this misery is a direct result of the final breakdown of Stalinist economic mismanagement and of the policies pursued by Yeltsin to bring about capitalist restoration.

The poor and downtrodden who believe in anti-Semitism are those who are being fooled. Those who spread the anti-Semitic propaganda are either in the grip of a dangerous paranoia or are very clever cynics. In reality, the fascist leaders are a mixture of both. The function that anti-Semitism serves for them should be clear to every intelligent worker keen to defend his or her class interests. It is the ideology of all those layers of society which hope to preserve their privileges and social status in a state capitalist Great Russian dictatorship.

It is the “socialism” of the desperate petty bureaucrat, of the brutal former secret policeman, of the would-be restorationist of tsarism; in short, the “socialism” of the most bitter enemies of the working class, of the most intransigent enemy of workers’ freedoms and democratic rights. Anti-Semitism seeks once again to bind the industrial and agricultural worker, the rank and file soldier to his or her oppressor—just as the peasants were bound to the Tsarist landlord a hundred years ago.

The roots of anti-Semitism

It was with the development of merchant and banking capital in Europe, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, that a section of the Jews became more and more restricted to money lending. As feudalism broke down in Eastern Europe the impoverishment of the peasantry and the petty nobility led to vicious pogroms against these Jews. The Jews’ role as usurers, shopkeepers and landlords’ bailiffs made them the target of successive peasant revolts.

With the development of capitalism (especially in the imperialist epoch) the small farmer became heavily in-

debted to the banks, the small shopkeeper collapsed under the strong competition of the great co-operative department stores and the state bureaucracy's employees were deprived of career promotion. As a result, these layers of society all looked with envious eyes at the prominent and successful Jews, deliberately singled out by anti-Semitic propaganda.

Yet it was the backwardness of Tsarist Russia, the strangulation of even the most elementary bourgeois freedoms by the monarchy, which prevented the assimilation of the Jews into Russian society and at the same time held the countryside in semi-feudal backwardness and rural idiocy. And it is a characteristic feature of Russian anti-Semitism that its major spokesmen and organisers were the people closely connected to and sponsored by the most reactionary elements of society: the Tsarist police—the Okhrana—and later on the most repressive anti-working class Stalinist bureaucrats.

Lenin was clearly aware of this. Time and time again he spoke of the Purishkevichs and Dubrovins as the most consciously reactionary elements of Russian society, the most brutal and dedicated defenders of the oppression of the worker, the peasant and the non-Russian nationalities. These were the sponsors and protectors of the Black Hundreds along with the Tsar.

It was the October 1917 Revolution which smashed this scum together with their backers: the tsarist state, the landlords and the urban bourgeoisie. Under Lenin and Trotsky's leadership the revolutionary Bolsheviks had nothing to do with the accommodation towards anti-Semitism that Stalin and his successors engaged in. Lenin and Trotsky unconditionally recognised and defended the democratic rights of the Jewish communities. Moreover, the workers' and peasants' soviets led by the Bolsheviks fought a sharp battle against all expressions of anti-Semitism.

The Stalinist counter-revolution of the later 1920s and early 1930s, which politically expropriated the working class from the fruits of its victory over Russian capitalism, deepened the oppression of the proletariat by reviving all kinds of reactionary ideologies. Little wonder that anti-Semitism, once a weapon of the Tsar against the people, became a weapon of the Stalinist bureaucracy against the working class, and against disobedient and courageous dissidents in the party in particular.

Anti-Semitism played a prominent role in the Moscow trials of 1935-38 and in the physical elimination of many

of the heroic leaders of the October Revolution. It was used in the post-Second World War purges in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe, such as the so-called "doctors' plot" in 1951, when Stalin lyingly declared that Jewish doctors had tried to kill him, and the purges of CP leaders in Eastern Europe such as the Slansky trial in Czechoslovakia.

The whole hypocrisy and cynicism of Stalinist "anti-Zionism" and its basically anti-Semitic and reactionary character was revealed in Stalinist emigration policy. Soviet Jews were neither granted their democratic rights nor allowed to assimilate into Soviet society, but were rather stigmatised and alienated from the workers' state and used as human cattle, to be traded in deals with the Zionist state. Stalinist anti-Semitism became a mixture of deportation and forced retention, a blend of supposed "anti-Zionism" and demagogic anti-cosmopolitanism. The Stalinists ended up echoing the tsarist and monarchist critique of Jewish culture, condemning what Lenin once called one of the "world-progressive features of Jewish culture"—its internationalism.

Such features clearly fit well into the ideology of the born-again Russian anti-Semites and fascists. By mobilising the most reactionary ideological traditions of Russian history, Stalinism prepared fertile ground for their explosive growth today.

Like their predecessors decades ago, today's anti-Semites threaten the Jewish community with slander and pogroms, they once again threaten the workers with the elimination of democratic rights and the establishing of a reactionary overt dictatorship. They must be stopped now!

The working class must organise to defend Jewish citizens where they are under attack, to fight for their full democratic rights and the ruthless suppression of any anti-Semitic propaganda. The fascists and anti-Semites must not be allowed to spread their malicious agitation. Today they turn against the Jews, against the oppressed nationalities. Tomorrow they will turn against the workers, the intellectuals, the rank and file soldiers to restore an oppressive Great Russian state.

Just as Bolsheviks smashed the Black Hundreds, so must the anti-Semitic fascists and monarchists too be smashed. No platform, no freedom of speech must be given to them. All workers' organisations—the trade unions, the left political groups—must unite to organise defence squads to smash these scum.

Down with capitalism! Down with Stalinism!

Forward to a new red October!

Rabochaya Vlast leaflet distributed in Moscow, 7 November 1992

75 years ago the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky led the proletariat to the seizure of power in our country. They established the first workers' state in the world, the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. However, by 1923 with the failure of the uprising in Germany, the strategy of internationalising the revolution, always at the core of the Bolsheviks' programme, suffered a significant setback which in turn strengthened the forces of counter revolution in the new Soviet state, leading to the seizure of power by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

This political counter-revolution destroyed workers' democracy, terrorised and destroyed the proletarian vanguard, the revolutionary Bolshevik party. It succeeded in passing political power into the hands of a bureaucratic caste whose policy was in no sense based on the interests of the proletariat and the world revolution but on its narrow parasitic caste interests and privileges. It created an obstacle to the advance of the world revolution both nationally and internationally, a brutal anti-working class dictatorship which from the very beginning of its rule undermined the post capitalist property relations established by the October revolution.

It did so most notably by alienating the Soviet proletariat and its allies from the workers' state. Instead of workers' democracy the Stalinists established a ruthless dictatorship over the proletariat, a repulsive caricature of "socialism". Instead of fighting anti-Semitism and great Russian chauvinism, the Stalinists used the anti-Semitic sentiments in Russian society to purge the most prominent leaders of the Bolshevik party after Lenin—Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and thousands more. Instead of liberating the oppressed nations and winning them to a truly voluntary union, they made the Soviet Union into a Stalinist prison house of nations.

And it is the very same bureaucracy whose different wings are now trying to achieve what even Stalin and his butchers were unable to do: to restore capitalist exploitation. Capitalism means unemployment, price rises, the further inflaming of national hatred. It means production for the profit of the few, not for the needs of the workers. The results of this can already be seen. Since Yeltsin came to power after the failed August coup, living standards in the CIS have sharply deteriorated, bad as they already were. Now the government has started a mass privatisation programme which, if accomplished, will lead to mass factory closures, throwing millions of workers onto the streets. That is what Gaidar and his government offer the workers.

Volsky's Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, the parliamentary chairman Khasbulatov and vice-president Rutskoi who represent the high ranks of the old industrial and military bureaucracy do not repre-

sent an alternative for the working class either. Their opposition to mass privatisation is only dictated by their own interest to preserve their power and themselves become the ruling class or its lackeys in a future state capitalist Russia. Their reactionary nature can be seen by their Great Russian chauvinism. They do not disagree with Gaidar on the issue that it will be the workers who have to pay for the restructuring of Russian industry. All they disagree about is the speed and form of this process.

Equally the red-brown alliances of the successor parties of the CPSU and their extreme right, fascist and anti-Semitic allies, are no alternative for the workers. Their only concern is to preserve a Greater Russian state, not the rights of the workers and nationalities. They do not give a damn for workers' rights or workers' democracy. If they came to power they would establish a bloody dictatorship.

None of these forces is offering a way forward for the workers. On the contrary, all these rulers and would-be rulers are anti-democratic and anti-working class to the core. In order to defend themselves against the governmental attacks the workers cannot rely on the opposition in parliament or the red-brown demonstrations.

The problem today is that after decades of Stalinist dictatorship, the Russian workers are politically disorientated and under the misleadership of open bourgeois, reformist and Stalinist forces. They lack an independent class perspective and strategy for the struggles ahead. Workers must start to build their own independent class organisations and organs of struggle in the factories, in the offices, in the communities. Protests and strike actions must be built and linked together into a generalised fightback of the workers in the whole Russian republic.

However, in order to be able to defeat the government's onslaught and reverse its anti-working class policies, an alternative proletarian leadership, a new revolutionary party of the working class must be built. It must be a party in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, of October 1917 that can combine the struggle for the workers' immediate needs with the struggle for working class power. We need this power today to resolve the acute economic crisis by creating a democratic plan in the interests of the producers, not of the old bureaucracy or the new capitalists and speculators. We need a real dictatorship of the proletariat based on workers' councils and a workers' militia.

The supporters of RV, the Russian paper of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, are committed to this goal. We ask every working class fighter, every militant student who wants to struggle for a progressive outcome of the current crisis: Contact us! Join our ranks!

Letter to the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (USA) on their analysis of capitalist restoration

International Secretariat, 16 June 1992

Dear Comrades,

In this first of what we hope will be a series of letters during the year, we want to express some observations on the material that you are publishing. We make a start by offering the following remarks on the article in *International Trotskyist* No 5 (IT5) entitled, "Capitalist Restoration in the Former USSR; the Class Nature of the New States".

Even before the breakdown in fraternal relations we had noted in an earlier letter that your analysis of the restoration process in IT4 drew heavily upon our own work in *Permanent Revolution* 9 but had introduced certain decisive modifications of our analysis in order to indicate to the reader that the process of restoration was complete in Poland. This was not and to date still is not the position of the LRCI. (See TI8 for an update).

Now in your latest journal article on the former USSR you have taken this analysis further. Unfortunately, we do not think that you have improved it but instead made a number of additional analytical errors. The purpose of this letter is to try and convince you of this and draw you back onto the path of analysis that the LRCI set out some time ago in our methodological resolution on the restoration process. (See TI 7)

The RTT position summarised

You argue as follows. Soon after Yeltsin defeated the coup he and his team proceeded to dismantle the central planning apparatus. The legal and actual powers of Gosplan and the other central all-Union agencies to plan and co-ordinate the production and distribution of resources was broken up. Naturally, he deepened the process, already begun under Gorbachev, of mass sackings of bureaucrats in these ministries.

You argue that the place of the disintegrating planning mechanisms was taken by barter arrangements, which you recognise were increasing in scope before the August coup and were given a new momentum afterwards; this represented an *intermediate* stage on the road to restoration.

However, by the end of 1991 with the break-up of the USSR barter arrangements were increasingly giving way to commercial relations between the enterprises. This, you state, was inevitable since barter relied for its success on trading relations across the former USSR republics. The disintegration of the Soviet Union into new national states made this increasingly difficult if not impossible.

In turn this process forced the republics to switch

away from trade with each other towards trade with the imperialist states. Naturally, such trade could only be conducted upon the basis of hard currency and would succeed in accelerating the commercialisation of relations between enterprises. It seems that the RTT believe that the transition from a "collapsed workers' state" to an "incipient capitalist state" occurs around this point, due to the increasing commercialisation of enterprise relations in place of barter. As you say,

"The establishment of national capitalist states is one of the chief accelerators of commercial relations between enterprises, that is capitalist restoration." (IT5 p31)

At this stage in your analysis you introduce the central analytical position: the absence of, and need for, a "stable convertible currency" in Russia (and by extension the other CIS and non-CIS former republics). Without it the completion of capitalist restoration is impossible since a stable banking system and an end to the state monopoly of foreign trade cannot occur.

Moreover, without such a stable convertible currency there can be no economic stability. Continued disintegration and even chaos are likely and this means that the process of capitalist restoration is not complete until such a currency has been put in place.

Finally, you argue that there are signs that Soviet workers' resistance is occurring (i.e. January 1992) and that this would fizzle out unless the workers passed beyond protests against the effects of the restoration process and challenged the whole basis of this process. You end with a few pointers of an action programme for this resistance.

Our criticisms

We hope that you recognise this description of your position. Let us start by reminding you of the essence of our analysis. We felt it was crucial to start not from any abstract criteria of capitalist restoration but from an understanding of the concrete history of the nature of the marketising reform process in the degenerated workers' states. The chronic and endemic failure of the Stalinist bureaucracy to intensively develop the productivity of labour led them all by the 1970s to embark on the road of these reforms, unable to contemplate the possibility of invigorating production relations by ending the atomisation of the working class.

For the LRCI the process of capitalist restoration comes as a qualitative extension of this process of marketisation. But along what lines? Essentially, by

decisively subjecting the *accumulation* process (that is, the process of extended reproduction, investment in plant and equipment etc) to capitalist criteria. In short, to criteria which have at their centre investment decisions based upon profitability, the production of surplus value and its subsequent division into profit, interest and rent.

There can be no doubt that this abrupt, dialectical reversion of the dynamics of the accumulation process signifies a profound revolution (more exactly, a *counter* revolution), full of shocks, advances and retreats. But we have every right to say now, six months after the USSR's Big Bang, that we were absolutely right in stating where we thought the essential point of confrontation would be in the transition to capitalism: in the sphere of credit, banking and the relation of this sector to the enterprises below them and the government above it. Why?

Because no one enterprise (or group of enterprises, it seems, even in a society with such huge industrial associations as the ex-USSR) can enter the process of production and circulation of goods (or commodities) through a process of direct transactions with its suppliers and customers. Barter, as we both agree, is a system of decline and desperation and necessarily of contraction and, we agree, necessarily a relatively short abnormal phase operating alongside a more fundamental system or systems. (We should not, however, overestimate its scale; we have seen figures that suggest barter accounted for a maximum of 12% of national output in 1991.)

The reliance upon an abstract form of "capital"—credit—is essential in dealing with the delay between production and sale of the enterprise's products. Moreover, it is decisive in accumulating a sufficient fund for expansion and modernisation. When advanced by the banks this is a call upon the future surplus generated by the new investments.

Thus, for us, it is transforming the *content* of this relationship that is crucial. In this sense the commercialisation of relations between the enterprises (i.e. the form of the transactions between the units of production) is derivative.

In the last weeks we have seen that the capitalist restoration process in Russia has suffered a reverse because Yeltsin has baulked at the enormous consequences of his programmatic position of transforming the content of the relationship between the central and commercial banking sector and the 40% or so of enterprises that are incapable of generating an operating surplus in financial terms. Put simply, they have run scared from it for the moment.

Instead they have continued to underwrite the vast inefficiencies of the state enterprise system through printing money and thereby allowing a ballooning of state deficits. Let us be clear, this is not a state capitalist intervention against the dogmas of neo-liberalism based on already established capitalist social relations of production. No, this represents a stumbling on the road to capitalist restoration. The scale and sheer size of the intervention by the state banking sector has a decisive weight in the whole process.

The RTT's mistakes

The RTT state: "In order to integrate the former Soviet Union into the world capitalist economy (even as

semi-colonies), the ruble (and the new Ukrainian currency, for example) must be convertible. This is the only way by which the weak emerging capitalist class, which is dominated by foreign capital, can import and export commodities and build a stable dollar reserve. This is also a precondition for a stable banking system which can break the state monopoly of foreign trade in a final and definite way."

There are several problems with this statement. The first is that the basic contention is wrong; namely, that the Russian economy is subject to domination by foreign capital or that this integration is the mechanism for the restoration of capitalism in Russia. This is important for your case since you argue that barter breaks down with the creation of nation states and each in turn becomes increasingly subject to trading with imperialism which subjects it to its rule. Hence, the logic runs, since this is the main mechanism of capitalist restoration, a "stable convertible currency" is essential to the process.

We do not agree that integration is a cause of restoration. If anything (and here we have to be equally careful of one-sidedness) it is an *effect*. Once bankruptcies are enforced, once new forms of ownership are instigated, then it becomes clearer to potential investors and trading partners which units of production can be made to be profitable or already are, or which firms can be relied upon to pay for their supplies. Integration flows from the success of the restoration process. Until then imperialism will provide strictly limited funds to oversee financial stability. Even in Eastern Europe there was only a sum total of \$2.3 bn inward imperialist investment into the whole region last year and it is no accident that most of this (over 50%) has gone to the country furthest down the road to capitalism—Hungary.

It is in this light that the question of the currency has to be seen. Poland—not as far down the road to capitalism as Hungary—has a more convertible currency. In Russia it is also not an all or nothing situation. A partly stable, partly convertible currency exists, or at least enough of one to manage the transactions between imperialism and Russia. In the last half year it has shot up from the fictitious dollar/ruble parity to around \$1/R100 and then around \$1/R70. Like in any other country, the exchange rate is subject to movement. It is certainly not a free exchange rate, but rather a managed one. But this is very common around the capitalist world as exchange rates are subject to political decisions and then bolstered by bank intervention. Some large economies (e.g. India) have managed to go through 90% of the post-war period without a freely convertible currency.

The main *immediate* problem the Russian government faces with respect to the currency is the rate of exchange. Even people such as Jeffrey Sachs have said that the west must provide a dollar reserve fund to back the ruble so that the exchange rate can be brought down to around \$1/R35 and Russian factories can buy the raw materials they need from the west in order to keep production going. Such a rate is also necessary to stop the sale of Russian property and other assets to the west for next to nothing.

Trotsky and convertibility

Currency exchange rates reflect the relative values of

each currency based on the relative productivity of labour in the respective economies. In other words the currency measures the value of production according to world competition. In and of itself there is nothing in this that is alien to the transition to socialism. As you know, Trotsky was in favour of a stable convertible currency for the USSR in the 1920s, one backed by gold. He rightly knew that without one to guide the trade between the west and the USSR, it would be impossible to measure improvements in the productivity of labour inside the USSR and moreover, it would be difficult to establish what comparative economic advantages the USSR had, if any, over the west that would tell Soviet planners what they should concentrate their economic resources upon.

You seem to think that without a convertible currency it will be impossible to break the state monopoly of foreign trade in a "final and definitive way". This is not true. Again Trotsky said that the state monopoly of foreign trade in the USSR was an essential requirement, a precondition, of a stable convertible currency. Why? Without this the currency would be the means by which the stronger economies of the west would destroy industry in the USSR. Part of the state monopoly of foreign trade meant precisely controlled access to foreign currencies by *certain* Soviet industries. In fact this is the situation that now pertains inside Russia; apart from this there is no state monopoly of foreign trade in Russia. All enterprises are free to trade with the west, if they can find a buyer and the hard currency.

