

TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL

Issue number 4 Spring 1990 Price £1.50



THE DEATH AGONY OF STALINISM

The crisis of the USSR and the degenerate workers' states

The political revolution in East Germany

Revolution in Romania

Revolution and counter-revolution in Poland 1980-81

Sotsprof: Soviet trade unionists speak out

Boris Kagarlitsky: A review and an interview

TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL

Issue number 4 Spring 1990

Contents

<i>In this issue . . .</i>	2
<i>The death agony of Stalinism: the crisis of the USSR and the degenerate workers' states</i>	4
Resolution passed by the International Executive Committee of the LRCI, 4 March 1990	
<i>The political revolution in East Germany</i>	23
Resolution passed by the LRCI International Secretariat, 21 November 1989	
<i>Revolution in Romania</i>	30
Resolution passed by the LRCI International Secretariat, 29 December 1989	
<i>On the use of Soviet troops in Azerbaijan</i>	34
Resolution passed by the LRCI International Secretariat, 28 January 1990	
<i>Revolution and counter-revolution in Poland, 1980-81</i>	36
By the Gruppe Arbeitermacht, the Irish Workers Group and Workers Power, July 1982	
<i>South Africa: No to a negotiated settlement! Fight ANC betrayal!</i>	50
Resolution passed by the International Executive Committee of the LRCI, 4 March 1990	
<i>Soviet workers speak out!</i>	55
Interview with a Sotsprof militant	
<i>Boris Kagarlitsky: A review and an interview</i>	60

The LRCI:

ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (Austria)
Poder Obrero (Peru)
Pouvoir Ouvrier (France)
Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany)
Irish Workers Group
Workers Power (Britain)

Poder Obrero (Bolivia) is a group in the process of discussions with the LRCI with the aim of becoming an affiliated section.

Major documents of the LRCI, including the *Trotskyist Manifesto*, are available, many in French, German and Spanish as well as English, on request.

See pages 59 & 68



Published by the
International
Secretariat of the
League for a
Revolutionary
Communist
International

BCM 7750
London
WC1N 3XX
England

Printed by
Dot Press (TU)
Oxford
England

ISSN 0953-7554
© LRCI 1990

In this issue. . .

Since the last issue of *Trotskyist International*, the world has been turned upside down. The crisis of Stalinism in the USSR and Eastern Europe has created a whole new terrain of struggle. We have witnessed a massive expression of working class power, from the mass demonstrations in East Germany (GDR) to the revolution and civil war in Romania.

All the certainties of the post-war world have been thrown on the scrapheap. We are faced with the imminence of a united Germany and a Soviet 'Disunion'; we are obliged to chart the road to political revolution in conditions not anticipated by Trotsky. It is essential that the workers in the degenerate workers' states are able to hear our voice. For this reason this issue is devoted almost entirely to the crisis of Stalinism.

In these stormy months and years the decisive question will be that of leadership and programme. The working class needs to be rallied to a clear call for political revolution. The political revolution—like the social revolution in the capitalist countries—will only be successful if there is a revolutionary party to lead that struggle, to guide the working class towards the seizure of power and warn the masses against the reformist and centrist misleaders.

As well as intervening energetically into the struggles in the USSR and the degenerate workers' states we have undertaken to define the positions of our international tendency in a series of resolutions, which we print here.

Resolutions force an organisation to combine a clear analysis with a precise programme. Vague and diplomatic formulas should be banished, the practice of "personal positions", which tie no one to anything, discarded. No other international tendency, from the smallest to the largest, has adopted a series of resolutions of comparable scope and rigour on the crisis of Stalinism to the ones found here.

At a time when even the imperialists and the Stalinists are describing their diplomacy as being "OBE talks" ("Overtaken By Events") there is an obvious danger that certain statements may be conjunctural or even turn out to be based on mistaken information. Nevertheless, the resolutions here present an image of how our international tendency grappled with the programme of political revolution from Autumn 1989 to Spring 1990.

In general, the conjunctural elements of the resolutions printed here only serve to highlight the correctness of our positions. For example, the resolution on the Political Revolution in East Germany, adopted by our International Secretariat in November 1989, notes how—at that time—the demand for German reunification was not being raised by the masses, but goes on to point out that the movement could not develop further without this key question coming to the fore.