If you are suggesting that only when all enterprises have *free and unrestricted access* to hard currency for export and import then (a) you will wait for a very long time before Russia becomes capitalist and (b) you will have difficulty explaining the class character of a great many capitalist semi-colonies around the world since the Second World War.

In other words the currency exchange rate and companies' access to hard currency for foreign trade are manipulated by governments throughout the capitalist world in order to serve other economic ends. It is not an independent variable.

Soft budget constraints

If the imperialists agreed with the RTT and placed such an emphasis on stable convertible currency then they would have taken this road a lot earlier. But they have not. Why? Because they want to see signs that capitalist restoration is well under way and irreversible before they create the financial and monetary support for Russia's integration into the world market.

The *Economist* expressed the real relationship of currency stability, convertibility and exchange rates to the decisive economic indicators when it noted earlier this year:

"Under central planning, the creation of money by the central bank was entirely passive: if enterprises made losses, the central bank would simply print money to cover them . . .

Under such a system, enterprises have a 'soft budget constraint'. Their spending is not limited by a lack of cash. . .

The soft budget constraint can fatally undermine other needed economic reforms. Suppose the local currency is

made convertible—that is, enterprises are allowed to buy dollars freely to exchange for imports. Enterprises will buy as much hard currency as possible, because dollars can always be exchanged for goods. Thanks to the soft budget constraints, the enterprises will be willing to bid almost any price in local money (supplied on demand by the central bank) to get hold of foreign money." (8 February 1992)

In a different article the *Economist* took exception to those like the RTT, who "argue, for instance, that free trade and currency convertibility are the keys to reform: if enterprises and consumers are allowed to trade with foreigners, economists said, the pressure of competition on Eastern Europe's producers will force them to become more efficient.

The advice ignores the distortions in the financial system. By itself convertibility can lead to a chase for limited supplies of hard currency, explosive growth in the supply of local currency, and spiralling inflation. To avoid this, convertibility must be accompanied by steps to impose financial discipline on enterprises."

So the real question facing the restorationists, as the LRCI argued a year ago, is how to end the soft budget constraint through tightening the money supply, enforcing bankruptcies and the rigorous application of a harsh circuit of capital *accumulation* (and not the usual pouring of money down the black hole). Then convertible currencies and free access to hard currency will be no problem since firms will only buy dollars at the market rate if it allows them to purchase raw materials or goods from the west at market prices and still make a profit out of the sale of their own finished products.

But the whole discussion of currency convertibility in one sense obscures another more important point; namely, that the level of integration between Russia and the world economy is far lower than you suppose. On the other side the degree of fracturing of both the barter system and of inter-republican trade is far less than you suggest.

For Russia, exports and imports to the other CIS republics as a percentage of Russia's GNP is around 30%. This is the smallest percentage of all the republics and reflects the size and relative self-sufficiency of Russia. It does not reflect a high level of trade with the west. This remains marginal. For all other republics the percentage is much higher, expressing the high degree of interdependence under central planning. In the Ukraine it is 60% and Belorussia 100%.

The CIS still uses the Russian ruble as a common trading currency (the Ukraine has developed a coupon system as a parallel currency). This makes economic sense for them. When Comecon fell apart the USSR insisted on hard currency trading with the Eastern European countries. Slump ensued or deepened. Why? Quite simply because each country preferred to keep the scarce dollars for trade with the west not with the east.

If the CIS republics went further and introduced their own currencies then each would insist on dollars as the currency of trade between the republics. This would have a catastrophic effect on output and trade between the CIS republics, worsening an already bad situation that arose as a result of the breakdown of co-ordination through central planning.

So we would draw the opposite conclusion to the RTT

about the conditions for economic stability in the short term. The RTT believe that an end to the economic decline and instability of the last half year could be brought about only if currency convertibility and integration into the world market occurred and so signalled the completion of the restoration process. We feel that under the present conditions that prevail inside Russia such a step would *accelerate* the decline and economic chaos.

Barter

Has barter increasingly given way to commercialisation in the relations between enterprises as a result of nation states springing up? The evidence we have seen suggests that barter in the Ukraine and Russia was able to carry on by means of the enterprises switching from barter relations between enterprises in different republics to enterprises within the republics. Huge informal industrial associations emerged in the last months of 1991 in which suppliers and customers linked up with each other, using the new enterprise legislation to do so.

Moreover, if by "commercialisation" you want to suggest trade based on normal capitalist criteria then you would be far off the mark. This takes us back to the soft budget constraint question. Enterprises order supplies and the supplier extends credit to the customer irrespective of the credit worthiness of the customer. This happens all along the chain, a "conspiracy" against the reformers to keep production going and jobs intact. The bulk of the debts built up in this way are bad and are paid for by a generous bail-out from the banks by printing money. Real commercialisation between enterprises would mean rigorous enforcement of tried and trusted instruments such as 90 day credit notes, bills of exchange etc which would have to be settled or the courts intervene and insolvency ensues, driving the weak to the wall. This is far from happening in Russia at present as the events and crisis since the April Congress of Peoples Deputies and the rise of the "industrialists" within the policy making circles since then testify.

The restoration process in Eastern Europe also demonstrates that currency stabilisation, although an important prerequisite for the successful introduction of profit criteria regulating the banking system and the relations between the enterprises, does not in itself lead to this. Poland under the Bielecki government, Hungary for a period of time and Slovenia were relatively successful in lowering inflation. (This is, by the way, not the same as currency convertibility, with which you seem to falsely to equate it.) However, the much more important point we want to make is that this must not and did not qualitatively alter the relations between the factories and the banking sector yet (again, see the article on Poland in TI 8).

The real importance of a stable (inside Russia) currency lies in the fact that it is one condition for measuring the (future) profitability of the enterprises, for valuing them for various privatisation schemes, for dividing between the profitable and the unprofitable. To really break up the remnants of bureaucratic planning, the banking and credit system for example, is a task which has to be consciously fulfilled by social counterrevolution. This would mean the establishing of the law of value as the

dominant regulator of production and reproduction of society as a whole and the definite destruction of the historic gains the proletariat has made in these countries.

Only from such an analysis, i.e. from the recognition that the states of the ex-Soviet Union are still degenerated workers' states, does it make sense still to speak of the defence of a workers' state. Therefore, we find it contradictory when you state in IT 5:

"These unique historical conditions provide a space for the working class—a space in which workers can exert their social weight, burst open the incipient capitalist state and defend (and extend) the gains of the workers' state." (p 33)

If Russia is a capitalist state, although incipient and far from stable, then the gains of October have been destroyed. This would not be altered by the fact that the misery and economic dislocation caused by capitalist restoration could lead the working class to vigorously fight back. Of course, there would still remain a lot of gains to defend (fighting against privatisation, further reduction of social provisions.). However, such a "defence of the gains of the workers state" would be little different from the one the Cliffites and other state capitalist groupings advance. Your formula confuses the issue. It seems that you are afraid of drawing the conclusions from your own analysis. If you take your own characterisation of Russia seriously, you should clearly state that the working class would fight back from a qualitatively different terrain and from a position of having suffered a historic defeat.

Conclusion

It seems that the RTT has been guilty of a certain "theoretical impatience" in relation to the capitalist restoration process in the former USSR. You consistently telescope events and underestimate the difficulties that the imperialists and the pro-capitalist bureaucrats face in overturning seventy years of history. This is probably related in turn to your position as far back as last August that Yeltsin was the greater evil and that his victory then signalled the fairly quick collapse of the workers' state.

Methodologically, your initial mistake stems from a wrong conception that restoration proceeds via the national break up of the former USSR and the integration of each former republic into the imperialist world system. (By the way, the undialectical and one-sided nature of this view can all too easily be noted in the fact that for some republics—see Ukraine and even more Tadjekistan—the break up of the USSR was a means of breaking *from* fast-track Russia and hence slowing the process of restoration).

Moreover, the RTT's concentration on currency convertibility as the key method of this integration and subordination is flawed. The economic significance of this measure is misunderstood, its position in the sequencing of restorationist measures is not properly grasped.

We hope that in the next period the RTT can respond to our comments here so we can extend the discussion further. It is a sad reflection that few in the international "Trotskyist" movement even consider this discussion worthwhile.

The August 1991 coup in the USSR, the character of the bureaucracy and the tasks of revolutionaries

A reply to the Bolshevik Party for the Fourth International (Argentina)

In November 1991 the comrades of the Bolshevik Party of Argentina (PB/A) made some serious criticisms of the LRCI's declaration of 22 August 1991 on the failed coup attempt in the USSR. We welcome the opportunity this presents to debate strategy and tactics with the comrades in Latin America.

Historical events put political tendencies to the test. Theoretical and programmatic positions have to prove themselves during key turning points of the class struggle; then their implications, their practical consequences are shown in the clearest and sharpest way. The August coup in the Soviet Union was clearly such an event. The strategic and tactical questions posed and the answers revolutionaries gave to them will be crucial not just for the building of a revolutionary Trotskyist leadership in the CIS, but on a world scale.

The various centrist distortions of Trotsky's analysis of the ruling caste in the degenerated workers' state, especially the theory of the dual nature of Stalinism and the political adaptation to a "progressive" wing of the caste flowing from this characterisation, led certain so-called Trotskyist tendencies to back the coup-makers.

The most consistent of these Stalinophile centrists were the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT). By supporting the State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE) it outstripped even the ICL (former iSt): their Spartacist parents took a formally abstentionist position because the coup-makers "bungled" their operation. In not carrying out their promised onslaught on the democratic rights of the working class "effectively", the SCSE showed themselves to be amateurish and hence earned the disdain of the ICL.

Unfortunately the PB/A deverts forward a similar position to the IBT in its critique of the LRCI statement (22 August) on the coup, despite claiming to have a similar analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy to the LRCI.

"The statement of the LRCI maintains a classification similar to our one of the bureaucracy, in which Stalinism exists as a caste and the majority of the conservatives are committed to the defence (in a counter revolutionary manner, we agree) of the bureaucratic planned property relations, of course with different conceptions as to the degree of concessions to imperialism or to the working class." ("About the coup in the Soviet Union")

However, we cannot agree with this assessment of the LRCI's characterisation of Stalinism nor do we agree that our analysis of the bureaucracy is "similar" to that of the PB/A. We therefore want to deal with the question of the character of the Stalinist bureaucracy and, especially, with the question as to whether one major faction

of it must inevitably, or at least in the present circumstances, be committed to the defence of bureaucratically planned property relations.

Secondly, we will deal with the question of what position revolutionaries would have fought for, and how the consciousness—and the class independence of the proletariat—could best have been developed during the coup.

The character of the Stalinist bureaucracy

The PB/A correctly reject the theory of a "single restorationist bloc", i.e. an analysis which does not recognise the different factions that are developing out of the fragmented ruling caste and of the development of embryonic capitalist layers in the degenerated workers' states. Any such theory will fail to explain the conflicts between different forces and factions of the former bureaucracy which can even lead to coup d'états, and to nationalist and civil wars.

But the PB/A go too far by forcing a historically outdated—and therefore false—schema onto contemporary reality: "During the epoch of the foundation of the Fourth International the bureaucracy could be classified as having three wings: the Bolshevik wing in the figure of Ignace Reiss, fascism represented by Butenko. Both wings were separated by an intermediate strata gravitating towards bourgeois democracy. The third wing existed in the form of the rule of Stalin's Bonapartist oligarchy (Transitional Programme). At present the inter-bureaucratic antagonisms have changed their form—as was anticipated in the Transitional Programme—so that the equilibrium has moved to the right, favouring the bourgeois wing of the bureaucracy (as result of the debacle of the Stalinist sectors—and their inability to find a way out of the crises—they are forced to give more concessions to imperialism, because they find it impossible to use the whip for disciplining the productive class as was done by Beria or to appeal to the revolutionary and anti-capitalist feelings of the proletariat)." (ibid)

This schema is then transferred to the present situation: "The coup, even if in a distorted form, was a final demonstration of the predominant conflict (restorationists vs. hardliners; capitalism vs. socialism in one country?) in the absence of a revolutionary leadership, or of a force orienting itself to the political revolution. (...) Despite major battles (...) and the miners' strike, which obtained important gains from the bureaucracy, the dominant factor is not yet the political revolution. This means that the principal antagonism is still that

between the Stalinist oligarchy and the restorationist bureaucracy. The latter is in the process of consolidating a superstructural triumph after the political counter-coup of August." (ibid.)

However, this analysis of the bureaucracy has much more in common with the iSt's theory of the dual nature of Stalinism than with the LRCI or Trotsky's analysis.

Trotsky was clearly aware that the bureaucratic caste's role in the degenerated workers' state not only acted to undermine the post capitalist property relations by economic mismanagement and by alienating the workers and the oppressed, (i.e. it was objectively counter-revolutionary) but was also subjectively so. Many bureaucrats would be prepared to back social counter-revolution and make the transition to being members or servants of a new capitalist class:

"If ... a bourgeois party were to overthrow the ruling Soviet caste, it would find no small number of ready servants among the present bureaucrats, administrators, technicians, directors, party secretaries and privileged upper circles in general. A purgation of the state apparatus would, of course, be necessary in this case too. But a bourgeois restoration would probably have to clean out fewer people than a revolutionary party." (L Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, New York 1972, p. 253)

Although Trotsky often stressed that the bureaucracy had to defend the post-capitalist property relations, he never saw this as an ahistorical necessity:

"Since of all of the strata of Soviet society the bureaucracy has best solved its own social problem, and is fully content with the existing situation, it has ceased to offer any subjective guarantee whatever of the socialist direction of the policy. It continues to preserve state property only to the extent that it fears the proletariat. This saving fear is nourished and supported by the illegal party of Bolshevik-Leninists, which is the most conscious expression of the socialist tendencies opposing that bourgeois reaction with which the Thermidorian bureaucracy is completely saturated. As a conscious political force the bureaucracy has betrayed the revolution. But a victorious revolution is fortunately not only a programme and a banner, not only political institutions, but a system of social relations. To betray is not enough. You have to overthrow it. The October revolution has been betrayed by the ruling stratum, but not yet overthrown. It has a great power of resistance, coinciding with the established property relations, with the living force of the proletariat, the consciousness of its best elements, the impasse of world capitalism, and the inevitability of world revolution." (ibid, p251)

In Trotsky's view the defence of the planned property relations by any part of the ruling caste (except for the faction of Reiss) was the result of internal and external class forces, not of an inner necessity. This fact arises from the bureaucracy's character as a caste, which "has not yet created social supports for its domination in the form of special types of property" (ibid, p249).

In contrast to the bourgeoisie in the capitalist countries it is not irrevocably tied to specific property relations, except as a parasite is attached to its host. Thus whilst its host is in relatively good health and yields a substantial amount of blood, these leeches have no reason to abandon it. But when their parasitism reaches the

stage where the host is plainly moribund then they seek to transfer their "services" to imperialist capitalism as the instruments of its restored rule.

To suggest that any bureaucratic wing (apart from revolutionary dissidents like Reiss, who consciously broke with the caste) will defend the degenerated workers' state under all circumstances means to give the ruling caste a social character it simply does not have. In short, it is to give it a deformed or degenerated proletarian character. Trotsky did not characterise it in this way: he insisted that the caste had a petit bourgeois class character.

Therefore, in a situation of deep economic and political crisis, all factions of the bureaucratic caste can simply give up any commitment to defend the post-capitalist property relations and can try to save their privileged positions in society by allying themselves with the forces of restoration (or they may even for a time become the main driving force of this process). The events in Eastern Europe since 1989 clearly demonstrate this. Where was the bureaucratic faction committed to defending the degenerated workers' state in Hungary, in the GDR (after the Leipzig demonstrations), or in Poland?

However, although the bureaucrats may try to save their skins by leading or by backing social counter-revolution, this does not mean that the caste as a whole has a commonly agreed strategy. As we explained in our statement on the coup, the SCSE clearly had no principled opposition to the restoration of capitalism. It represented that layer of the bureaucracy which faced the immediate loss of its positions of power and privilege through the break up of the Union (that is why the coup followed the new Union Treaty). This section did not see any chance of preserving its caste privileges in a broken-up Union. These bureaucrats basically sought another way to achieve restoration, rather than being opposed to it in principle.

The PB/A might argue that—unlike Yeltsin—the hardliners only wanted to implement "market measures" (which we agree should not be simply equated with the restoration of capitalism): "We particularly emphasise that market measures do not in themselves mean capitalist restoration: this depends on the character of the state power. In the case of the conservatives this reflects their caste interests, interests built on the working class foundations of the USSR, but which objectively they are undermining." ("About the coup in the Soviet Union")

However, there is little or no evidence that the coup makers were committed to defending post capitalist property relations, despite the PB/A's theory. Most of the layers of the bureaucracy which the coup makers wanted to rally behind them stood aside during the coup, waiting to see who would win. This internal weakness of the SCSE reflects the fact that they did not have a fundamentally different strategy from that offered by either Gorbachev or Yeltsin. They clearly had no qualitatively different (i.e. non-restorationist) economic programme. This was not just a tactical question. They simply did not see any other realistic alternative to the restoration project.

Furthermore, developments in the aftermath of the coup show that what remains of these forces are far from leaping to the defence of the workers' state even in its

degenerated form. What remains is open Great-Russian chauvinism. They ally with monarchist and fascist restorationist forces like Pamyat. Alksnis, the hardliner touted by the PB/A, is indeed a major spokesman, not for "socialism in one country", but rather for the great Russian chauvinist and anti-semitic organisation *Nashi*! He has repeatedly and publicly announced his belief in the necessity of introducing a full market economy and speaks of the bankruptcy of "communism".

It is false to say that all this happened after the coup (which Alksnis did not support). The alliance between hardline Stalinists and the Great Russian nationalists, monarchists and fascists is far older than this. The very foundation of these organisations up to four or five years ago was clearly supported by hardline bureaucrats and by the KGB. This should be no surprise if we realise that what we have in front of us is not, as the Spartacists monstrously claim, the faction of Reiss but the faction of Butenko; that is, the faction of restoration by the road of fascist dictatorship!

Contradiction

The PB/A's analysis of the role of the different Stalinist factions during the coup is in contradiction with the events, basically because it uses a mechanical, rather than a dialectical view of the bureaucracy. But, as history has shown more vividly than any quotation, no sector of the bureaucracy inevitably defends the planned property relations. The problem which arises from the PB/A's characterisation is that the bureaucracy—or at least a part of it—becomes an objective defender of the property relations, irrespective of the world and local balance of forces, the depth of the economic and political crisis and how these determine the aims of the caste.

Secondly, this analysis has the even worse consequence of driving the PB/A into equating the ousting of the bureaucratic hardliners by Yeltsin and Co. with the destruction of the workers' state itself. According to the PB/A, whether the carrying out of market measures means capitalist restoration or not depends on the "character of state power": "In relation to the counter-revolution, the triumph of the coup was the lesser evil because it prolongs the agony of the workers' state which would allow the fight for the political revolution, and the continuation of the sustenance of the workers' state superstructure usurped by the bureaucracy." (ibid.)

Thus the hardliner's victory would have represented the "continuation of the sustenance of the workers' state superstructure usurped by the bureaucracy". The failure of the coup is equated with the restoration of capitalism. Again, this basically means that, in the absence of a revolutionary leadership of the masses and organs of working class power (soviets, workers' militias), the gains of the October revolution depend on the hardliners' hold on state power. The existence of the workers' state is tied to the survival of the dictatorship of the ruling caste.

We do not agree with this view. The restoration of capitalism requires more than just the destruction of the conservatives' hold on state power (which by the way was not totally completed by the coup and counter-coup). It requires the destruction of the operation of the bureaucratic planning system and its replacement by the law of value as the dominant economic regulator of society. The

LRCI has devoted a lot of time and attention to the degree to which this has been achieved by the bourgeois restorationist governments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

It is not simply a question of abolishing the monopoly of foreign trade or the central planning commissions like Gosplan. The mechanisms of resource allocation, the credit and banking system and the inter-factory links must also be broken, since they effectively prevent the law of value from dominating the economy. The working class must become a class of free labourers once again. The seizure of state power by Yeltsin after the coup certainly put state power into the hands of the fast-track restorationists without completely resolving the dual power situation between them and the all-Union wing of the bureaucracy. This is represented in part by the army which prefers a slower state-capitalist process. Although this seizure of power marks a giant stride further down the road to restoring capitalism it did not and does not constitute the end of this process. Decisive battles still lie ahead.

Revolutionary tactics during the coup

However, the PB/A's false analysis of the Stalinist caste, which inevitably leads it to see one faction of the bureaucracy as objectively progressive, because it must defend the degenerated workers' state, is only one source from which the PB/A support of the Stalinist coup flows. The second is that, for the PB, political revolution simply was not on the agenda. Therefore, the PB/A gives, the position toward the coup-makers was simple: better that they succeed than Yeltsin so that "the workers will gain a "breathing space"!

But what "breathing space" is the PB/A talking about? If the coup had been effectively carried out, if it had succeeded in imposing the state of emergency, it would have smashed all democratic rights which had been given to the working class over the last few years. The PB/A's assessment that these rights are merely "non-essential concessions" alters little. Even if this was true—that all the democratic rights were merely concessions the working class had not even fought for—this still would not answer the question: what would the smashing of these rights—one central goal of the coup—have meant for the development of the workers' consciousness?

The answer is clear for everyone who has eyes to see. It would not have produced a "breathing space for the working class", that is, time to raise its consciousness to the level necessary to set accounts with all factions of the bureaucracy and the embryonic capitalist class. No. The destruction of these democratic rights and of the independent working class organisations (including the smashing of the miners' struggles which the PB/A refers to positively) would have stifled this consciousness. If Stalinist dictatorship is a medium for the development of fighting class consciousness, why, over sixty years, has it lowered this class consciousness to the point where the workers will not (yet) rally to the defence of their historic gains?

The PB/A comes dangerously close to seeing Stalinist dictatorship as a "blunt instrument" roughly adequate for the defence of the gains of October. On the contrary,

it is an instrument for their destruction. Such a dictatorship would have once again thrown back the proletariat into the nightmare of forced atomisation. It would have alienated the working class from its property relations even more—if this were possible.

The result of such attempts to rescue the workers' state can be seen in Poland today. The crushing of Solidarnosc in 1981, whose leadership also clearly had a programme which would have led to the restoration of capitalism, shows where such a "defence of the workers' state" ends. The Jaruzelski coup was carried out in the name of the defence of "socialism in one country". Yet it led to the destruction of a mass organisation of the working class and strengthened its right-wing leadership. It objectively made it more difficult to advance workers' consciousness and to raise it to the level necessary to carry out proletarian political revolution.

The lesser evil 19 to 21 August was not the coup-mongers but the forces—including the miners' union—grouped around Yeltsin's resistance to the coup. Trotskyists were obliged to fight the coup and to take united action with all forces (except the fascists) who were committed to opposing the coup. The reason for this is simple. For us the working class, not the bureaucracy, is the historic subject which must carry out its own emancipation. It must itself create and defend the instruments necessary to achieve this. It has to learn how to do this by its own experience and its own struggles. Any other view is an utter capitulation to the standpoint of Stalinism which sees the bureaucratised workers states as the highest good to be "defended" against the working class itself if necessary.

However, the PB/A's backing of the coup-makers does not just arise from its assessment of the coup's objective aim. For them the coup also represented "the lesser evil in relation to the bourgeois counter-revolution, which could win, as occurred, because the working class was not able to intervene from a revolutionary position in this battle and obtain a victory against the bourgeois and bureaucratic counter-revolution."

For the PB/A the working class simply was not capable of defending itself against counter revolution; therefore, the coup-makers had to do it! To pose the question in this way misses the point and the crucial question for revolutionaries: how to win the working class to the defence of these gains in a revolutionary crisis? How can the gains the working class had made in terms of self-organisation, democratic rights and so on be defended against a coup (which set out to destroy them) whilst supporting the coup at the same time?

A daydream

The programme, the PB/A puts forward to achieve this task is little more than a daydream: "This position of the Trotskyists should have started with the following programme: for the defence of the workers' state, fight the capitalist counter-revolution; for the defence of the political and economic gains of the October Revolution based on economic planning, state property and the market under workers' control (factory committees, soviets); for the abolition of any measure or proscription against workers committed to the defence of the workers' state; for the right to form unions and political organisa-

tions and to arm ourselves for self-defence; for the defence of socialist property and the historic gains of the working class. The main agitation should be: General strike, the formation of strike committees, for the arming of the proletariat, price freeze, wage increases, stopping the privatisations and blocking the imposition of the state of siege."

Given that the coup was met with resistance by the most combative sectors of the working class, especially the miners—and not just by petit bourgeois intellectuals or individuals with expectations of capitalist enrichment as the PB/A suggests—what would this mean with regard to their organisations? The PB/A state that they wanted to rally the workers to block the state of seige, yet the workers who were doing precisely this were Yeltsin supporters!

The workers that at one and the same time wanted to fight Yeltsin, defend the planned property relations, stop privatisations and oppose the coup mongers existed only in the heads of the PB/A. The task of revolutionaries was to seek to convince the workers who supported Yeltsin and who opposed the coup that his action was designed to increase for the workers' own exploitation, designed to put more bonapartist measures in his hands. But we could do that only by demanding that Yeltsin carry out the most radical measures possible in the fight to destroy the coup makers. If we had done that we could have got the workers to crush the KGB and prevent Yeltsin inheriting it wholesale.

The majority of the workers supported Yeltsin—a very unfortunate fact but a fact which revolutionaries have to recognise and develop tactics capable of overcoming. The PB/A simply ignore it. They are not interested in the mass demonstrations against the coup in Lenin-grad and the miners' strikes against it. In the absence of a revolutionary leadership and after the nightmare of nearly 70 years of Stalinist dictatorship, the influence of the democratic restorationists in the proletariat is hardly surprising.

Revolutionaries had to take the defence of the democratic rights of the working class as their starting point and try to expose the Yeltsin leadership by raising demands like the arming of the workers. We would have supported his call for a general strike against the coup. In short, we would have formed a military united front even with the Yeltsinites against the coup-makers. It is good that the PB/A agrees that it was necessary to stop the coup by workers' action, but it is inconsistent not to propose unity in action with those workers and their leadership who wanted to do just that.

This would also have included the defence of the White House against the coup. Sectarians might argue that this would be a defence of Yeltsin's policy, and of the petit bourgeoisie and semi-capitalists who were also there. They have argued that it was right to oppose the coup, but not alongside the forces whose headquarters were the White House, or that it was possible to ally with the workers who supported Yeltsin but not with Yeltsin himself. This intransigence, attractive as it might be for a western leftist, is rather more geographical than political. Its method has much more in common with the Stalinist Third Period method of the "united front from below" than with a Leninist-Trotskyist application of the united front tactic.

Some have suggested it would mean joining in action with workers only so long as they maintained some appreciable distance from the White House in their fight against the destruction of democratic rights by the coup-makers, against the establishing of a military dictatorship. "We would join their struggle, but would not defend the leaders they (unfortunately) trust and who are coordinating the struggle against the coup" goes the refrain. This simply means making the defence of the democratic rights of the workers conditional on these workers first abandoning their misleaders. All this would accomplish, however, would be to lose any possibility of exposing the betrayals of these misleaders by putting demands on them whilst trying to organise the workers in independent organs of struggle.

Of course, a military united front against the coup-makers would have had clear limits. No political support could be given to Yeltsin. No support could be given for his seizure of power after the coup failed. The united action would be focussed exclusively on stopping the coup succeeding and would have been aimed at mobilising the working class, organising for struggle and arming it. Such tactics was far from impossible and are far from being "without precedent" in the tradition of genuine revolutionary Marxism. In essence, it is the same method that the Bolsheviks applied towards the Kerensky government during the Kornilov coup.

Proletarian struggle

This would have provided the basis for exposing Yeltsin's anti-working class policy in practice and at the same time building democratic organs of the struggle (factory committees, workers' militias, workers' councils). These proletarian forms of struggle and organisation, although aimed directly against the coup, would also create the basis for successfully challenging the democratic restorationists. Such a struggle would have provided a basis for raising workers' consciousness to the level necessary to defend the planned property relations, breaking the class away from the Yeltsinite leadership and building a revolutionary vanguard party of the class in such a struggle.

Yeltsin's influence in the class can be combatted. However in the struggle to break the workers away from him failure to oppose the trampling of the democratic

rights of the toiling masses could only have a counterproductive effect. Any active or passive collusion with the coup would tie them even more strongly to the restorationists, or at best would drive them more deeply into political apathy and passivity.

The reason why the working class did not come to the forefront of the struggle, lies in the weakness of the coup itself, which collapsed before the great mass of the proletariat began to move. But this in no sense means that it was impossible to exploit the social contradictions between Yeltsin and the sections of workers and the oppressed nationalities who followed him against the coup.

For the struggles which lay ahead, a successful coup, the effective imposition of the state of emergency and the destruction of the right to self-organisation of the working class would have had a terrible effect. It would have demoralised the class and made it even more difficult to overcome its political disorientation. And what would have been achieved by such a crackdown? At the very best a temporary slow down of the marketising economic measures by a brutal, desperate Stalinist dictatorship, a traumatic extension of the death agony of a historically illegitimate caste, whose song is definitively sung.

The only breathing space the working class will get is that created by its own strength and its own victories. Despite the restorationist governments in power and despite the masses' illusions in them, these regimes have been vacillating and racked with internal disputes, paralysed in part by fear of what the workers' reaction will be when their measures directly attack the jobs and social gains. In Poland for example workers' resistance has sown dissensions amongst the restorationist parties and led to a temporary slowing of the attacks.

Already the measures the restorationists have taken have considerably diminished the strength of the workers' illusions. However, the restoration process can only be reversed if a clear alternative revolutionary leadership is created.

It is to that task that the LRCI is bending all its efforts. We hope that the PB/A will reconsider its positions which constitute a self-defeating accommodation to Stalinism in its death agony. We firmly believe that the remains of the gains of October can only be saved by merciless struggle not only against the Yeltsinite restorationists but also against their remaining Stalinist rivals.

Postscript

The International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) holds a similar view to the PB/A on the August coup. They wrote: "A victory for the coup leaders would not have rescued the USSR from the economic impasse that Stalinism had led to, nor would it have removed the threat of capitalist restoration. It could, however, have slowed the restorationist momentum at least temporarily, and bought precious time for the Soviet working class. The collapse of the coup, on the other hand, led inevitably to the counterrevolution that is now in full flood. Without

ceasing to expose the coup leaders' political bankruptcy, it was the duty of revolutionary Marxists to side with them against Yeltsin and Gorbachev." (1917 supplement, September 1991, p2)

This stance—like that of the PB/A—flows from a wooden and Stalinophile appreciation of the ex-USSR.

The IBT likes to claim Trotsky's support for its position by citing the following quote from his article *The USSR in the war*: "We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the

Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR". But the IBT omit the last part of this quote which runs "and that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is for us subordinate to the question of the world proletarian revolution."

This shows that whole question is not as straightforward as the IBT thinks. This quote only supports the IBT's position if we can show that temporary support for the bureaucratic hard-liners would have enabled the proletariat to improve its position, to achieve its strategic goal of political revolution (undoubtedly an important element of proletarian world revolution). Secondly, it assumes that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy and preserving state property were counterposed during the coup. This is what the IBT suggests when they argue that "the conquests of the October Revolution weigh far heavier than bourgeois democracy in the scales of human progress."

Congratulations on your discovery, comrades. But for Trotsky, the defence of the October Revolution meant the mobilisation of the working class to take part in this defence. Up until his death, Trotsky assumed that the working class would virtually spontaneously defend these gains. But after decades of post-war Stalinist oppression and—from the 1970s—creeping economic stagnation and growing illusions in "western style" (i.e. bourgeois) democracy, can we really imagine that this assumption is still valid?

So the question naturally arises: how can we raise the proletariat's consciousness to the level necessary to defend the conquests of the October Revolution? For all knee-jerk Stalinophiles the answer comes back with all the rapidity—and persuasiveness—of an automaton: by fighting for soviet power and political revolution and blocking to the death the emergence of bourgeois democratic forums and rights which are, as is well known, mere camouflage for capitalist restoration. It all seems so straightforward.

Lenin and parliament in the USSR

What is truly straightforward is that this is a million miles from the position of Lenin and Trotsky. In 1933 Trotsky reminded his followers of Lenin's approach to the use of democratic demands in a workers' state:

"At the Seventh Congress of the Russian Communist party in March 1918, during the discussion of the party programme, Lenin carried on a decisive struggle against Bukharin, who considered that parliamentarianism is done for, once and for all, that it is historically 'exhausted'. 'We must', retorted Lenin, 'write a new programme of Soviet power, without renouncing the use of bourgeois parliamentarianism. To believe that we will not be thrown back is utopian... After every setback, if class forces inimical to us should push us to this old position, we shall proceed to what has been conquered by experience—to the soviet power...' Lenin objected to a doctrinaire antiparlamentarianism with regard to a country that had already gained the soviet regime: we must not tie our hands beforehand, he taught Bukharin, for we may be pushed back to the once abandoned positions." (L Trotsky, Writings 1932-33 p301)

Today, faced with the collapse of Stalinism, we use democratic demands and forums to expose the bourgeois restorationist forces and their inconsistent and lying attachment to democratic rights. We do this as and when illusions in these forces grip the masses and gain their support. We cannot simply counterpose workers' councils and proletarian revolution. We must seek to use tactics to break the influence of these reactionary forces and by this route rebuild workers' organisations and class consciousness. We do it not to deaden workers' consciousness of its class independence but to sharpen it.

Thus in the DDR in 1989 we argued against parliamentarism, but recognised that "if the bureaucracy is obliged to call parliamentary elections then we call for the workers to call prior mass meetings to select their candidates and to hear the candidates of all parties. The workers should demand annual elections and deputies who are recallable by their constituents. They should demand of all candidates a pledge to defend statified and planned property. By these means the fraud of bourgeois parliamentarism can be exposed, its dangers minimised and the principles of workers' councils fought for." (Trotskyist International 4, 1990, p28).

Those, like the IBT or the PB/A who said that in August 1991 their task was to bloc with the coup-makers to crush the "democratic" opposition were in fact indefinitely postponing the political revolution, precisely because this revolution requires that the working class understands by experience who its enemies are. They were also objectively reinforcing the process of capitalist restoration, since the workers will be thrown into the arms of the restorationists as a result of common repression.

The IBT fear the consequences of a hard line crack-down on the workers. So they introduce an alternate scenario that might arise from a bloc between the workers and their jailors: "given the evident lack of internal cohesion of the coupists and current crisis of Stalinism, the Soviet working class might actually have increased its democratic rights and advanced the march towards workers' political revolution had it been independently mobilized in the struggle against capitalist counterrevolution." ("Yeltsin's Counter-revolution Was the Greater Threat", IBT West coast special, Spring 1992)

What a state of emergency! What a coup! In order to make its own position more attractive, the IBT tries to fool the working class—but only succeed in making fools of themselves. The IBT want the coup to succeed, which would require the coup-makers to be strong and solid; but if they did not possess this necessary cohesion (which they did not) then this might allow the workers to establish their own rights! Comrades, either you wanted the coup to succeed or you wanted the working class to strengthen itself. Which is it?

The coup makers may have been the representatives of a senile caste but they were not so senile that they did not realise that an active and mobilised working class was their worst nightmare. Even if the IBT do not grasp this fact the coup makers certainly did: you cannot have a successful coup and at the same time mobilise the vast majority of the population, the proletariat, to political life. Therefore, they were quite clear on the need to ban

strikes, to restore "law and order" under their dictatorship. An increase of democratic rights would have meant that the coup failed and could only have brought defeat for the coup-makers.

The example of Poland

The IBT's Spartacist inspirers are right when they suggest that a successful coup could only have been a "Jaruzelski" coup. And where were the freedoms of the Polish working class following his coup d'etat? Who suffered most from the repression of Solidarnosc? The Polish working class! Its organisations were destroyed and, despite the collapse of Stalinism, it was much more disorientated at the end of the 1980s.

This experience alone shows where "critical support of the Stalinist hard-liners" leads—to "critical" support for the destruction of working class consciousness and organisations. Faced with the turmoil of the Stalinist regime, the IBT's position means a bloc with the bureaucratic dictatorship against the workers and the reinforcement of the workers' support for the forces of capitalist counterrevolution. This too is the lesson of Poland after 1981.

The IBT see the coup's failure and Yeltsin's subsequent seizure of state power as the decisive point of the collapse of the degenerated workers' state. Why? Not because the economic foundations of society have changed from one day to the other, not because the law of value is once again dominating the economy of the states of the former Soviet Union, but because the Stalinists committed to the state ownership of production collapsed. This essentially sees parts of the Stalinist bureaucracy not just as objective defenders of the planned economy (come what may) and thereby objectively a guarantee of these, but also identifies the very existence of the degenerated workers' state based on a political superstructure. In short, it turns Marxism on its head. However, we have long argued that the Stalinophile tradition from which the IBT comes mistakes defence of the workers' state for defence of the parasitic bureaucracy. So it is no surprise that the IBT (and iSt) equate the destruction of the Stalinist bureauc-

racy with the destruction of the property relations.