The major document presented here is "The death agony of Stalinism: The crisis of the USSR and the degenerate workers' states", adopted at the beginning of March by our International Executive Committee. We explain the nature of the crisis, the development of factions within the bureaucracy, the tendencies within the opposition and within the working class and the role of the national question in the USSR. We advance the main elements of a working class programme to overcome the crisis and seize power from the Stalinists.

One question which we deal with in particular detail is the nature of state power in the degenerate workers' states, and the possibility of a relatively peaceful counter-revolutionary overthrow of post-capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe.

For decades the debates within the far left on the class nature of the societies in Eastern Europe seemed to have significance only for a few thousand organised militants. Now the competing analyses and programmes touch upon the lives of tens of millions; over the next few years much depends on whether Stalinism is vanquished by proletarian political revolution or the forces of capitalist restoration. Those on the left who cannot pose the issue in these terms are doomed to commit grave errors.

The resolution on the Romanian revolution, written in the heat of events and adopted on 29 December 1989, hails the insurrection and warns against illusions in the army or dissident Stalinists within the National Salvation Front. A sharp strategy for workers' power in Romania is outlined. Once again, subsequent events have confirmed the validity of our analysis.

Probably the most explosive feature of the situation in the USSR is the threat posed by the revolt of the nationalities. In January 1990 the dominant sections of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan, having launched a bloody pogrom against the Armenians, threatened to seize power in a counter-revolutionary coup. Gorbachev, having stood by whilst the Armenians were massacred, deployed the Soviet Armed Forces. A resolution explains our stance on this bloody conflict.

The most exciting development in the USSR over recent months has been the explosion of new, independent workers' organisations. We print here an interview with a member of Sotsprof, one of the new trade unions, which explores the current direction and dilemmas facing the working class in the USSR.

Boris Kagarlitsky, a leading left-wing Soviet intellectual, is very influential within Sotsprof and amongst wide sections of the European intelligentsia. In December 1989 he gave an interview to a group of British socialists, including a representative of the LRCI, who were visiting Moscow. We print that interview here, for

the first time, together with a review of his new book *The Dialectic of Change*, recently published in English. We have fundamental political differences with Kagarlitsky, but, like him, we believe that political differences are best discussed in open debate rather than hidden for "diplomatic" reasons.

The crisis of Stalinism is not restricted to the workers' states. Gorbachev's strategic retreat also affects the various anti-imperialist and liberation movements which are heavily influenced by indigenous Stalinist forces. This is especially the case in South Africa, where the ANC is offering an historic compromise to the apartheid imperialists. In a resolution adopted at our IEC of March 1990 we explain the origins of the moves to a "negotiated settlement" and explain how black workers can stop the sell-out by the Stalinists.

Our international tendency was formed in April 1984. Two years before, three of our organisations (Gruppe Arbeitermacht - FRG; Irish Workers Group and Workers Power - GB) agreed a set of theses on the political revolutionary crisis which gripped Poland in 1980-81. This document, long out of print, is reprinted in this issue. The essential continuity between our positions of 1982 and of 1990 shows how deep rooted our method is, and the solid nature of our international tendency.

Another event which has taken place since the last issue of *Trotskyist International*, on a more modest scale than the revolutions in Eastern Europe, but nonetheless of fundamental importance, is the publication of our international programme, *The Trotskyist Manifesto: A new transitional programme for world socialist revolution*.

This coincided with the creation of democratic centralism on an international scale inside our organisation. To mark these twin facts, we changed the name of our

tendency from MRCI (Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International) to LRCI (League for a Revolutionary Communist International).

Throughout the 1980s we argued that it was necessary to re-elaborate the Marxist programme. Against those fetishists who argued that Trotsky's Transitional Programme of 1938 was quite sufficient, we pointed out that much has changed over the last 50 years. Notably, there have been a series of political revolutionary situations in the workers' states of which Trotsky had no experience. It has proved necessary to use the method of the Transitional Programme to write a new programme.

The events of the last six months confirm the correctness of our position. In the face of the massive changes in Eastern Europe, it would be wrong to imagine that all the answers can be found in his writings. *The Trotskyist Manifesto*, taken together with the resolutions printed here, provides a route map from here to the seizure of power.

Our programme is not only intended as a guide for millions in struggle. It is also a challenge to all those who proclaim themselves to be revolutionaries, whether they consider themselves Trotskyists or not. We are living in stirring times, and it is the duty of revolutionaries to be clear on what to fight for and how to fight for it. In our programme, in our resolutions, we clearly explain our positions.

Workers of Eastern Europe: discuss with us, help us, join us in action! Militants from around the world: examine our positions, read our Programme, see how we can work together to sweep away not only the decrepit remnants of Stalinism, but also the temporarily strengthened ramparts of imperialism.

We have a world to win!

The second parts of our two articles on the history of centrist "Trotskyism" (on Morenoism and on the USFI) have had to be held over until a future issue.

The Trotskyist Manifesto

*a new transitional programme
for world socialist revolution*

£2.95 per copy
(£3.50 inc. p&p)

Available from:
LRCI, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX, England
Cheques payable to *Trotskyist International*

FINANCIAL APPEAL

**The LRCI's work in
Eastern Europe
needs YOUR money!**

We are raising the banner of Trotskyism in East Germany, Hungary and the USSR. We need money to produce bulletins, leaflets and journals, to hire rooms for public meetings, to pay for travel.

**Rush your donations to:
LRCI
BCM 7750
London WC1N 3XX
England**

The death agony of Stalinism

The Crisis of the USSR and the Degenerate Workers' States

During 1989 a series of mass popular revolutions swept through Eastern Europe. The power of the Stalinist bureaucratic dictatorships was weakened or destroyed. In the first half of the year, the Chinese bureaucracy was momentarily paralysed by a mass student movement which began to draw in sections of the proletariat. The bureaucracy was only able to halt the developing revolutionary crisis by severe repression.

The heart of the crisis of the workers' states is Gorbachev's USSR, which is wracked by nationalist revolts, by a continuing factional struggle between marketising reformers and bureaucratic conservatives, by the emergence of embryonic parties of the democratic intelligentsia and last but not least by the awakening of the proletariat—the re-birth of an independent labour movement.

The next historic period poses the stark alternative: proletarian political revolution or bourgeois social counter-revolution. A momentary—even a bloody—triumph of bureaucratic counter-revolution might preserve a restricted and shrunken area of Stalinist rule for a few years, but certainly not for decades. We are witnessing the death agony of Stalinism.

The present crisis of the Stalinist bureaucracies proves beyond doubt that they are *castes*. In the immediate post-war period many impressionistic theories sought to explain the unforeseen stability and longevity of the ruling Stalinist parties by suggesting that they had become ruling classes. Trotsky's analysis of the caste nature of the bureaucracy has been vindicated. His error was one of perspective, telescoping the timescale for the collapse of bureaucratic rule.

The bureaucracy's loss of confidence in its own economic system and its willingness to abandon this system for a completely antagonistic mode of production indicates that this caste has no legitimate or necessary role to play.

What ruling class ever voluntarily turned its back on its own mode of production?

Having developed on the basis of the destruction of capitalism, the bureaucracy obstructed the full operation of the law of value. During the Stalin and Brezhnev eras the bureaucracy recognised that the market tended to fragment and disrupt the cohesiveness of caste rule.

But its political dictatorship over the producers and consumers and the defence of its privileges ensured that its method of planning could never lead to a smooth and harmonious development of social production.

Throughout the decades of its rule, the bureaucratic caste was unable to transfer its economic and social privileges from the realm of distribution (access to jobs for the family, preferential shops, special dachas etc) into the realm of ownership of the main means of production. Power and privilege were never separated from occupation of a bureaucratic post. The bureaucracy did not convert itself into a ruling class.

Unlike previous ones that have wracked one or another of the degenerate workers' states, this present crisis is a general crisis affecting them all. Its roots lie in the political and economic exhaustion of the reactionary utopian strategy of building "socialism in one country". This theory was the ideological expression of the defence and extension of the privileges of a parasitic bureaucracy.