The IBT and the Spartacist brethren are like Trotsky's sectarian critiques in the late 1930s who opposed the call for a "united, free and independent Soviet Ukraine". Why? Because the workers had a reactionary leadership. Because a nationalist movement against the Kremlin threatened the whole USSR. Because the defence of the USSR was a higher good than national independence. All these arguments of the IBT are not new. They were employed against Trotsky—and he answered them:

"To find the bridge from reaction to revolution—that is the task. This is the import, by the way, of our entire programme of transitional demands (The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International). Small wonder that the sectarians of all shadings fail to understand its meaning. They operate by means of abstractions—an abstraction of imperialism and an abstraction of the socialist revolution. The question of the transition from real imperialism to real revolution, the question of how to mobilise the masses in the given historical situation for the conquest of power, remains for these sterile wiseacres a book sealed with seven seals. (...) Yet our critic apparently recognized the inevitability of a political revolution against the Bonapartist bureaucracy. Meanwhile, this revolution, like every revolution, will undoubtedly present a certain danger from the standpoint of defense. What to do? Had our critic really thought out the problem, he would have replied that such a danger is an inescapable historical risk which cannot be evaded, for the rule of the Bonapartist bureaucracy is doomed." (L. Trotsky, Writings 1939-1940, p50-51)

The IBT stands for the political revolution—but without risks. It is thus no accident that time and time again the IBT have come down on the side of the Stalinist gendarme when the working class has gone into struggle without a revolutionary leadership.

Faced with the task of breaking the working class from pro-capitalist bourgeois democratic misleaders who try to exploit the proletariat's justified hostility to the Stalinist oppression, the IBT have repeatedly capitulated.

Key slogans in Peru in the coming period

International Executive Committee, 4 July 1992

1 The Peruvian section of the LCRI reacted immediately to the Fujicoup by issuing a statement on the 10 April. Its analysis of the reasons for Fujicoup, its call to resistance immediately through agitating for a general strike and the programme of immediate and transitional demands was correct, as was its programme of democratic demands up to Fujicoup itself. Faced with this new turn in the reactionary offensive, and given the lack of working class resistance, it was and remains essential to expand the range of revolutionary democratic demands to include the call for a single chamber sovereign constituent assembly.

2 Unable to crush the bourgeois opposition organised around San Roman and the "underground" congress, and under the pressure of the demands of imperialism, Fujimori has called elections for a Constituent Congress on the 18 October. This was originally the demand of the bourgeois opposition and imperialism, and has been taken up by Fujimori only in order to try and restrict its powers and make it produce the kind of restrictive parliament he wants. In this situation, the Peruvian section of the LCRI should raise the following slogans and appropriate propaganda:

- Down with Fujicoup! For an immediate end to all arrests and detention of political opponents with the exception of fascists and paramilitaries!
- For popular assemblies, democratic councils of action composed of revocable delegates elected by the rank and file! For the forging of a central coordinating council to organise resistance at a national level around a national programme of demands!
- For the complete freedom of trade union and political organisations and propaganda. For workers action a military or imperialism to restrict its powers or franchise. It should be composed of 500 deputies, elected on a national basis, with its members earning the average manual wage.
- No plebiscites before the elections for the Constituent Congress which might give legitimacy to Fujicoup! Abolish the Presidency!
- For free, universal secret direct and equal suffrage in the elections to a Constituent Assembly for all those over 16 and for all those workers under 16.
- For the polling and counting of results of the elections to be supervised and controlled by the rank and file of the trade unions and the workers' parties, peasants' organisations and their militias.
- No restrictions on who can stand or vote in the elections, including illiterates. Break with the popular front against Fujimori! For workers' candidates to be selected at meetings of workers', poor peasants' and urban poor organisations.
- For a free and equal access to the media, especially local and national television, under workers' control, except for fascists and paramilitaries.

3 All the parties and organisations of the workers, peasants and urban poor should unite in the Constituent Assembly to win a majority and mobilise the masses to impose the following:

- Stop and reverse all measures of Fujishock and Fujicoup!
- Reject all IMF packages and renounce the foreign debt!
- End the state of emergency throughout the country! End the massacre of Sendero prisoners! Smash all military decrees! For the release of all political prisoners except paramilitaries and fascists.
- Remove the High Command and senior officers of the army; for rank and file soldiers unions/committees organised in full independence of the officers and generals; for the election of the judges.
- Abolish all special forces of the security services. Workers' organisations must put them on trial for their massacres and crimes!
- For workers' and popular tribunals to investigate corruption! Tax the rich! Abolish purchase and property taxes which attack the poor! For the redirection of pro-imperialist interest payments into a massive programme of public works to satisfy the needs of the workers. For free decent housing, water and energy supplies and for the building of hospitals and schools. For a national literacy campaign as part of a massive expansion of the education system!
- Direct commercialisation of exchange between the town and countryside! Nationalise the land, banks and public transport under workers' control. Down with repression against the coca peasants! For freedom to produce coca! For peasants' defence squads faced with state, paramilitary or Sendero attacks! Expropriate the narco-traffickers!
- For a revolutionary workers' and poor peasants' government!

4 In the case of the elections to the reactionary Constituent Congress going ahead in the absence of a working class upsurge, we will not boycott it. But the main energy of the proletariat should continue to be focused on the fight for a thorough democratic alternative, convened through workers' and poor peasants' councils, made sovereign by workers'/poor peasants' militias. We would intervene into the Constituent Congress with a view to winning other workers and peasants deputies to our programme of revolutionary democratic demands.

5 The only decisive solution to the Peruvian crisis and the exploitation of the workers and peasants by imperialism and the indigenous bourgeoisie lies along the road of the overthrow of capitalism by councils of workers, peasants and the urban poor.

Our position on the Constituent Congress

Translated from *Poder Obrero* (Peru) September 1992

When Fujimori carried out his coup, his prime concern was to pave the way for a dictatorship designed to draft a new constitution supplemented by an electoral procedure. In addition to that he aimed to outlaw parliamentary control for one year in order to draw up a programme of radical privatisation as well as attacks on the labour movement. However, due to a range of mounting pressures, the dictatorship was forced to convene a one-chamber parliament which at the same time would draft a new *Magna Carta*.

The whole of the bourgeoisie needs to ditch a range of previous constitutional legislation to open the road for savage private capitalism. Monopoly and multinational capital profit most from these measures, at the expense of the internal market and the living standard of the masses; labour stability and other historic conquests of the workers will be pulverised.

Imperialism and the democratic opposition concur with Fujimori on the need to take a range of neo-liberal and repressive measures. But they disagree about the scale and the method. The White House insists on the development of stability framed by a formal democratic parliament. A democratic constitutional regime offers far better guarantees to investors as well as credibility when it comes to curbing the labour movement and smashing the armed insurrection.

Fujimori under pressure

Fujimori was recently under so much pressure that he was forced to withdraw five clauses from his first decree: abandon his plan to enable himself to enforce the new constitution if two plebiscites rejected what the CC had agreed; abandoned his plan of imposing a minimum voting age of 30. Despite Fujimori's backtracking, his assembly remains a reactionary powerless institution. It will not be a sovereign and autonomous assembly, it has no power, and it cannot carry out its own decisions. The assembly will not be able to question the decrees drawn up by Fujimori after his coup or kick him out of office; it will not be able to approve its own budget and MP's will not be immune from prosecution, without which repression can be used against the opposition.

Fujimori was initially ready to ban all political parties, but eventually the JNE proclaimed that all those parties that were legally recognised before the coup would continue to be so. Recently, however, Fujimori vetoed 20 legal parties in an attempt to exclude the Left from the election process. With the exception of the six major bourgeois parties, if parties want to participate in

the elections, they have to obtain 100,000 signatures within 45 days under repressive conditions.

When it came to political confrontation between the President and the two chamber parliament, we called for the abolition of both of these institutions and for immediate elections to a fully sovereign single chamber parliament instead, with delegates revocable by the electors. Because Fujimori succeeded in consolidating his power and because all political forces have decided to draw up different kinds of constitutional amendments, revolutionaries must take a bold initiative in order to take on the fraud of Fujimori and San Roman—that is, to demand a genuine constituent assembly.

This should consist of 500 members so as to embrace wide layers of society as well as to concentrate all power in its hands. The vote should be given to everyone over 16 years old, to soldiers and to minors who work. Everyone who can vote should be able to stand for election, including youth and illiterates. The election campaign should be controlled by workers', peasants' and popular organisations, supported by militias. Newspapers, radio and TV must guarantee free and equal access for all political parties under the supervision of the workers' organisations. There should be electoral participation without any restrictions (signatures, positions); no region, university, shanty town, mines, port or factory should be under military control, no political prisoners!

The role of parliament

Marxists are well aware that parliament is a tool of the bourgeoisie. The most genuine democracy is the democracy of the proletariat based on worker' councils, councils of the poor, peasants and soldiers' councils, elected and revocable from below through a sovereign assembly. However, for this democracy to exist, a socialist mass insurrection is necessary. In the absence of such mass upheavals, it is impossible to resort to the tactic of boycott.

In these circumstances, revolutionaries are obliged to participate in bourgeois elections in order to expose them and make use of parliament as a tribune for educating and organising the masses against capitalism. The current political situation is neither revolutionary nor pre-revolutionary. Rather, it is shaping up to be marked by one of the most reactionary offensives of the last period.

Because of the bankruptcy of the nationalist projects and the Stalinist bureaucracy, the treacherous role of the Left, the discrediting of the traditional elite, the rejection of authoritarian "Senderismo", the setbacks and weak-

ening of the labour-movement, and—last but not least—the colossal absence of revolutionary leadership, the government remains popular. Neo-liberal and “independent” forces speculate that the way to get Peru out of the crisis and to put an end to subversion is to attract capital. In these circumstances, the workers’ movement must make an active electoral intervention.

The task of the workers’ movement is to intervene as an independent force, armed with a real programme against the bourgeoisie. We must try to avoid even worse retreats and put forward a way of regrouping the workers. Workers must be stopped from becoming demoralised and supporting capitalist solutions or falling into degenerate petit bourgeois militarism.

To boycott or not to boycott?

The democratic bourgeois opposition is split between boycotters and non-boycotters. We must remember that IU, APRA, IS and the PUM brought Fujimori into office with their votes. They backed his first bills and later voted for the Cabinet that gave us Fuji-shock. As backbenchers, AP, PPC and Libertad supported hundreds of the most reactionary laws proposed by Fujimori. Faced with the coup the opposition refused to mobilise the masses. Instead, they backed several repressive laws and supported the massacres.

The nomination of San Roman had little effect: it did nothing to mobilise mass campaigns which could create a parallel government. The most important action taken by the opposition was to pressure US imperialism via OAS in order to temper parts of Fujimori’s first authoritarian amendments.

There are important tendencies within the boycottist sections of the democratic opposition. Ex-Presidents like Alan Garcia and Belaunde are calling for a boycott. They both believe that they would do miserably in the elections, so they are trying to reviving their fortunes without “burning their fingers” by drawing up the new Constitution. APRA, which was an accomplice of the dictatorship in the previous constitutional assemblies, is avoiding participation, fearing further discredit. Faced with the internal crisis caused by the recent purges, APRA is doomed to even further decline.

The left MPs have a sad record. IS, MAS, APS are mini-bourgeois parties who entered the first Fujimori cabinet, propping up a regime of privatisation and “moderate” anti-subversion laws. PUM, PCP and UNIR, having supported Fujimori, have now converted themselves into secretaries of the FREDEMO parliament, forming an assiduous fan club for the imperialist OAS.

Some sections of these parties are currently attempting to regain credibility by covering up their previous support for Fujimori through a policy of boycott. Other currents like the LETTIS are even prepared to stand on a joint election list with the neo-liberal opposition. The whole of the parliamentary Left is drifting to the right. Their aim is to form new broad popular fronts with the repressive and pro-privatisation bourgeoisie. The boycotters are building a bloc of class collaboration with reactionaries like Borea, Garcia and Belaunde.

PCP-SL, isolated from the masses and their organisations, is calling for an armed boycott. By their militarist, authoritarian and terrorist actions against the civil

population (like the massacre at Calle Tarata) they inevitably push important sections into the arms of reaction, therefore strengthening the dictatorship and the FFA alike.

No to class collaboration

Workers must oppose every class collaborationist bloc set up with the bourgeoisie. That means opposing every formation of a popular front be it a joint electoral list or the launching of a boycott. Supporting the boycott tactic would mean tailing the past bourgeois presidents and leaving reserved seats for the “independents” and bourgeois “Socialists”. It is a useful way for radical reformists to hide their cowardice. It means playing into the hands of Fujimori who wants to kick the left out of the Constitutional Congress so that he can get the assembly to impose reactionary laws up until his re-election in 1995.

Workers’ parties need to be bold and should use the crisis within the abstaining parties and the declining APRA and AP to win over the members and sympathy of these old populist parties in workers’ districts or at the workplace. The duty of revolutionaries is to use the tribune of the new Constitutional Congress to expose its reactionary nature and to mobilise the masses against the introduction of the most reactionary laws which the Congress will try to impose.

Trotskyists demand that the workers’ parties (PC, UNIR, PUM, UDP, PL, FOCEP, PT, PST etc) and the unions, the peasant and popular organisations (CGPT, Federaciones Sindicales, CCP, Clubes de Madres) to launch a workers’ united front aimed at intervening in the election campaign. Their task should be to defend the gains of the labour-movement, to oppose the repayment of the external debt and every attempt of privatisation, and finally put an end to Fujimori and the bourgeoisie. We call on these organisations to set up a united rank and file Congress, with democratically decided election lists containing no bourgeois representatives. This front must launch strikes (e.g. in the health service), and set up a central coordinating council to unite the fight.

Workers’ parties should not set up an electoral bloc with mini-bourgeois parties (APS, MAS, IS, DC etc.). In order to preserve their existence, they are looking for some crumbs from yankee colonial organisations like the OAS, instead of kicking imperialism out of Peru or forcing imperialism to keep its hands off Peru. Workers’ parties must launch mobilisations and direct actions to fight against the dictatorship. We also demand that the guerrillas subordinate themselves to the decisions taken by the Congress and that they respect—or launch—an elected anti-imperialist united workers’ front.

Revolutionaries always insist on preserving their principled critical stance towards reformist or centrist organisations. By constituting such fronts, Trotskyists fight to prevent privatisation by demanding state credit and technical support, under workers’ control; for no repayment of the external debt, for a sliding scale of wages and work; for the democratic election of the judges, for popular courts to punish the oppressors and the corrupt; for a workers’ and peasants’ government.

Trotskyists demand that the newly elected Congress should not recognise the Presidency of the republic and that it calls for a new, democratically-elected constituent

assembly. This tactic has absolutely nothing in common with the "Red Motion", which was an attempt to transform the constitution of Haya and Bedoya into a soviet-based system, replacing it by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Were a list of workers' candidates to be presented, we would call for a critical support for this list. That is, we would take a step with those workers who were moving towards class independence, but at the same time we

would expose the reformist or centrist nature of the candidates. This would include inviting these organisations to struggle for the demands of the exploited. If these forces were in an election list with the bourgeoisie (such as Mohme, Pease, Bernales etc) we call on them to break with the bourgeoisie. We will only vote for the candidates of the workers' organisations. If there are no representative workers' candidates at the elections, we will campaign for a spoiled ballot.

Resolution on Maastricht

International Secretariat 26 May 1992

1 The Maastricht Treaty of December 1991 marks a new stage in the process of European economic integration. The Single European Act (1986) was designed to create a single market by January 1993. This policy of the European imperialist powers was intended to overcome the crisis and stagnation into which the European Community (EC) fell in the 1970s and early 1980s. Growth levels fell to half those of the 1960s and growth of intra-EC trade stopped. The erection of non-tariff barriers to trade within the EC in the 1970s seemed to be a step back from the goal of integration.

2 In the mid-1980s, recovery from recession, the relaxation of the Second Cold War and, most importantly, the increased economic pressure from Japan and the USA changed the situation. Mitterrand and Kohl took the initiative for a new round of more profound integration. The European bourgeoisies—in particular France, Germany and Italy—needed a new series of co-ordinating mechanisms. In particular they needed the free circulation of all commodities—including labour power—within the frontiers of the EC.

3 They needed to decrease the burden of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which swallowed up 75% of the EC Budget, in order to free resources for greater regional aid. They needed to move on from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism towards European Monetary Union if they were to really compete with the USA and create a regional international currency to rival the dollar. They needed to create a common system of social welfare costs and provision and to equalise labour costs throughout Europe, in order to prevent “social dumping”—unequal competition due to cheap labour and poor social provision. Under the terms of Maastricht the pressure on each country is to meet the criteria leading to greater “convergence” of economic performance. Those which fail will be relegated to the second division of European powers, which will doubtless include the peripheral semi-colonial economies which have no chance of achieving convergence.

4 Each of these measures—regional aid, economic and monetary union and the Social Charter—has run into enormous opposition from one or another of the major or minor powers. The collapse of Eastern Europe, the disintegration of the USSR and the unification of Germany enormously increased the pressure not only to fulfil all of these measures but to take concrete steps, or at least agree on the goal of moving towards some sort of

political and military union. Within a decade, this could mean the creation of a federal European imperialist superstate.

5 The international working class has nothing in principle to fear from the centralisation and organisation of production on a continental scale; such a mode of organisation is intrinsically superior to isolated national production, which is one of the elements restraining the unfettered development of the forces of production. However, a precondition for such continental organisation being progressive is that it should take place under the rule of the international working class. It is not excluded that capitalism can unite Europe, but it will only lead to increasing exploitation, oppression, competition and, ultimately, war.

6 Britain's strategy is to hold open the door to enough EFTA and East European states so as to slow the crystallisation of the EC into a regional bloc let alone into a federal superstate. Britain wants to continue its world exploitative role (under US and Japanese hegemony); the huge non-European investments of British imperialism (far greater than any other EC nation) would be most threatened if growing economic regionalisation led to a fracturing of world trade and capital flows. However, it is unlikely—outside of a fracture of the Franco-German alliance—that Britain possesses either the political cunning or the strength to obstruct the unification process.

7 German imperialism faces a number of major short and medium term problems: the “unforeseen costs” of unification and the need to reduce its (higher than Japanese and US) unit labour costs. In turn this points the need to discipline and weaken the unions, generally reducing the unsustainably high “social” and “co-determining” elements of their system, such as worker participation in management etc. The class struggle that this will bring will undoubtedly delay and divert Germany from its integrative goals to some degree. But the opening up of Eastern Europe and the CIS, the relatively high level of German investment there, the rivalry with the USA and Japan that will develop, as the destructive phase of restoration reveals viable scientific and high-tech elements to be salvaged from the defence industries, raw materials etc, will all push Germany, in alliance with France and Italy, to press ahead with fashioning out of the EC a supra-national state capable of fighting for their interests.

8 The EC states are currently attempting to adopt legislation through parliaments or referendums which will open the road to further social, economic and political unification. In every country this will mean not only the erosion of "national sovereignty" as bourgeois parliaments lose legislative power to the European institutions. It will also mean an attack on democratic rights, as decisions affecting the lives of hundreds of millions of European workers are increasingly taken by the unelected European Commission.