Despite the boasts of Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and their imitators, it has proved utterly impossible for the degenerate workers' states to "catch up and surpass" the leading capitalist states, let alone to achieve "developed socialism" or "communism". The reasons for this lie not in a failure of planned economy itself, nor in the intrinsic impossibility of achieving the socialist goal, but rather in the fact that neither can be achieved in national isolation from the world proletarian revolution, nor by means of a bureaucratic dictatorship over the proletariat.

Workers' states based on planned property have survived for between forty and seventy years. As Trotsky said, this shows that the planned economy—a modern society without capitalists—is not an impossibility. But without workers' democracy, without world revolution, these bridgeheads of the new order will ultimately suffer counter-revolutionary degeneration and collapse. Today's "crisis of communism" is in reality a crisis of Stalinism. Trotskyism alone has a programme to save the social conquests of the workers, to restore or create a democracy qualitatively superior to bourgeois parliamentarism and to open the epoch of the final destruction of world capitalism.

The Stalinist project of building socialism in one country consciously cuts a workers' state off from the world capitalist economy and the international division of labour, restricting the workers' state to what can be achieved with the resources of a backward country.

Lenin and Trotsky's strategic insight that the capitalist chain could break at its weakest link did not imply that socialism and communism could be built in one backward country alone. For these revolution-

ary leaders, victorious proletarian dictatorships were seen as launching pads for international proletarian revolution.

A healthy workers' state might have to survive years or even decades of isolation whilst preserving proletarian power. Revolutionaries have a programmatic answer to this situation, as was shown by the actions of the Bolsheviks after 1917. On the basis of nationalised industry and infrastructure the prerequisites of socialism can be constructed.

This will require a constant battle with the remaining elements of capitalism within the workers' state (petty commodity production, private trade, the wages system) and the pressure of the encircling capitalist world economy. The weapons for waging this struggle are state ownership and direction of industry (planning) and the monopoly of foreign trade. Within this overall strategy and subordinate to it, limited concessions to foreign capital and even the market are permissible. Such was NEP, as conceived by Lenin in 1921.

During the transition to socialism and communism the market for consumer goods will exist as long as scarcity exists. This market will be the testing ground of the planned economy. In addition, certain sectors of production—private or cooperative—will for a long period remain outside of the planned economy. In agriculture this may have to be a very large sector.

However the planned economy and the democratically run political and economic organisations of the proletariat (workers' councils, trade unions, co-operatives, women's organisations) will supervise and control the private sector. With the key sectors of all large-scale industry and banking in the hands of the workers' state, the remaining operations of the law of value can be directed to aid the accumulation process in the socialised sector.

The degeneration of the USSR

Stalinism was organically incapable of conducting such a revolutionary policy. From 1923 to 1928 Stalin, in alliance first with Zinoviev and Kamenev and then with Bukharin, did not strengthen the planned state sector. He allowed, and then positively encouraged, the unbridled growth of the rich peasant farmer and NEP man. At the same time, soviet workers' democracy, which had been heavily damaged and deformed during the years of the Civil War, was not restructured and expanded, but further restricted and finally replaced by a bureaucratic dictatorship. The Left Opposition was repressed. First the Oppositionists were driven from the party, then they were hounded into the camps. This constituted the Thermidor of the Russian Revolution.

The triumph of Stalin's political counter-revolution thwarted the process of constructing a democratic plan for the whole economy. Only the great grain crisis of 1928 forced Stalin to turn violently to bureaucratically centralised planning and forced collectivisation. In 1929 the role of Gosplan, the planning agency, was finally upgraded and the first five year plan was instituted.

This was the panicky and pragmatic response of a bureaucracy that had encouraged the dramatic development of the market in a way that undermined the foundations of a socialised economy. The bureaucratic command structures were wielded in an attempt to wipe out those classes which had been nurtured in the early 1920s favouring private property.

After 1929 the Stalinist bureaucracy pursued a policy of autarky. This involved a brutal tyranny over the petty commodity producers (middle peasants as well as kulaks), a reckless abandonment of the convertible currency, forced labour and the abolition of trades and services that it could not replace. These bureaucratic measures were necessary because workers' democracy had been abolished. Stalin could not mobilise the masses in a conscious political and economic struggle against the law of value.

For Trotsky and the Left Opposition, planning would triumph because the goods produced by large-scale state industries would rapidly become better, cheaper and more plentiful than the products of petty commodity and small private capitalist production. The planned economy would thus steadily encroach upon and replace market relations. By contrast, the ruthless forced accumulation carried out by the bureaucracy was aimed solely at preserving bureaucratic power against both the bourgeoisie and the working class.

The principle objective of bureaucratic planning was not that of increasing workers' and peasants' consumption and of creating ever greater social equality. Any concessions made to these aims were solely in order to stabilise bureaucratic rule. The bureaucracy's policy of socialism in one country involved the expansion of basic heavy industry at the expense of other sectors in order to provide the economic foundation for their rule and military defence.

In the 1930s the Stalinists denied that the law of value even existed in the USSR. Thus they were hardly able to manipulate it to the advantage of the state sector. The bureaucracy had no rational recognition or measure of the operation of the law of value within the Soviet economy.

Without the initiative and intelligence of the proletarian masses in supervising planning an ever more complicated economy, Gosplan became increasingly incapable of directing and harmonising the various sectors of the Soviet economy.

In essence, the long utopian experiment of socialism in one country has been exhausted. The Stalinists were only able to conduct this experiment for so long due to a number of contingent factors.

In the 1930s the bureaucracy marshalled the vast natural resources of the USSR and directed them to the accumulation of producer goods (plant, machinery and infrastructure). This sector is more responsive to purely quantitative targets than is the consumer goods sector. This is because the creative input of the working class in determining the quality and range of consumer goods is essential.

This first stage of bureaucratic planning achieved impressive results because of the systematic terror exercised against the population (including against the bureaucracy itself); but it was also a result of the



Looking east over the newly built Berlin Wall, 1961.

genuine self-sacrifice of the class conscious workers for whom the revolution was a living memory.

... and of Eastern Europe

Similar factors lay behind the relatively fast growth rates achieved by the degenerate workers' states in the periods of reconstruction after the Second World War in Europe and after the Civil War in China. As in the USSR in the 1930s, however, such growth was concentrated in heavy industry and in those sectors responsible for the re-creation of an effective infrastructure. But this growth was accompanied by disproportionalities which rapidly destabilised these countries both economically and politically.

For a while the limited economic co-ordination between the USSR and the new workers' states of Eastern Europe and Asia widened the international division of labour and helped fuel growth in the USSR itself. But at the same time the post-war boom and the fruits of a new exploitative international division of labour enabled imperialism to establish a technological and scientific lead over the degenerate workers' states which eventually had crippling effects on the latter.

In Eastern Europe the gains of bureaucratic planning were uneven. They were most dramatic in the formerly backward semi-colonial states: Poland, Yu-

goslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. They were less marked in countries that were once part of imperialist powers: Czechoslovakia and the GDR. As the long boom progressed growth rates in these states declined. The post-war attempts to shift resources into consumer goods industries fell foul of the established interests of the heavy industry and military sectors of the bureaucracy.

The application of technological innovations was thwarted by the conservatism of the managers. The corruption and theft by which all layers of the ruling caste obtain and disguise their privileges have destroyed any possibility of honest economic accounting which is essential to rational planning. As a result, Eastern Europe and Soviet growth rates have declined with each five year plan in the 1970s and 1980s.

At different periods in different countries the ruling bureaucracies have tried to inject life into their failing economies by reform programmes. From the early 1950s the Yugoslavian bureaucracy sought to be independent of the USSR. It thus had to rely to a greater extent on the working class through workers' "self-management" and a greater emphasis on consumer goods than was the case in the other degenerate workers' states. The bureaucracy also collaborated extensively with imperialism, giving international capital a massive influence on national politics as a result of decades of marketisation.

During Khrushchev's reign in the USSR the Lieberman proposals were advanced in order to increase enterprise autonomy and profitability. Kosygin's initial economic programme for the USSR and Sik's proposals for the CSSR (1968) attempted to circumvent the problems created by Stalinist planning through the adoption of market mechanisms. The crushing of the Prague Spring, conservative resistance to the Kosygin proposals and the ascendancy of the Brezhnev faction dampened the pace of marketisation.