9 Maastricht will provide the political and social framework for a series of attacks on working class gains such as welfare services, nationalised industries etc. This, together with the loss of democratic rights, has led sections of the labour movement to oppose the Maastricht treaty from a nationalist point of view. For example, the French Communist Party has been mounting a massive campaign, seeking out sectors of the ruling class as allies. This position is profoundly mistaken. Maastricht does not impose such measures directly and without mediation. The national governments have to impose them and the working class has to be beaten into accepting them. If any member state were to withdraw from Maastricht, the anti-working class attacks would continue. In many countries they would increase, as intensified competition with an ever more unified European imperialism, and the withdrawal of EC funding creates growing difficulties for the ruling class. Finally, not all gains are being levelled to the lowest common denominator: the terms of the Maastricht treaty can also be a basis for extending rights and gains from states where the working class never won these gains, or where it has lost them.

10 Although Europe does not yet have a united armed force, renewed debate about the future role of Western European Union (WEU), Europe's intervention into Yugoslavia, the joint French-German regiments and Mitterrand's demagogic offer to cede power of France's nuclear arsenal to a united Europe all indicate that steps are being made in this direction. In European countries such as Ireland which claim a false "neutrality" the bourgeoisie will increasingly be pressured into bringing its declarations into line with its consistent participation in pro-imperialist actions under the aegis of the United Nations. This may eventually take the form of joining NATO, although this particular Cold War battlehorse is being increasingly retired in favour of a new, distinctly European armed force. We are opposed to, and vote against, all military spending and military actions of the bourgeois state. At the same time we denounce the hypocrisy of those ruling classes which claim neutrality whilst prosecuting the class war at home and abroad, arms in hand. A breach of such a fake "neutrality" can be no reason for voting "No".

11 Some centrists, such as the French LCR, are arguing for "a social 'no' in the name of international solidarity". But to some extent European workers will be better armed to fight back on a continental scale after the implementation of the terms of Maastricht. The "free movement of labour" not only lets the bosses move scabs, but can be the basis for promoting the unity of European

workers resistance to scabbing. The main way forward for European workers is to fight together against these attacks, to strive to universalise the best workers wages and conditions, the best protective legislation, the best health service and the freest civil and political rights which already exist in one state or another and build from there. Further, to regard the frontiers of the existing imperialist states as a protective bulwark, let alone to line up behind them with a Le Pen or a Thatcher, would be to poison internationalism, of which the working class must be the foremost champion. The workers of Europe should reject the call for a "No to Maastricht".

12 In Ireland, where a referendum is to decide on ratification, the issue of abortion has clouded the question of Maastricht. The Treaty contains a specific clause (a Protocol) which prevents an appeal to the European Court against the anti-abortion Eighth Amendment of the Irish Constitution. This attack on democratic rights was insisted upon by the Irish bourgeoisie in order to enforce the reactionary constitutional ban on abortion. On this basis the Irish pro-choice movement has been arguing for a "No" vote. This position is wrong for several reasons. Firstly, voting against the Maastricht Treaty would mean voting for the continued "independence" of the state which is responsible for the absence of these rights in the first place. Furthermore, since the anti-abortion movement has also been arguing for a "No" vote, even in terms of a campaign to show the strength of the pro-choice movement, the referendum will reveal little except that abortion rights was not the main issue in the minds of the majority who will vote on the Maastricht Treaty. Worse, the "No" vote stands a danger of confusing this vote with the reactionary sections of the petit bourgeoisie. Finally, in the context of the anti-abortion movement this campaign has shifted the focus away from one of the direct struggle for abortion rights to the more general questions of Europe, to which it is giving mistaken answers. In Ireland as in the rest of Europe, the working class should mount a campaign of abstention, and in the case of Ireland they should spoil the ballot forms with "Free abortion on demand—a woman's right to choose" as a protest against the reactionary anti-abortion legislation enshrined in the current constitution and which will be protected under Maastricht.

13 Attracted to a "social Europe" or a "Europe of the regions or the small nations", right wing reformists, nationalists and even some "Marxists" are arguing for a "Yes" vote. This too is profoundly mistaken and will have equally reactionary and class-collaborationist consequences. The unifying EC has the overall character of an imperialist power, exploiting semi-colonies both within its frontiers and beyond, restoring capitalist exploitation and misery to Eastern Europe, fomenting rivalry, and economic and, ultimately, military confrontation with the USA and Japan. We can never give a vote of confidence in imperialism to unify Europe in the interests of all its peoples and in the interest of its workers and small farmers. Only the working class can build such a federation, under the banner of the Socialist United States of Europe.

14 A united capitalist Europe will not aid or benefit

the masses of the super-exploited semi-colonies. Free movement within Fortress Europe will be matched by a battery of racist immigration controls, imposed by a new transnational police force with added powers for tracking "terrorists". There will be pressure for the introduction of obligatory identity cards on those countries which did not previously have them. The agreements of Trevi and Schengen are only a taste of things to come. Post-1992 Europe will be a fortress against political refugees and those fleeing the economic havoc that the EC and the IMF has wrought in the semi-colonies.

15 We reject both the new capitalist Europe which is currently being constructed and the isolated capitalist nation states which currently exist. To indicate this double rejection workers should demonstratively and actively abstain from choosing between the existing states and the existing EC of which they are a part and the post-Maastricht new order. Where the population is directly asked to endorse or reject Maastricht we say neither option is a real choice for workers.

16 Where national parliaments or constitutional assemblies take this decision we say to all the deputies who claim to represent the working class; do not vote in this false choice! But this is not a negative abstention. Deputies should use every tribune to attack all the reactionary consequences of the Maastricht Treaty *and* the existing reactionary legislation and constitutions of the member states. They should use it to call on workers across

Europe to fight against the loss of all past gains and for the extension of the best conditions to all.

- For the levelling up of all social benefits to the highest level to be found in Europe
- For working class action to stop attacks on social benefits
- For a Europe-wide fightback against the bosses' attacks
- Down with all anti-trade union laws designed to shackle resistance to convergence measures
- For rank and file links in all industries
- For the free movement of all workers within, into and out of Europe
- For the right to political asylum. Down with all immigration controls.
- Down with the Trevi and Schengen police agreements
- Scrap the Irish Maastricht Protocol
- No to a European police force, no to a European army
- Down with the unelected European Commission and Council of Ministers
- For the election of a sovereign European Constituent Assembly for all those countries in the EC or who seek to join it, convened and protected by the fighting organisations of the working class
- No to the bosses' Europe. Only workers revolution and a workers' council state can unify Europe on a progressive basis
- For the United Socialist States of Europe—a federation of revolutionary workers' states open to all peoples who wish to join.

***Militant action against fascism and state racism now!
No immigration controls!
No platform for fascists!
Build a fighting workers' united front!***

Leaflet to Youth against Racism in Europe demonstration, Brussels, 24 October 1992

Racism and Fascism: What they are and how to fight them

Racism is on the rise all over Europe. So is fascism. The parties ruling for the European bourgeoisie, Christian Democrats, Conservatives or "Socialists" have accompanied their moves towards a united European market with racist measures to keep out immigrants from Africa, Eastern Europe etc. The mass media run lurid stories of mass invasions by "economic refugees". Hit hard by the recession, the long term unemployed, the petit-bourgeoisie and even badly organised sections of the working class are becoming disillusioned with the traditional parties of the ruling class and the reformist labour movement. Some of them are turning to the demagogues of the far right who blame everything on immigrants.

In a bid to maintain collapsing electoral support, the establishment politicians themselves increasingly resort to racism and reactionary nationalism, thus giving it a "respectable" voice. The bosses' Europe touted in the 1980s as a historic achievement for the "brotherhood of man", the creation of an internationalism founded on free enterprise, is developing in the 1990s into a bear pit of racism and national chauvinism.

Racist attacks and murders are everyday experiences in the migrant communities of Europe. Through the TREVI and Schengen agreements the Euro-bosses have made sure that millions of migrant and immigrant workers are deprived of citizenship rights in the new Europe. In Britain new restrictions on asylum rights are proposed. In Germany the response to the attempted fascist pogrom in Rostock has been to set in motion the amendment of the constitutional guarantees on the right of asylum.

Fuelled by this "official" state racism, right-wing bourgeois parties like Jörg Haider's FPÖ in Austria have adopted strong anti-immigrant positions. In the November 1991 elections they got over 20% of the vote in Vienna. In France crypto-fascist organisations like the Front National get 16% of the vote and in Belgium the Vlaams Blok got 10.4%. In Germany and Holland neo-Nazi parties are enjoying a real renaissance. They have made significant electoral gains. On the streets fascist terror is growing bolder every week.

The immigrant communities have not remained passive victims of these attacks. In Sweden they have physically resisted the fascists; in France and Britain in the poverty-stricken inner city ghettos they have organised to defend themselves against police harassment.

Fascism is not just a form of militant racism. It has objectives beyond terrorising and driving out the immi-

grant communities. It uses racist, anti-semitic and even pseudo-socialist demagogy to gain a mass following amongst the petit bourgeoisie and the lumpenproletariat. It organises these angry and despairing masses into street fighting gangs and terror squads. Eventually it enrolls these squads in the service of Big Capital to smash the workers' movement and the progressive democratic gains it has won over generations. Big Capital only needs these costly and dangerous servants when it can no longer afford to maintain the democratic regime and needs to take back previous concessions in the interests of survival against its imperialist rivals.

This is not yet the situation in any EC state. The present threat is not of an immediate march towards power by these scum. But there is a real threat of their emergence as a serious force across Europe, a force that today terrorises the immigrant communities and sets the agenda for racist measures by the big bourgeois parties and constructs a weapon for the future against the unions and the left. What is the response of the leaders of the workers' movement to this danger?

These self-satisfied dignitaries have not lifted a finger against the rise of state racism or neo-Nazism. Worse, as with the German SPD, they have trampled on their earlier claims to be the real defenders of asylum rights and rushed to offer support to anti-immigrant measures. In France the Socialist government has copied the right's tactics by chartering planes to deport illegal immigrants en masse and even tried to implement part of the Front National's programme by setting up centres for imprisoning immigrants at all airports.

Why do the reformists rush to do the bosses dirty work for them? Because they are chained to the capitalist order hand and foot. For the European capitalists racism plays a fundamental role: dividing the working class, providing a cheap labour force with few democratic rights, legitimising a situation where millions starve in the Third World so that the European bankers can stay fat.

In France we saw the spectacle of a "communist" mayor leading the anti-immigrant campaign in Vitry back in 1980. In Britain in the '60s and '70s it was Labour governments which passed the main racist laws on immigration and set up the special police squads who terrorise the black communities. It is the same in virtually every country.

There are of course left reformists like Steinkühler of the German metal workers union IG Metall who talked a year ago of trade union defence guards for the immigrant areas under attack from the far right and who opposes the change in the constitution. Gregor Gisi and

the former Stalinist PDS have joined demonstrations against the racist violence in Rostock. Certainly we need to demand that Steinkühler, Gisi and Co put their money where their mouth is and mobilise their members and their resources in building anti-fascist defence and mass mobilisations now. But it would be utter folly to wait for these "lefts" to lead a fightback against racism and fascism. At best they might join in if we take the lead now.

It is the duty of class conscious workers themselves—the rank and file of the mass workers' parties and trade unions, black and immigrant organisations and above all young people within all of these, to join together across Europe in a militant struggle against racism and fascism.

A plan of Action against Fascism and State Racism

We should be fighting:

- Against immigration controls, for open borders, no restrictions on immigration into the EC; defend and extend the right of asylum. Make the capitalists pay the cost of housing refugees and migrant workers.
- Open all the trade unions to the immigrant workers, organise the unemployed, so that the bosses cannot use them to force down wages or worsen social conditions.
- Against racist laws which deny full citizenship rights to migrant workers and reduce immigrants to second class citizens
- Against discrimination in employment we should fight for workers' control of hiring and firing, and of the production process itself to ensure equal rights and opportunities at work for black/migrant/refugee workers.
- Against discrimination within the workers organisations we should fight for the right of racially oppressed workers to caucus at every level, and for the right of representation on leading committees and at conferences.
- Against the racism of the police we should fight for the disbandment of all police riot squads and similar paramilitary forces. Where immigrant communities fight back against police harassment we demand "police off the streets", the release of all prisoners and the dropping of all charges against those who participated in the uprisings.
- Against the resurgence of fascism we cannot appeal to the bourgeois state to disarm and ban the fascists. The police stood by in Rostock while the would-be pogromists burned down a migrant hostel. In France they regularly protect Le Pen's scum. In Britain it is the same. Workers and the immigrant communities must rely only on their own strength.
- The "democratisation" of the police force is no answer. They are not "workers in uniform" but an integral part of the state machine that must be smashed if workers and the oppressed are to take and hold power. Of course we should defend any existing measures of democratic accountability or partial control over the actions of the police. But we must recognise that only a workers' government based on workers' councils and an armed workers' militia, can create a law or order in the interests of the exploited and oppressed.
- For the right to self-defence of the communities under

attack. The workers' movement must be won to supporting and participating in the organised self defence of black and immigrant communities. Defence squads, armed with all the means necessary to be effective and trained to resist the pogromists or the police, should be formed—not in the distant future but as an immediate task.

The workers' united front against fascism. How can we build it?

Defence squads cannot be really effective if they are only tiny groups of the far left. This job cannot be completed by small, clandestine groups of anti-fascists. We need a united front of the mass workers' organisations and all parties and groups that call themselves left, socialist or communist. The immigrant communities must be mobilised against the fascist threat. Such a united front must be committed to denying the neo-nazis any right to organise. They must be driven out of the trade unions. We must drive their marches and paper sellers off the streets and back into the sewers they come from.

But the construction of this united front must be started with whatever forces are available. The small size of today's anti-fascist forces should not be an excuse for inaction or for pacifism. At the same time the present apathy of many workers faced with the threat of resurgent fascism does not mean we can ignore that our key task is mobilising the tens and then hundreds of thousands needed to smash fascism.

But "anti-fascism" alone, as a sort of isolated, specialised activity, is no solution. Racism and fascism are growing because the workers' leaders offer no answers and no hope to those whose lives are being destroyed by capitalism. Unemployment, factory closures, decaying housing and social services, no prospects of a decent and fulfilling life for the young, these miseries are the deep roots of racism. It is insecurity and frustration and the apparent lack of any radical solution that turn people towards the poisonous drug of racism and even fascism.

We need to overcome the acute crisis of leadership that afflicts the workers' movement; only a movement which fights in a revolutionary manner to abolish the root of racism, capitalism itself, will win the masses and isolate the fascists. The collapse of Stalinism and the long term bourgeoisification of social democracy has left large sectors of the working class without a living experience of socialist political consciousness. We need a powerful campaign against racist ideas in the working class linked to a mobilisation for a real class struggle alternative.

But the crisis of leadership does not stop at the reformist parties and trade unions. The so-called revolutionary left in Europe presides over many pacifistic and moralistic "campaigns" against racism and fascism. Even worse, some sizeable organisations actually ignore the problem and say it will only be resolved by socialism in the distant future.

Look at the French anti-fascist movement. Not one of the organisations has the intention of building a movement that can smash Le Pen. Lutte Ouvrière and the Parti Communiste Internationaliste turn their back on any kind of anti-fascist activity whatsoever, saying that socialism is the only answer; fighting the fascists only

draws attention to them and helps them grow. The Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (section of the USFI) is more active but concentrates much of its work on SOS-Racisme, an organisation heavily influenced by the Socialist party which consistently avoids any confrontation with Le Pen's marches or mass rallies.

In Britain the famous "Anti Nazi League" has been relaunched, but its only serious backer and inspirer the Socialist Workers Party, systematically refuses to fight for physical confrontation with the fascists because it fears it will lose its allies amongst the Labour left and the stars of the entertainment world. Militant, the main organisers of this rally, have only just emerged from an attitude to fascism nearly as passive as Lutte Ouvrière's. They still do not mobilise their considerable forces against the growing menace of the British National Party.

But these organisations comprise several thousands of the most militant elements in Europe. We have to convince their rank and file members at least to force their leaders into action and organisation against the fascists and the organised racists. In every country they, and the existing anti-fascist groups, should form the nucleus of a united front, pledged to defend the immigrant

communities, to aid their self defence and to deny the fascists the right to meet, to march and to organise.

Such united fronts do not need bourgeois politicians, pop stars or church leaders to be effective. On the contrary they need to aim themselves in the opposite direction, towards the mass parties and trade unions of the workers of Europe. In so doing they will enormously aid the radicalisation of the organised workers of the entire continent and hasten the open struggle for a socialist Europe as part of a socialist world.

Fifty years ago Europe was in the grip of fascism and millions of workers were killing each other in an inter-imperialist war. The post-war imperialist order, which was supposed to ensure that inter-imperialist conflict and fascism never rose again, is falling apart.

We call on the youth of Europe, black and white, to take the lead in a militant struggle against racism and fascism, a struggle inseparable from the fight for socialism, new revolutionary workers' parties and a Leninist-Trotskyist International.

That is what the LRCI and its sections in France, Germany, Ireland, Britain, and Austria are fighting for. Join us!

Whither the JCR-Egalité?

Translated from *Pouvoir Ouvrier* (France), Autumn 1992

The crisis of Stalinism has had considerable effects on the "Trotskyist" organisations. In some, such as *Lutte Ouvrière* (LO), differences over the nature of the USSR have led to the development of tendencies. In others, such as Pierre Lambert's *Parti Communiste Internationaliste* (PCI), the effect has been indirect. The opportunist policy pursued by the PCI having been reinforced since the collapse of Stalinism, a number of PCI militants have refused to take the final step—the straightforward dissolution of the PCI into a largely fictitious "*Parti des Travailleurs*" ("Workers' Party"). For their pains, they were expelled.¹

In the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* (LCR), French section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), the factional divisions, which go back almost two decades, have been completely altered. The rightist opposition around Matti split over his "innovation" of calling for a "democratic" rather than a workers' revolution. A group of militants rejected this logical development of their previous positions and began a turn to the left.

These differences have had immediate repercussions on the work carried out by the LCR amongst youth, notably in the *Jeunesses Communistes Révolutionnaires* (JCR), where some of these leftward-moving comrades are active.

The balance of forces within the JCR has thus changed, even though there are still remnants of the Mattist past. This development has so annoyed the leadership of the LCR that it appears to be preparing to sort matters out by simply dissolving the two youth organisations which currently lay claim to the title of the JCR.

The JCR has been occupying the minds of the LCR since 1989 when there was a change in the majority of the JCR which went against the factional line-up in the parent organisation. The long-running crisis came to a head in November 1991 during the 9th Congress of the JCR when a split took place, leading to the creation of two JCRs, *JCR-Autre Chose* and *JCR-Egalité*, named after their respective publications.

The two organisations had opposing conceptions as to what kind of youth organisation to build. *JCR-Autre Chose* wanted to build an "open and broad" organisation, where all rebellious youth could find their place on a minimal programmatic basis, whereas the *JCR-Egalité* were in favour of an organisation of youth who were Trotskyists and proud of it, able to fight for what they understood to be revolutionary positions.