The 1970s was generally a period of economic conservatism, where bureaucratic planning was sustained by massive foreign borrowing or, as in the case of the USSR, by large hard currency earnings from raw material exports. Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland and Hungary were the first to borrow from the imperialist banks. The bureaucracy hoped these loans would be a rope to help haul Eastern Europe out of stagnation. In fact the rope became a noose of debt around the neck of these economies. Debt payments grew while the economies continued to produce goods for export that were unsellable on the world market.

The Polish bureaucracy's attempt to slash subsidies and social services to repay the debts led to the proletarian upheaval of 1976 and eventually to the revolutionary situation of 1980-81. The masses rose in revolt and created Solidarnosc, the first mass independent labour organisation in a degenerate workers' state. Romania, fearful of facing a similar revolt, drew back from the economic embrace of imperialism. This had dire consequences for the living standards of the workers and peasants.

Hungary staggered from one austerity plan to another and attempted to relieve social tension by nor-

malising the black market and the twilight economy, thus stimulating a small commercial bourgeoisie. Even East Germany and Czechoslovakia, which were more developed and less indebted, sank into stagnation as their industrial base became more decrepit, their subsidies from the USSR declined and their trade with the west ran up against the problem of the inferiority of their goods.

In the early 1980s growing minorities within the Eastern European bureaucracies despaired entirely of correcting the deformations of bureaucratic planning. They sought to go beyond the introduction of market indicators and "market socialism". They looked to the day when they could return to a mixed economy or even a "welfare capitalism". But so long as their Kremlin masters insisted that they built stunted replicas of the USSR, so long as the Soviet Armed Forces (SAF) backed the bureaucratic conservatives, the reformers had to wait. Only with the changes in the USSR after Gorbachev came to power was it possible to open up a new phase in Eastern Europe.

The beginning of the political revolution

After 1975 the creeping stagnation of the USSR economy was complemented by the political immobilism of the Brezhnev gerontocracy. In the early 1980s a new cold war was launched by Anglo-American imperialism which included a massive round of rearmament. This placed new burdens on the USSR at a time when it was least equipped to meet the challenge. The imperialists' declared aim was to break the back of the soviet economy and force a major political retreat upon the Kremlin.

After Brezhnev's death in 1982 a three year interregnum was followed by Gorbachev's rise to power. From 1985 a new interpretation of "peaceful co-existence" was crafted. This was a recognition that imperialism was winning the Cold War. Major concessions to US imperialism would free the economic resources to radically transform the technological basis of Soviet industry and buy off domestic discontent with a sharp increase in the supply of consumer goods.

This was not a programme of capitalist restoration: it was a programme for the renewal of "bureaucratic socialism" through greater economic ties with imperialism and the controlled, if extensive, introduction of market mechanisms.

The existence of old-style hardline regimes in Eastern Europe was a permanent threat to the Gorbachev faction in the Kremlin. In order to massively scale down the Soviet troop presence, Gorbachev needed leaderships committed to this policy throughout Eastern Europe. He clearly hoped to carry out a slow controlled "reform" of Eastern Europe. But Kremlin pressure on the old leaderships encouraged a movement from below for the legalisation of opposition groups; the apostle of reform unwittingly and unwillingly became the herald of revolution.

The political revolution in Eastern Europe went through an initial democratic phase. Its origins can be traced to the end of 1988 with the shifts inside the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (HSWP—the rul-

ing Stalinist party) which called into question and then fatally undermined "the leading role of the Communist Party". Throughout the 1980s Hungary played a lead in experimenting with the market and in the creation of small-scale capitalist commercial enterprises.

The decision of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) to allow multi-party parliamentary elections in Poland in June 1989 deepened the process. Although the Stalinist apparatus guaranteed itself a third of the seats, its dismal election showing led it to concede a majority of governmental positions to the legalised opposition forces of Solidarnosc. The leadership of Solidarnosc evolved into a proto-Christian Democratic party with a brazenly restorationist programme. Tied to a government intent on imposing austerity and capitalist restoration, the Solidarnosc union has failed to grow to its former size.