At its 10th Congress in February 1992, the LCR decided between these two irreconcilable lines. The *Ligue*

wants to transform itself into a "non-strategically delimited party"; so LCR youth will have to consign their red flags and revolutionary programme to the museum. Things aren't what they used to be: now that the LCR claims to be "On the left of the possible", there's no need for all the clobber of yesteryear. Better to be discrete, to lie down smiling before the reformists: that's the only way to behave!

To their credit, the *JCR-Egalité* have rejected this policy. This unexpected and novel political independence has attracted the attention of other organisations: *Socialisme International* and the *Ligue Trotskyste de France* have written them "open letters"; the *Alliance des Jeunes Révolutionnaires*, recently expelled from the PCI, has set up a coordinating committee with the *JCR-Egalité*, and the two organisations carried out a joint campaign around Maastricht; discussions have also taken place between the leadership of the *JCR-Egalité* and leaders of LO, etc.

Writing about the *JCR-Egalité* is thus decidedly in fashion. For our part, we think that this evolution of a critical current amongst the youth is probably the most important development on the left for more than a decade. It can and must lead to the regroupment of principled Trotskyists, a regroupment based on a common understanding of the centrist errors of the past, an analysis of the period opened by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the tasks which flow from this, and a programmatic agreement on the nature of revolutionary strategy and tactics in the years up to the end of the century.

We intend to participate in this process. Only centrists take short cuts or avoid difficult subjects: we prefer to closely examine the politics of the *JCR-Egalité*, to encourage all steps forward, to point out the ambiguities and possible programmatic and tactical differences, and to study the key theoretical problems in all their practical consequences. Some will think us nit-picking, others, principled. This is the only road which will lead out of the current maze. We are certain that the militants of the *JCR-Egalité* will appreciate our frankness.

The fight against the FN

Because of its electoral results, its penetration of civil society, and the banalisation and copying of its politics, the *Front National* (FN) has become a menace for the working class. The fight against the FN is a central issue. On several occasions, the comrades of the *JCR-Egalité* have been amongst those who understand that we need to build for and carry out a mass physical struggle

against the FN.

- After a long debate, the Caen branch adopted this line, and was able to mobilise the workers and youth of the town to physically stop an FN meeting.
- In Paris, on the 18th March, as Le Pen rounded off his series of racist meetings at the Zenith concert hall, the JCR rejected the clever “tactic” proposed by the organisers of the counter-demonstration which involved turning away from the Zenith. Instead, the JCR tried to get youth to go towards the Zenith, under the slogan “No withdrawal to the Bastille, No Zenith for the fascists”. The CRS riot police replied by a vicious attack against the demonstration, leaving several injured.
- At Bayeux, following an attack by FN thugs against anti-fascist school students, the JCR drew the lesson that “next time, we will have to defend ourselves”.²

As against the complacency and the refusal to act which characterises the major organisations of the French left, this is refreshing. Further, it is the fruit of a political struggle and has been strongly criticised by the LCR itself! These ex-ultra leftists did not hesitate to use the pages of *Rouge* to attack the comrades of the JCR-Egalité—not the fascists!—for their actions.³

Unfortunately, the JCR also shows great confusion on this question. In the “Political Theses” they adopted at their 10th Congress in September 1991, the JCR-Egalité did not say one word about the FN, and barely made reference to the rise of the racist tide! Even if this was only due to “forgetfulness”, it is nonetheless revealing.

Ten months ago, the JCR explained to us that “Those who think that it is ‘midnight in the century’, that the time has come for direct, physical confrontation with the far right and that, from today, it is necessary to build anti-fascist committees on this basis, are mistaken.”⁴

We don’t think that it is yet “midnight in the century”, but we do think that in order for it not to become so, we must organise the necessary actions to stop the FN from growing. Amongst these actions is precisely “direct, physical confrontation with the far right”.

This contradictory position—on the one hand support for direct confrontation, on the other hand rejection of it—can be explained by the previous policies of the JCR-Egalité, heavily influenced by the Matti tendency of the LCR, which itself finds its inspiration in Lambertist democratism. The PCI has systematically refused to organise the slightest action against the FN, claiming that the real problem is the Mitterrand government and the Vth Republic.

Quite clearly, the JCR have not completely broken with this mistaken method. Thus, in the same issue in which they defended their actions on the 18th March, *Egalité* also insisted that “the JCR had no intention of trying to get through the police lines. That would not only have been irresponsible, but also completely wrong: only the working class and its organisations can stop the FN by fighting around their own demands.”⁵

Or again: “To stop the fascist threat, to abolish unemployment and casual labour, we must fight against the current government. We must unmask those who lead the workers and the youth from defeat to defeat, capitulating in front of the ‘economic necessities’ of a system in crisis. Mitterrand’s policy plays into the hands of Le Pen. We must defeat it.”⁶

Or again: “the most important point of today’s struggle is to fight together, employed and unemployed, French or immigrant, for the defence of the rights of immigrants, against the policy of this right-wing government which hides its true nature. To smash the Front National, we have to defeat this government.”⁷

These positions are not only in clear contradiction with the actions carried out by the JCR at Bayeux, Caen and Paris. They are also wrong. Consciously or not, this whole analysis draws its inspiration from Lambertism, and it is wrong.

Of course, the government, and behind it the whole capitalist system, are responsible for the rise of the FN and the racist tide. As we wrote in our leaflet for May Day 1992, “only the revolutionary destruction of capitalism can forever prevent the resurgence of fascism”. Of course, we must denounce this system and its government. Of course, we must carry out concrete actions against both of them.

But this does not mean that the struggle against the fascist threat can be replaced by a vague fight “against the government”. The FN won’t wait until we have overthrown the government before it grows and becomes stronger. There are actions we can and must carry out today, together with workers who are not in favour of the revolutionary destruction of capitalism (that is, the overwhelming majority) but who are ready to fight the FN.

This policy is the united front; the only preconditions are that the action should be clearly in the interests of the workers, and that freedom of criticism is preserved. In the case of the FN, the fundamental task is to stop the Nazi rats from meeting and demonstrating, by the use of mass physical means.

Lambertism also talks about the “united front”, but this is only in order to deform the concept, to replace concrete action with other forces by a policy which is both opportunist and sectarian, which aims only at building its own organisation on a rightist basis. We fear that this is the method which is at the root of the ambiguities we can find in the politics of the JCR faced with the rise of the FN.

The Maastricht affair

The JCR, like the LCR and most of the French far-left organisations, called for a “No” vote in the referendum on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty which took place on the 20th September. The JCR-Egalité’s analysis was fundamentally correct. They declared that “in and of themselves, neither the ‘yes’ nor the ‘no’ will open an independent road for the proletariat”⁸ and that faced with “the generalised social regression promised by the treaty, with the attempts to weld the European imperialisms into a block, the Jeunesses Communistes Révolutionnaires raise the liberatory perspective of the Socialist United States of Europe.”⁹

And yet, despite this correct starting point, the JCR opposed the idea of calling for an active abstention in the referendum, of rejecting both the nationalists of the “yes” vote and the nationalists of the “no”, of insisting first and foremost on the need to fight against the capitalists’ attacks, whether they come under Maastricht or under the Vth Republic. Instead of adopting this revolutionary position, the JCR gave the same advice as the centrists—

"No".

Some of the reasons put forward by the JCR to back up this position reveal the centrist influence of Lambertism. In particular, the arguments about secular, anti-religious policies reveal an astonishing degree of confusion. The JCR point out that the Maastricht treaty does not contain one word about the separation of the Church and state in European institutions. But they do not explain that this is due to the cowardice of the "democrats" who wrote the treaty, who did not dare suggest to the British—amongst others—that they should adopt this elementary reform. Instead, and despite the fact that there is no threat whatsoever against the democratic reforms of the French Third Republic in terms of the relation between church and state, the JCR lashed out in a fashion worthy of old Lambert himself:

"Will the French have to give up this law, will they—as is the case in Greece, for example—have to go to church to get their birth certificates and official family papers? (No!—PO) Will the catechism be part of the official school curriculum? (No!—PO) Will the state pay the salaries of the clergy? (No!—PO) Will the state pay for the construction and maintenance of places of worship, churches, temples and other caverns of superstition? (No!—PO) We shouldn't laugh: the absence of the separation of Church and State in the founding treaties of Europe makes this a very real threat."¹⁰

"We shouldn't laugh"? Oh yes we should! Or rather, we could laugh if it wasn't so serious. The origin of this ridiculous position can be found in the lines which follow: "But there is something which is even more serious. (Is it possible?—PO). Secularity is one of the necessary conditions for the construction of a peaceful Europe."¹¹

Whether they like it or not, the authors of this pamphlet, like their Lambertist inspirers, here reveal their illusions in the bourgeois reforms of the Third Republic. After all, France has been well and truly "secular" for nearly a century, and yet it hasn't been "peaceful" or shown the slightest hesitation in going to war!

This kind of position adapts to the current consciousness of the majority of reformist workers—our dear "democratic" Republic is worth more than all their Maastrickery. Far from representing a consistent opposition to reformism, the JCR, despite their intentions, find themselves encouraging reformist ideas.

Rejecting our position on Maastricht, the JCR suggested that "not voting against the Maastricht treaty (and that is the question that is posed) in the name of some strange voting purism, would be a reactionary position."¹² We should point out in passing that we did not adopt our position in favour of an active abstention in the name of some "voting purism"—strange or not—but rather in order to reinforce class independence, and to prepare the workers for the struggles they will have to carry out tomorrow.

The JCR instead called for a "No" vote in the name of the need to inflict "a profound defeat on Mitterrand and his government. The tradition of the Vth Republic allows us to think that Mitterrand would be obliged to resign were the No' to win. That would clearly be a rejection of his anti-working class policies. Organising the struggle for a No' enables us to get rid of this government which serves the bosses all the quicker."¹³

This is a long way from the "liberatory perspective of

the Socialist United States of Europe" of which the JCR were so proud at the beginning of the referendum campaign. Instead, the JCR emphasised that any No' would be a left No' ("rejection of his anti-working class policies"), thus enabling us to get rid of the main enemy, Mitterrand and, implicitly, to put someone better in his place.

Yes, we need to get rid of Mitterrand. But, unlike the JCR, we are not indifferent as to the circumstances under which that takes place. Mitterrand—and the workers who, unfortunately, still support him—being beaten by openly bourgeois parties is not part of our programme.

This does not seem to have occurred to the JCR. The line they put forward seems very left, but it contains an opportunist kernel: the main enemy is Mitterrand, and all other questions are subordinated—or forgotten—faced with the main task which is getting rid of the government.

Once again, the JCR have copied part of their politics from the Lambertists. The break with Mattism has not been completely carried through. The gap between the (correct) starting point and the (false) conclusion is striking. For the moment the JCR seem able to live with this contradiction. But that is not the point: their method is incoherent, and it will inevitably lead to other confusions and other wrong positions which will be even more serious.

The question of the USSR

From the 1920s onwards, the nature of the USSR has given rise to fierce debates within the revolutionary movement. Some have imagined that the USSR was a form of "state capitalism" or "bureaucratic collectivism". Others, like Trotsky, defended the idea that the USSR was a degenerate workers' state within which the working class had been expropriated from all political power, but where capitalism had not been restored. Today, this analysis can only be a starting point for understanding current developments. The break-up of the USSR and the coming to office of bourgeois, openly restorationist governments in all the republics of the ex-USSR raise important problems in terms of the nature of the CIS and the tasks of revolutionaries.

In June 1992, the JCR published an "attempt at an analysis of the evolution of the ex-USSR". This pamphlet clearly shows that, unlike the LCR, the JCR are looking for a new political and programmatic understanding—"a bringing up to date of the revolutionary programme" as the author puts it. At the heart of the document there are two questions: the August 1992 coup attempt and the nature of the CIS today.

The analysis of the origin of the reactionary coup presented in the pamphlet is very similar to our own. We are told that the coup "was the despairing attempt by one wing of the bureaucracy to regain control of events" but that "in terms of their economic programme, the coup-mongers did not have a qualitatively different project from those of Gorbachev or Yeltsin."¹⁴ But this is not enough. Part of "bringing the revolutionary programme up to date" involves giving a programmatic answer to the coup attempt. And yet *Egalité* has not said one word about its position. Are there differences within the organisation as to what position should have been put

forward?

D. Elliot, the author of the pamphlet, seems to support the correct position that it was necessary to defend the democratic gains against the tanks of the coup-mongers, even if this required a united front with forces led by Yeltsin, but he does not say so clearly. Further, his analysis of the failure of the coup is exaggerated: "the coup was defeated by the resistance of determined sections of the population of the major cities", he tells us.¹⁵

If only this were true. In fact, the population was generally indifferent to the coup attempt. In Leningrad and Moscow, tens of thousands of people—including our comrades—did demonstrate and set up barricades. But the putsch collapsed because the army was not confident in the coup-mongers' project. On this point, the pamphlet appears to reveal the influence of those who, like the Morenoites, thought that the response to the putsch was "a genuine revolution".

Is Russia a capitalist state?

The most audacious position put forward in the pamphlet is on the nature of the CIS. We agree that "the overall process taking place is currently that of a counter-revolution", but we do not agree that the economic counter-revolution has been completed. For D. Elliot, "neither Russia nor the majority of other republics to come out of the ex-USSR are workers' states, even bureaucratically degenerate ones. However, state ownership of the means of production remains dominant (...) At the moment, the Russian economy is a sort of state capitalism: property relations which permit the private appropriation of the means of production and the effective domination of the nationalised sector."¹⁶

Such a situation is not impossible, but we need to clearly define the terms being used. The USSR was a degenerate workers' state because the law of value, the fundamental law of capitalism, no longer controlled the functioning of the economy. In its place, production and distribution were (badly) controlled by the bureaucratic plan.

The real question we have to ask is this: to what degree have the restorationists' plans succeeded? Have they been able to restore the law of value to the dominant position it holds in western countries? This is the turning point which would mark the qualitative change from a degenerate workers' state to a capitalist state. Clearly, this is not a theoretical question, but an empirical one. To our knowledge, even in Poland and Hungary, the final steps, in particular the introduction of the law of value in the granting of credit and the functioning of the central banks, have yet to be taken.¹⁷

The criteria used by D. Elliot to support his definition of the CIS are not clearly explained, but seem to be based on the political character of those who hold power, that is, the restorationists: "the whole of the state is no longer, even in a deformed fashion, the guarantor of the expropriation of capital, but rather the guarantor of the restoration of private property."¹⁸ That is, the existence of a bourgeois government at the head of a country means we have to define that country as capitalist. This method, if we have understood it correctly, is wrong.

The nature of the state

The nature of the state is defined by the property relations which are actively defended by bodies of armed men. As far as degenerate workers' states are concerned, it is not sufficient for these men to be politically bourgeois: the key question is that of the actions they carry out.

Let us apply this method to the ex-USSR. The state apparatus is composed of counter-revolutionaries. But the economy they control "functions" according to the remains of the bureaucratic rules established before the collapse of the Communist Party. We are dealing with a moribund workers' state, dominated by a bourgeois government. Or, to use D. Elliot's terms, "a post-capitalist infrastructure and a bourgeois superstructure."¹⁹

It would be wrong to confuse the political nature of the state apparatus and the nature of the state itself. That would mean, for example, that as soon as the Soviet Armed Forces (SAF) entered Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War, the occupied territories immediately became degenerate workers' states, whereas in fact the Stalinists spent three or four years trying to restabilise capitalism in these countries, before finally giving up, faced with imperialist pressure. This position would also imply that the Eastern part of Austria, occupied by the SAF until 1955, was a degenerate workers' state, and that so was Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989! The truth is somewhat different. And, finally, this position would mean that capitalism had been restored for at least a year throughout Eastern Europe.

This question is not of purely academic interest. There are obvious consequences for the programme of the masses of the CIS. And it is at this point that the pamphlet becomes most confused: "The coming revolution, which is no longer an antibureaucratic political revolution, is not yet a social revolution in classical terms because a majority nationalised sector still exists and the bourgeoisie has not yet been formed as a class. The coming revolution will be a political revolution of an unusual type, never before seen in history."²⁰

We agree with the last sentence, but, of course, this does not correspond to the rest of the analysis put forward in the pamphlet! If capitalism has been restored, as comrade Elliot suggests, the coming revolution will clearly have to be a social revolution. The change in definition proposed in the pamphlet would have important programmatic consequences: Who would be the targets of the revolution? If "the bourgeoisie has not yet been formed as a class", who profits from capitalist production? Where does the surplus value go? Who are the possessors who need to be depossessed? If the law of value dominates the economy (as it does under all forms of capitalism, be they statified or neo-liberal), how can we use the existing links between the enterprises to set up an emergency plan?

Without an answer to these questions, the "total reworking, (the) new programme"²¹ argued for in the pamphlet will be flawed from the outset. It is thus hardly surprising that the programmatic content of the document is so weak, and that transitional demands are virtually absent.²² And it is not enough to reply that "only a Leninist-Trotskyist party can elaborate such a programme".²³ Comrade Elliott set out to deal with the fundamental question: the nature of the CIS. The pro-

grammatic principles which flow from this were undoubtedly also within his grasp.

It appears that the position put forward in the pamphlet is not yet that of the JCR. The author has tried to deal with a complex and developing situation. Not all of his answers are correct; some are contradictory. But as against the positions and the analyses put forward by other far-left organisations, those presented in this pamphlet reveal a willingness to re-examine the world situation using Trotsky's method, without merely repeating, like some, the Transitional Programme, or, like others, rejecting the Marxist method. It is a step in the right direction.

An action programme?

Last year the JCR-Egalité adopted an action programme for youth,²⁴ again showing their desire to use the politics of Lenin and Trotsky. But despite their best intentions, they were unable to complete their break with the centrist traditions of the French far left. The document contains a series of slogans, many of which are correct—for example, opening the unions to youth and unemployed, unemployment benefit for all unemployed youth, or free abortion and contraception. Other slogans are false and reveal a mistaken understanding of the revolutionary programme, such as the reduction of military service to two months instead of the total opposition to military service under capitalism, or the call for “a minimum student income, granted on the basis of social criteria” rather than calling for the right to a decent grant for all students.

But the main problem with the document goes much deeper than the correctness of this or that demand. The programme claims to be “a weapon for mobilising youth shoulder to shoulder with the working class.” In fact, it is nothing of the sort. Of course, it contains slogans around which youth can be mobilised. But how? What is the relationship between abstract slogans and the real struggles of youth? An action programme is not a shopping list of slogans—in this case of maximum and minimum slogans. It must be based on transitional slogans, “unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat” as Trotsky put it.

This involves linking slogans to forms of mobilisation (strikes, occupations, agitational campaigns) and organisation (unions, the party). Further, such a programme must contain the central question of workers' control. Every time we seek to mobilise the workers or oppressed, the struggle must be centred on their self-organisation. For example, the fight for the sliding scale of wages must be linked to the creation of price control committees, formed by delegates elected in the factories, working class communities and by the organisations of working women and proletarian consumers.

There is none of this in the JCR Action Programme. There is not even a reference to the seizure of power by the workers, or to the revolutionary party! The programme does not go outside the framework of bourgeois society, despite its inevitable references to “the struggle for socialism” and to the “general fight against capitalism” which we can equally hear on the lips of left reformists. It is thus not surprising that the content of the programme is in fact limited to a series of slogans, some

of which are merely reforms and which are presented as such.

Take the slogans on unemployment. There is not one word about work-sharing under workers' control, not even in its current popular version of the 35 hour week with no loss of pay! Instead of this transitional demand, which we can find, of course, in the Transitional Programme, and which is absolutely fundamental in giving an answer to the problems of unemployment, the JCR put forward a series of slogans which are summarised in the following way: “These measures are the first of a law which would forbid casual labour.”

This is far from Trotsky's conception of the question. Instead of a mobilising slogan, the aim of which is to take the working class—and above all the youth—towards the question of power, we find an outline of a parliamentary law! Once again, we can detect the nefarious influence of the PCI and of Matti. This conception of the “Trotskyist programme” owes much more to Lambert than it does to Trotsky.

Or again, on the key question of the armed forces and military service, where the JCR add a minor reform to a pious wish: “For the reduction of military service to two months, with no time in barracks: the youth will not go and fight in imperialist wars.”

The idea of reducing military service to two months, instead of abolishing it completely, is widespread on the French far left. Often—although not here, where the slogan is presented on its own—this demand is explained on the basis that it is necessary for the workers to learn to use arms because of the coming revolution (true) and that two months is enough for this.

In fact, this is nothing other than an adaptation to the reformist idea of the French Communist Party according to which military service represents “the republic in arms”. This position “overlooks” the fact that today, in 1992, we live in an imperialist country: the reformist republicans' historical reference is anachronistic, 200 years old.

Like Trotsky in the Transitional Programme, our starting point is the slogan “not a soldier, not a penny for this system”. Thus we are against all bourgeois conscription of young workers. Where conscription exists, we fight for its abolition, and where it is proposed, we fight against its introduction. To meet the real need for workers to have the right and opportunity to learn military techniques and to bear arms, we call for military training in the workplaces and workers' districts, under trade union control in liaison with soldiers' committees.

The JCR's campaigns

This same mistaken method is at the root of the two campaigns recently launched by the JCR-Egalité. At the beginning of the year, the comrades launched “a petition for jobs for youth”, where we find the slogans from their action programme, although the 35 hour week without loss of pay is finally included.

We are not against these slogans, and yet we did not sign the petition. The reason is simple: the petition was conceived of as more than a simple piece of propaganda; it also demanded that “the workers' organisations organise a gigantic march for jobs”. The question is immediately posed: how? How can we mobilise the working class and youth so that such a demonstration (“gigantic” or

not) becomes a reality?

What concrete action should be carried out? Apart from signing the petition, the JCR had nothing to suggest. If enough youth signed the petition, how could we oblige the union and party leaders who would inevitably sign as well, to act?

If the JCR was really serious about the campaign they would have built an organising committee for the demonstration, called a meeting of all far left and youth organisations to build the campaign, etc. Without these steps we could indeed have still signed the petition, but only as an act of cynicism, knowing that it wouldn't mean anything. That is not our method, so we did not sign.

In May, the JCR launched a second campaign, this time for "an international conference of youth against the Europe of the police and the bosses, for the United Socialist States of Europe." We are prepared to participate in and to build such a conference, but we consider that the "fightback" proposed against "the plans of the bourgeoisie" once again runs the danger of falling into abstract propaganda.

We have seen international conferences come and go. Resolutions can be adopted until the cows come home. Some reformist leaders may even participate in the conference and vote for the resolutions, as long as no clear action flows from them.

The campaigns proposed by the JCR for the abolition of the Schengen agreement or for the defence of jobs, at least in their published form, give no possibility of having the slightest effect on reality. How can the campaign be carried out? With what forces? With what means? How can jobs be defended? By occupations? Or by mere protests?

The aims of the campaign need to be clear, the leaders need to be obliged to act and not just talk, and young workers need to be mobilised in action, not just to play the role of extras in a conference which leads nowhere.

The workers' government

The JCR "Action Programme" clearly reveals that they still have some way to go in their search for the politics and method of Lenin and Trotsky. This is even plainer when we examine their use of the "workers' government" slogan.

For Trotsky, as for the revolutionary Communist International, the "workers' government" slogan had two aspects. It could be a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat, used as a propagandistic slogan in order to explain what the revolutionary party will do when it is in power.

The other interpretation, which is dealt with in the Transitional Programme, is the "algebraic" version, put forward as part of the united front tactic when the question of power is posed.

This was the way the Bolsheviks used the slogan in 1917, basing themselves on the self-organisation of the masses—the workers' councils—which had led to a dual power situation. In using the slogan this way, revolutionaries seek to put demands on reformists and centrists.

As Trotsky explained: "Of all the parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name, we demand that they break politically with the bourgeoisie and enter upon the

road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government. (...) At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should, in our opinion, form the programme of the workers' and farmers' government."²⁵

Trotsky also points out that revolutionaries "should critically orient themselves at each new stage, and advance such slogans as will aid the striving of the workers for independent politics, deepen the class character of these politics, destroy reformist and pacifist illusions, strengthen the connection of the vanguard with the masses, and prepare the revolutionary conquest of power."²⁶

Let us study the positions of the JCR in the light of this explanation. We have already pointed out that the JCR Action Programme says nothing about the "revolutionary seizure of power" or about the need for a revolutionary party. Far from it. And, in general, the same can be said for subsequent issues of *Egalité*.

In March 1992 the Bureau National of the JCR correctly criticised the policies of the PCF and the PS, and finished off: "Another solution exists: break with the policy of 'opening up' to the bourgeoisie, break with the diktats of the bosses and the EC. You have the majority, you should declare parliament to be sovereign! Form a government which will serve the interests of the workers and the masses!"²⁷

Or again, at the end of an article on the PCF, the JCR again offered "another solution", "that of a policy which organises the class and the youth so that the PCF and the PS, elected as a majority in the National Assembly, are obliged to apply their mandate."²⁸

This might appear to be in line with Trotsky's position: "Of all the parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name, we demand that they break politically with the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government."

But revolutionary politics begin where those of the JCR stop. The comrades make no reference to the content of such a government. Where is the "indefatigable agitation around those transitional demands which should, in our opinion, form the programme of the workers' and farmers' government" which Trotsky also spoke of?

Far from fighting reformist illusions, the JCR's position reinforces them by creating confusion.

The main problem in France today is not the reformist deputies' refusal to obey their mandate. Rather, it is that the working class has illusions in the possibility of changing the world within the framework of bourgeois democracy. That is why the workers voted for the PS and the PCF. But these reformists will never "form a government which serves the interests of the workers and the masses". No doubt, the JCR do not think they will, either. But they don't say so! Worse, they clearly suggest that the workers should try and force the PCF and the PS to apply a programme (which one?) in the interests of the working class, without one word of warning!

Nothing but confusion!

Revolutionary and centrist positions

The JCR are light-years away from the position of the

Communist International in 1922. Writing about a "workers' government" such as that which the Bolsheviks called for before October 1917, the Comintern wrote: "The overriding task of the workers' government must be to arm the proletariat, to disarm bourgeois, counter-revolutionary organisations, to introduce the control of production, to transfer the main burden of taxation to the rich, and to break the resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeois organisations."²⁹

When the PS came to power, it promised us "a radical break with capitalism". To oppose this rhetoric, it was necessary to say to the workers: "The PS and the PCF have made this promise. They are lying. If they were serious, if they really wanted to create a workers' government, they would organise the workers to take control of the factories, they would set up a workers' militia and arm it, they would expropriate the capitalists without compensation, they would call for the creation of workers' councils and they would immediately free the colonies. If we really want to fight in the interests of the working class, that is the road we must follow, that is a real 'radical break with capitalism'."

The positions of the JCR show that they have yet to completely break with the centrism of the LCR and the PCI, both of which regularly flirt with reformism. In 1987, seeking to adapt to Juquin's "Renovateurs", the LCR explained that "*only a government of the workers, based on their united mobilisation, faithful to their mandates, could take energetic measures leading to a radical break with the logic of capital.*"³⁰ This kind of phrase is deliberately vague, designed so that any old interpretation can be made by any old reader. For the "left" of the LCR, it meant revolution. For Juquin, it meant a parliamentary government. There is a world—and a class—of difference between the two. But that is the method of the LCR.

In a similar but different fashion (they are hunting after different reformists), the PCI has also become obsessed by "the betrayal of the mandate, the violation of democracy"³¹ of the PS and PCF deputies. But the PCI assure us that "things could be different, on the condition that the sovereignty of the PS-PCF majority in the National Assembly was assured, that social laws were passed which would guarantee the working masses of town and countryside against the ills created by the crisis of the capitalist system."³² This kind of position reinforces reformist illusions in parliament, in the PS and in the PCF. It clearly says to the workers that a principled reformism would have protected the masses.

Despite their best intentions, the JCR appear to be still linked to this kind of position. It must be completely uprooted. It is not enough to declare a break with Matti or with the centrism of the LCR. The whole of the politics of the JCR needs to be reexamined in the light of the method and the programme of Lenin and Trotsky. That is the only road which can lead to the result which the militants are hoping for.

New horizons, new tasks

At the last Congress of the LCR, in February 1992, the

leadership got a coherent position adopted, which was summarised by the slogan "New epoch, new programme, new party". In translation, this means that today, after the fall of Stalinism, we are no longer in the imperialist epoch, the epoch of "wars and revolutions" as Lenin put it. The strategic lines which corresponded to the old epoch, such as the need to build a revolutionary party, are no longer correct.

For these despairing centrists, the task of the hour is to group together all men (and women) of goodwill on a minimal programmatic basis and build the already infamous "non-strategically delimited" party. The logic is remorseless and betrayal is at the end of the road. Even if there appear to be few potential partners around today, the LCR is counting on developments within the PS and the PCF so that its hoped-for "refoundation" becomes a reality. As serious centrists they are preparing the ground. From this point of view the JCR-Egalité, far from being potential partners, have become an obstacle. The political differences appear to herald an organisational split.

The preservation of the JCR-Egalité in the battle joined by the LCR will require militants to come to a common understanding of the inevitable split, and of its programmatic consequences. This inevitably implies a political characterisation of the LCR and its international organisation, the USFI. Up until now, diplomacy has obliged the JCR-Egalité to keep quiet on these questions. This cannot continue: behind diplomatic phrases can lurk political imprecision, the enemy of every principled revolutionary organisation.

The political refoundation begun by the comrades of the JCR-Egalité is an extremely important development, but it is still uneven. As we have shown, revolutionary will is unfortunately not always enough. Our criticisms are not put forward in a sectarian fashion, but in a comradesly way.

Our aim is not to destroy the JCR, but to help it get rid of the last traces of its centrist past. It is up to the comrades of the JCR-Egalité and the LCR to decide what should be their next political steps.

NOTES

- 1 See the PO-F pamphlet "L'Agonie du lambertisme?" for our analysis.
- 2 L'Egalité 13, Summer 1992, p3
- 3 See our article in Trotskyist International 8, April 1992.
- 4 L'Egalité, January 1992, p6
- 5 L'Egalité, April 1992, p3
- 6 L'Egalité 3, June 1991, p1
- 7 L'Egalité, January 1992, p7
- 8 L'Egalité 13, June 1992, p6
- 9 Ibid, p1
- 10 "Maastricht, les raisons de voter non", JCR pamphlet, June 1992, p7
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 L'Egalité 13, June 1992, p6
- 13 L'Egalité 14, September 1992, p1
- 14 "De la chute du stalinisme à la formation de la CEI", D. Elliot, June 1992, p.16
- 15 Ibid., p17
- 16 Ibid., p.23
- 17 See article in Trotskyist International 8 on the methodology of the restoration of capitalism
- 18 D. Elliot, op. cit., p48
- 19 Ibid., p47
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 See LRCI Action Programme for the CIS, Trotskyist Bulletin 1
- 23 D. Elliot, op. cit., p48
- 24 L'Egalité Special, September 1991
- 25 L. Trotsky, "The transitional program for socialist revolution" (New York 1973), p134-5
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 L'Egalité 10, March 1992, p7
- 28 L'Egalité 13, June 1992, p9
- 29 J. Degras, (Ed.) "The Communist International 1919-1943: Documents", Vol. 1, p426
- 30 VIIIème Congrès de la LCR, 1987, p62
- 31 La Vérité 597, October 1985, p9
- 32 Ibid., p12

EDMUND SAMARAKKODY (1912-1992)

By Paolo Casciola, 4 June 1992, Quaderni del Centro Studi Pietro Tresso no. 23

Edmund Samarakkody passed away at the Colombo General Hospital, in Sri Lanka, on 4 January 1992.

I had the privilege of becoming acquainted with him in person in December 1984, when he came to meet me at the airport in Colombo, where I had arrived as a representative of the Gruppo Operaio Rivoluzionario (the Italian Trotskyist organisation of which I was one of the leaders at the time) in order to hold a cadre-school for the comrades of the Revolutionary Workers Party of Sri Lanka, of which he was one of the founders and principal spokesmen.

Edmund was born on 19 April 1912 to a very rich aristocratic Ceylonese family, Ceylon then being a British colony. Having completed his studies at St Anthony's College, Mount Lavinia, in 1931, he then enrolled at the Law College in order to carry on his legal education. The beginning of his political activity dates back to 1932 when he joined the South Colombo Youth League (SCYL), an organisation affiliated to the All-Ceylon Youth Congress, whose objective was to win the country's independence from British imperialism.

During 1931, the radical young activists, influenced by the Indian nationalist movement, had given life to a mass anti-imperialist movement—the Movement of the Suriya Mal. Active within the Youth Leagues and the Suriya Mal movement were members of an independent and underground organisation which came to life around 1932-33. It was known as the T Group, ('T' standing for 'Trotsky'), and was clandestine because of the restrictions on democratic rights imposed by the British. These militants—N.M. Perera, Colvin R. de Silva, Leslie Goonewardene, Vernon Gunasekera, Philip and Robert Gunawardena—had returned to Ceylon having completed their studies in either Great Britain or the United States, where they had come into contact with the Communist movement, and with the ideas of the Left Opposition led by Trotsky. Edmund quickly joined that group, while continuing to be a member of the SCYL.

Edmund was one of the early builders of the T Group's union work. The T Group's membership soon increased to the detriment of the Labourite-type official unionism then prevalent under the leadership of A. E. Goonesinghe. In February of 1933 the workers of the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills, who were not organised in a union, spontaneously came out on strike, and the T Group managed to establish an initial contact with this section of the working class, and to form a union in the course of the struggle known as the Wellawatte Mills Workers' Union. In the wake of the success brought about by that strike, the young militants of the T Group

opened a union office in Colombo under the cover name of the Workers and Peasants Educational League. They launched the paper *Kamkaruwa* ("The Worker") in Sinhalese which was published more or less weekly and was sold on the streets. It was around that time that Edmund became a union official of the South Colombo Motorworkers' Union.

Two and a half years after these events, Edmund took part in the creation of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), and he was elected as a member of its central committee by the party's founding conference, which took place on 18 December 1935. The T Group continued to exist *de facto* as a faction within the LSSP, trying to influence its political orientation. In fact, the LSSP was endowed not with a clearly Marxist revolutionary, programme but with a populist, anti-imperialist, revolutionary-democratic programme. The leaders of the T Group circulated the writings of Trotsky which they had brought from abroad, and they organised some political educations. Edmund was one of the protagonists of this work which was set on defining, in a Marxist sense, the physiognomy of the party, and on winning it over to a policy that contradicted the attempts of the Comintern to influence the LSSP in a Stalinist direction.

In 1936, Edmund, along with Robert Gunawardena, was chosen to bring the greetings of the LSSP to the sessions of the conference of the Indian National Congress which took place at Falzpur, and in which all of the most important leaders of the Indian movement participated: M. K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal, Nehru etc. During that five-day trip to India, the two LSSP delegates had the opportunity of meeting some important representatives of the Congress Socialist Party. The following year, in July 1937, Edmund was made chief organiser and coordinator of the party. The recruitment campaign organised under his leadership was a great success, and at the second congress of the party (18 December 1937) the LSSP could record a resounding numerical growth, having gone from 80 to 600 members in the course of the year.

This growth in the ranks of the party was certainly due to the activity carried out by the LSSP in the unions, during which Edmund was able to bring to fruition the modest, but important, experience he had accumulated in the preceding period. In September 1937, together with Robert Gunawardena and Vernon Gunaskera, he had taken over as advisor to the 80 workers who were on strike at the Vavasseurs Coconut Mills of Toluwagoda. A short while later he was the co-founder, along with N.M. Perera and Leslie Goonewardene, of a union within the

fertiliser works of the Colombo Commercial Company. In 1938 he was arrested during a strike organised by that union at Hunupitiya. He was subsequently acquitted at the trial.

Edmund's allegiance to the socialism of the LSSP, (a far too nonchalantly heterodox one) involved a break with the social environment from which he had come. Like other leaders of the LSSP, Edmund "betrayed" his class of origin. The break happened in a rather strange way, during the general election of February-March 1936. In an electoral meeting in the constituency of Avisawella, Edmund found himself publicly defending the LSSP candidate—Philip Gunawardena—and attacking his own father who was supporting the candidate of the bourgeois Ceylon National Congress. This was the straw—the last of a long series—which finally broke the camel's back and Edmund was disowned by his family.

Towards the end of the 1930s the long battle to arm the LSSP with a revolutionary Marxist programme and an internal Leninist structure led to a split. Between December 1939 and the beginning of 1940, after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact, the weak Stalinist wing of the party was placed in a minority, and was subsequently expelled by the majority (of which Edmund was a part) whose position was moving closer to Trotskyism. In the same period the LSSP also carried out intense union activity after the ebb-tide of 1938-39.

By this time the epicentre of the struggle had shifted from the town to the countryside. At the beginning of November 1939 the strike wave of plantations day labourers—to a large extent of Tamil origin—continued and extended from the Mool Oya estate into the hill country towards the south. The workers turned to the LSSP for leadership, and Edmund—who was beginning to practice law having just completed his studies—was one of the leaders who the party decided to send to one of the hotter zones at Badulla. By the time the movement reached the province of Uva in April-May 1940, the LSSP had assumed complete control of its leadership.

It was probably owing to the leading role played by the LSSP in the strike wave that the British military government of the island decided to hit the party hard. The day after the fall of Paris, the LSSP printshop was ransacked and closed by the police. Decrees were issued which, in effect, made the continuation of the party's public activity impossible. Arrest warrants were issued against its principal leaders: Colvin R. de Silva, N.M. Perera, Philip Gunawardena, Edmund, and Leslie Gunawardena. Only the latter escaped arrest and, thanks to the illegal apparatus of the party, he was able to continue to work in Ceylon for around 15 months. The others, with the exception of Edmund, (who was at Mount Lavinia), then went to Colombo in order to organise a public protest meeting against the arrests. On the morning of the following day the police came and arrested him too.

Thus Edmund joined the other three leaders of the LSSP who were detained in Colombo prison and, after a two month hunger strike against the atrocious prison conditions, they were transferred to a British military prison at Kandy. Here the situation was completely different. The prison guards, of Ceylonese origin, were much friendlier with the new arrivals than with their English commanders, and they were thoughtful enough to supply the four with a key which could allow them to

leave the prison! The key was used on two occasions: once when N. M. Perera, Philip Gunawardena and Colvin R. de Silva left the prison by night in order to participate in the pre-conference of the LSSP in December 1940, and again to attend the secret conference of 20 April 1941 while Edmund remained behind in the cell as cover. About a month earlier, in March 1941, the imprisoned leaders had received the Indian Trotskyist leader, Okarnath Shastri, in their cells!

Edmund was fond of calling that phase which opened with the great strikes of 1939-40 as the "heroic period of the LSSP". Having expelled the Stalinist wing, the party had begun to define more clearly its political and organisational physiognomy in the Marxist-Leninist sense. At the 1941 conference the LSSP was reorganised as a democratic-centralist cadre party, based on a new, formally revolutionary, programme. This break with the past went hand in hand with a greater internationalist orientation. The LSSP declared its political solidarity with the Fourth International, and intensified its contacts with the Indian Trotskyists in the wake of the creation of the party which would be known as the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI), officially created in 1942 after more than a year of preparatory work. The LSSP became the "Ceylon unit" of the BLPI, and the latter was recognised as a section of the Fourth International.

The "Bolshevisation" of the LSSP was carried through in the difficult clandestine conditions imposed by the Second World War, under the guide of cadres such as Doric de Souza, Robert Gunawardena, S. C. C. Anthonipillal and Reggie Senanayake, who after the arrests of June 1940 had taken over the leadership of the party together with Goonewardene. However, this turn towards Leninism created serious problems for some historic leaders of the LSSP (e.g. N. M. Perera, and P. Gunawardena) who wanted to maintain the old party form, that is a "loose" organisation, open to an opportunist and parliamentarian perspective of the social democratic type. They were, moreover, against the formation of an independent Trotskyist organisation in India, to which they had counterposed entry into the Congress Socialist Party.

During a Japanese air raid at the beginning of April 1942, the four captives escaped from Kandy prison, taking with them the prison officer whom they had recruited to the party. While N. M. Perera, Colvin R. de Silva and P. Gunawardena reached India, Edmund stayed on in Ceylon where he regained his place at the centre of the leadership of the LSSP which had been forced completely underground after the party had been banned in the middle of March. The faction struggle had begun to become more embittered right at this time, causing a "creeping schism" which lasted more than three years. Edmund, newly arrested and condemned to six months hard labour during 1944, sided with the minority Bolshevik-Leninist faction of Colvin R. de Silva, Leslie Goonewardene, Doric de Souza etc. They were opposed by the reformist workers' opposition led by N.M. Perera and P. Gunawardena, who would be expelled from the Fourth International only in October 1945.

At the end of 1946, an attempt to reunify the two groups, both operating under the initials of LSSP, resulted in failure. Some months later, at the general

election of August-September 1947, the two LSSPs presented a common list of candidates. However, the LSSP of the left, (which Edmund represented, unsuccessfully opposing the candidate of the bourgeois United National Party, Dudley S. Senanayake, in the constituency of Mirigama), won only 5 parliamentary seats (against the 10 of the other LSSP). A while later Edmund's LSSP changed its name to that of the Bolshevik Samasamaja Party (BSI). The political confrontation between the two groups turned physical during the by-election campaign in Gampaha in 1949, in the course of which some leaders of the BSP, among them Edmund, and Doric de Souza, were attacked with clubs by P. Gunawardena and other militants of the reformist LSSP—an episode which finished up in court.

The deceptive election results increased the desire of the rank and file in both groups to overcome the 1945 split. The reunification, which was supported by the Fourth International, was finally realised—without due account taken of principles or old differences—at the end of a joint conference held on 4 June 1950. Only a fringe of the LSSP, led by P. Gunawardena, refused to take part in the reunification, and this gave birth to the ultra-reformist Viplavakari LSSP. Two years later, following the general election of May 1952, Edmund, whose membership of the central committee of the reunited party was reconfirmed, entered parliament for the first time, as a LSSP deputy for the constituency of Dehlowita.

Edmund took part in the struggle against the new pro-Stalinist faction, (which was led by followers of Michel Raptis (Pablo); namely, Henry Peiris, T.B. Subasinghe and William Silva). This faction came out into the open at the special LSSP conference in October 1952 and broke with the party a year later in the wake of the split which had occurred in the Fourth International. Edmund often recalled that the LSSP was not at all conscious of what it meant to be part of a world party. The affiliation of the LSSP to the Fourth International had, in fact, a substantially "platonic", passive character, and expressed itself in the acceptance of whatever line was adopted by the World Congresses. 1953 was also the year of the great August *hartal*, (General Strike) which signalled the revival of the mass anti-capitalist struggle in Ceylon. Also in the course of that year Edmund visited China, being strongly impressed by the socio-economic achievements of the Maoist regime.

However, the 1950s marked a crucial period of reformist escapades for the LSSP; this was clearly expressed by the No Contest Pact stipulated by the party with the bourgeois Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in September 1955, and with the offer, on the part of the LSSP, of a "responsible cooperation" with the Majahana Eksath Peramuna (MEP), the block of parties which emerged victorious from the elections of April 1956. Edmund, together with Robert Gunawardena and other leaders of the LSSP, was among the organisers of the left opposition which took shape within the central committee of the LSSP in concurrently with the February 1957 congress of the party. The opposition insisted that it was necessary to characterise the MEP government as a bourgeois government which should be overthrown. Such opposition got no support from the Fourth International, which six years earlier had adopted the Pablo's centrist position with the support of the Ceylonese delegates,

Leslie Goonewardene and Philip Gunawardena. In April 1957 Edmund was included in the delegation of the Ceylonese parliament which went on an official trip to the Soviet Union, visiting Tashkent, Moscow and the Baltic Republics.

The revolutionary tendency, of which Edmund and Meryl Fernando were the principal spokesmen, opposed—together with the "centre" of Colvin R. de Silva and Leslie Goonewardene—the decision of the majority of the LSSP to support in parliament the SLFP government which had emerged victorious from the elections of July 1960. They further opposed the proposal to form a coalition with the SLFP tabled by the leader of the party's right wing, N. M. Perera, a proposal which would come to fruition four years later. A few months later N.M. Perera was sent, as the official delegate of the LSSP, to participate in the VI World Congress of the Fourth International (Pabloite) of January 1961. However, he did not manage to find the venue of the congress and he returned to Ceylon. In short, at that time the majority of the Ceylonese leaders had begun to believe that active participation in the life of the Fourth International was useless.

Edmund was very happy to take upon himself the task of attending world congresses. In 1963 the direction of the LSSP was such that he could go officially to the May Day festivities in the USSR as part of the Ceylonese trade union delegation. After a stay in Moscow, Edmund visited Yugoslavia, and from there he managed to reach London and Italy, where he helped organise the VII World Congress of the Pabloite "Fourth International", which was held in June near Rome. At it the reunification was ratified—on a centrist basis,—with the Socialist Workers Party of the United States, giving birth to the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI). At the end of the congress, during which he intervened several times, Edmund was elected as a member of the International Executive Committee. Furthermore, in the course of 1963 Edmund was among the leaders of the internal opposition of the LSSP who struggled against the party's entry into the United Left Front; this was a left electoral bloc which aimed to form a popular-frontist government with the SLFP.

Edmund again visited China in 1964, as a member of the Ceylon government, to which he had been re-elected four years previously. But 1964 was above all the year in which the LSSP finally broke with revolutionary Marxism, in order to enter into the bourgeois coalition government of Mrs. Bandaranaike. This class-collaborationist turning point occurred at a special conference of the party during 6-7 of June, at which the anti-coalitionist minority (led by 14 members of the central committee) broke with the party to form the LSSP (Revolutionary) [LSSP (R)], of which Edmund was elected secretary. Two weeks later the USFI expelled the three leaders of the LSSP who had become ministers of the bourgeois government, and suspended more than 500 congressional delegates who had voted in favour of entry into that government.

Besides being one of the principal leaders of the new party, Edmund also represented it, along with Meryl Fernando, within parliament. Some days after the recognition of the LSSP (R) as the Ceylonese section of the USFI, which occurred on 10 July, Edmund and Meryl Fernando opposed Mrs. Bandaranaike's "Throne Speech"

in which she presented the programme of the coalition government, thereby expressing no confidence in that government. Some days later, on the 18-19 of July, the emergency conference of the LSSP (R) reconfirmed Edmund in his post of party secretary.

In December 1964 the two LSSP (R) MPs opposed the nationalisation of the Lake House newspaper chain, which in fact was intended to restrict the freedom of the press. Instead they voted in favour of a motion moved by an independent right-wing deputy, Dahanayake, which was supported by the UNP and by the right of the SLFP. That objective bloc with the right wing of parliament (which Edmund subsequently considered a serious tactical mistake) caused the defeat and collapse of the coalition government. At the same time it began a period of profound crisis within the LSSP (R), which lost its parliamentary representation once and for all in the elections of March 1965.

Edmund attended the VIII World Congress of the USFI in Germany in December 1965, and at which he was reelected to the International Executive Committee. Another representative of the LSSP (R) who also took part in the Congress was V. Karalasingham, who bitterly attacked Edmund for his ultra-leftism, and who rejoined the reformist LSSP a few weeks later with his faction—the Sakthi Group. Meanwhile, the crisis of the LSSP (R) deepened, expressing itself (after December 1966 and especially after the July 1967 party conference) through a faction fight between the right wing—P. Bala Tampoe, supported by the Healyite tendency (the Virodhaya Gorup)—and the left wing led by Edmund, Meryl Fernando and D. S. Mallawaratchi. The day after a special conference of the LSSP (R) which took place in April 1968, the members of this latter tendency decided to abandon the party to form the Revolutionary Samasamaja Party (RSP), while the LSSP (R), which had come under the leadership of Tampoe, continued to be recognised as the section of the USFI.

It was thus as an official representative of the RSP that Edmund—formally still a member of the International Executive Committee though he had not attended a single meeting—took part in the IX World Congress of the Mandeliste International in Italy in 1969. On that occasion he denounced the pro-bourgeois, opportunistic policy of Tampoe, and tried to have the LSSP (R) disaffiliated and the RSP recognised in its place as the Ceylonese section of the Fourth International. However, the leaders of the latter—above all Pierre Frank and Mandel—decided instead to conceal what they knew of Tampoe and to shelve the whole question, especially prompted in this by Edmund's opposition to the position taken by the Congress regarding the "turn to guerrilla warfare".

During the following months the RSP tried to force the USFI into reopening the discussion on Ceylon, and into reviewing the decision of the World Congress. In the end, however, they had to recognise that the USFI had no intention of modifying its position. The RSP thus found itself isolated internationally ever when in April 1971 there was an insurrection directed by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). In contrast to the Healyite Revolutionary Communist League's silence in the face of the uprising, and the LSSP (R)'s appealing to the "humanity" of Mrs. Bandaranaike, the RSP—while criticis-

ing the adventurism of the JVP—condemned the massacre of the insurgents by government troops. They struggled for the release of the arrested militants, (Edmund defended many of them in court and, among these, the principal leader of the JVP, Rohana Wijeweera), and for the restoration of democratic rights. The following year, at the end of 1972, the RSP changed its own name to the Revolutionary Workers Party (RWP), since by then the adjective "Samasamaja" was hideous in the eyes of sectors of the Ceylonese proletariat given that the LSSP had openly supported the anti-JVP repression.

In the months preceding the IX World Congress, the RSP had begun to regularly receive the press of the International Spartacist Tendency (IST), and towards the end of 1971 Edmund began to correspond with the IST with the aim of establishing fraternal relations with them. Thus the RSP came out of international isolation. In the course of 1972 the IST sent a representative to Ceylon—the then leader of the Australian Spartacist League, Bill Logan—for discussions with the RSP, and after that the contacts between the RSP/RWP and the IST intensified. In 1974 the IST invited a delegation of the RWP—Edmund, and the secretary of the party, Tulsiri Andradi—to the United States to deepen the discussions. Being impossible to obtain visas for the USA, however, meetings took place between the two representatives of the RWP and representatives of the IST in Canada, Great Britain, France and Austria.

Fraternal relations with the IST continued right throughout the 1970s, and in 1978 the secretary of the RWP proposed—despite the persistent differences between the two organisations—to accelerate the process which would incorporate the RWP into the IST. Such a proposal was adopted by the RWP conference of February 1979, notwithstanding the reservations of Edmund and Meryl Fernando, which proved to be well founded. In fact, on the occasion of the first and only international conference of the IST which took place in Great Britain in August 1979, there was a rupture between the two organisations. A similar break took place at the same international conference between the IST and the Lega Trotskista d'Italia (LTdI). Several months later, in May 1980, a faction attached to the IST was officially born within the RWP. Formed by three party leaders, this Bolshevik Faction suffered, within the first few weeks, the defection of its principal leader, Laksiri Fernando, and it was expelled by the RWP in March 1981, adopting the name of Spartacist League of Sri Lanka.

The Gruppo Operaio Rivoluzionario (GOR)—formed by the anti-Spartacist wing of the LTdI in September 1980—established contact with Edmund and the RWP in January 1981, as part of the beginning of independent international activity. The following year, in October, a delegation of the GOR went to Sri Lanka where, at the end of a long series of discussions with the RWP, the two organisations decided to work with the common aim of building an International Trotskyist Tendency. At that time Edmund abandoned the idea of entering the centrist Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP), something he thought in the preceding months was a possible solution for ending the crisis of the party. He would then reconsider it for a brief period towards the middle of 1983. In January 1984, after the visit of the secretary of the RWP

to Italy (November-December 1983) the party suffered a second split during a conference. A minor faction (Tulsiri Andradi, Meryl Fernando and G.K.R. Perera) which opposed Edmund over tactical and personal issues, split from the RWP to form the Workers Marxist League (WML).

In December of that year, after my visit to Sri Lanka, Edmund travelled to Italy to participate in the IV International Meeting organised by the GOR, in which a small group of German Bolshevik-Leninists also took part. From then on he constantly made his precious contribution to the common international work as an official representative of the RWP. In May 1985 Edmund participated in the V International Meeting, which was held during the Fête de Lutte Ouvrière et de La Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire. In November of that same year he was part of the GOR-RWP delegation to the international conference of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International, in London, in the fringes of which the GOR and the RWP held their VI International Meeting. Again in 1985 Edmund was the main speaker at a meeting for the defence of the Tamil people's rights which was organised in Holland.

In 1986 Edmund suffered two very severe blows: the suicide of his daughter-in-law in the spring of that year, and then that of his son, Nahil, in July. Meanwhile, a new crisis exploded within the RWP. Two members of the group (D.H. Peter and Cyril) began an unprincipled campaign against Edmund. In December 1986-January 1987, Edmund again went to Italy, where he took part in the VII International Meeting. In the meantime, the opposition of D.H. Peter and Cyril continued, in an unctuous form, until March 1989. That month, Edmund and D.H. Peter went to Italy to participate in the European Trotskyist Conference, which took place at Rimini, and at the XI International Meeting. During their stay in Italy, the two representatives of the RWP took into consideration the idea of entrism into the LSSP as an expedient tactic for bringing their party out of the situation of stagnation and decline in which it found itself, a situation which is an integral part of the crisis which the Ceylonese left still finds itself in after twenty years. In the discussions I had with them in those days, I advised the two representatives of the RWP not to consider entrism as a panacea; to take into account, on the one hand, the fundamentally negative balance sheet of such tactics and, on the other hand, of the absence of the minimum objective conditions to carry out fruitful entrism work in the LSSP.

The RWP spent more than a year in discussions with the leadership of the LSSP, verifying whether or not it was possible to practise entrism. On the 15 May 1990, the General Secretary of the LSSP, Bernard Soysa, visited Edmund to announce to him that the Political Bureau of the LSSP would accept the entry of RWP militants into its own ranks. But at that point, Edmund, taking account of the marked popular-frontist turn by the LSSP, (e.g. participation in a large block with vari-

ous bourgeois parties—the SLFP at its head) decided to abandon the entrism perspective. This decision, made by the majority of the party, provoked the opposition of the Peter-Cyril faction, which was still in favour of entrism. In the end, at a special conference of the RWP held in April 1991, in the presence of delegates of the GOR and of the Austrian Revolutionär Kommunistische Liga (RKL), the RWP unanimously decided that the entrism hypothesis was impractical. However, at that point the Peter-Cyril faction decided nonetheless to break with the RWP, which according to them was controlled in a “dictatorial” manner by Edmund, and this in turn gave rise to the group, Workers Voice (WV).

I met Edmund for the last time in April 1990, when he came to Italy to take part in the XII International Meeting organised by GOR. As always whenever he visited Italy, he sought me out in order to discuss various matters. The rapport between the two of us was always extremely fraternal, notwithstanding that I had broken from the Italian organisation to which the RWP was affiliated in a single international nucleus. While understanding the motives that had brought about my split with the GOR, he exhorted me on more than one occasion to take part in their struggle for the reconstruction of the Fourth International—a struggle to which he completely and unselfishly devoted the last part of his life, whatever his mistakes and shortcomings may have been. Immediately after what would be his final trip to Italy Edmund travelled, for the last time, to the United States, where he participated—as an official representative of the GOR-RWP—at a conference of the Trotskyist Coordinating Committee in San Francisco. He also did some public meetings in the USA.

The following year, in February, he took part, together with the Associazione “Voce Operaia” [AVO] (the new name assumed by the GOR in December 1990), in an important international meeting held at Cologne, in Germany. But Edmund could not take part in practical activity of the Liaison Committee of Communists (LCC), the international tendency proclaimed in the middle of November 1991 of which the RWP was among the founders together with the AVO, the Austrian RKL, and the German group, Maulwurf.

His body was cremated in Colombo on 6 February. At the funeral procession the coffin was borne by militants from the RWP, WV, WML, NSSP and the LSSP. Some speakers from the WML, the NSSP and the LSSP recalled that outstanding figure of Trotskyism in the semi-colonial world, and of the international workers' movement.

The void that Edmund leaves cannot be filled. With him has disappeared a political cadre of the highest intellectual capacity, and a highly experienced militant of the “old guard”—doubly precious because he was still active. But for those like me—who were bound to him by deep feelings of respect and affection—we have lost a devoted co-thinker, and an everlasting friend. Farewell, Edmund!