These small breaches in the Stalinist monolith were to become a gaping hole over the following months as popular perception grew, first amongst the intelligentsia and later amongst the workers, that the Kremlin was sanctioning this process. Gorbachev's visit to China and later to the GDR aroused huge expectations. In May 1989, in the wake of the Polish elections, there was mass discontent with the old-style rigged elections in the GDR. In Hungary the social democratisation of the ruling Stalinist party encouraged a further growth in opposition movements.

The dam burst when Hungary, keen to demonstrate its pro-imperialist credentials, opened its borders with Austria, thus opening a direct line for refugees from the GDR to the capitalist west.

Mass demonstrations erupted in the GDR, fuelled by the evident crisis of the regime and by Gorbachev's visit for the fortieth anniversary celebrations. Growing popular protest in September and October 1989 faced the Honecker leadership with a choice: crack down or concede. They made ready to do the former. But Gorbachev could not allow bloody repression to destroy his *modus vivendi* with imperialism. The 19 divisions of the SAF, outnumbering their GDR hosts by over three to one, left Honecker no choice but to depart the scene in the face of protests from hundreds of thousands on the streets.

Once the bastion of the hardline resistance to Gorbachevism had fallen, the Jakés regime's days were numbered in Czechoslovakia. As November followed October, so Jakés followed Honecker. Mass opposition swept away the equally discredited successors to Jakés and Honecker.

In the GDR a new government of reform-minded SED leaders was only able to stabilise itself on condition that it conducted a permanent dialogue with the opposition and promised free elections. Eventually the new SED leader, Modrow, was forced to open the government to opposition leaders. In Czechoslovakia the keys would not stop jangling in Wenceslas Square until a new government with a majority of non-CP ministers was appointed and the dissident Havel was installed in the Castle.

In Bulgaria, the party sacrificed Zhikov in the hope of forestalling wider revolt. The process of reform, dialogue and legalisation of the opposition has hesi-

tantly begun in an attempt to retain the initiative and preserve bureaucratic rule. In Romania a civil war was necessary to dislodge the most repressive of Stalinist autocrats. Years of autarky and severe repression had removed a "reforming" wing from within the bureaucracy. Unlike the other Eastern European countries, there was no bureaucratic safety valve that could release the steam of pent-up anger and allow civil war to be averted.

Together with the absence of the restraining hand of the SAF, this ensured that mass protest in Romania would be met with butchery and would precipitate revolution. After the overthrow of Ceausescu the rump of the Stalinist party, in collusion with the generals, disguised themselves within the National Salvation Front. Under this banner they hope to create a new popular front after the elections. Even in Albania, the initial repression of popular protest has been followed by the promise of free elections. Not even the present Tirana regime can avoid falling under the wheels of the political revolution.

Elements of independent proletarian organisation have appeared in every country during the opening months of the political revolution. Armed revolutionary committees and factory committees were set up in Romania; factory committees and shop stewards' initiatives were organised in the GDR; strike committees were formed in Poland; Czechoslovakia was paralysed by strike action. Yet in the first phase of the revolution such movements have been limited to fighting for democratic rights and even bourgeois parliamentary-type institutions, instead of for working class power.

In each case the political outcome of mass protest or revolution has been broadly the same: the promise of free elections, the legalisation of the opposition and the right to organise, the abandonment of the leading

role of the Communist Party as enshrined in the constitution, the weakening of the hold of the Stalinists over the repressive apparatus and the conceding of a significant minority or even majority of governmental positions to the opposition.

In desperation at their impending electoral extinction the Stalinists are trying to embrace social democracy and bridge the chasm that opened up after 1914. This is also a clear indication that they are willing to play their part in the creation of a national bourgeoisie and to usher in an era of joint ventures with imperialism. On the other hand, it is also possible that the Stalinists, having been ousted from government can attempt to restore some workers' illusions in them by posing as the opponents of the austerity programmes or, as in Romania, resisting restoration.

This process has fractured the ruling Stalinist parties. In Hungary a cold split in the HSWP has taken place. A majority of the parliamentary fraction and of ministers, together with a minority of the bureaucrats, has formed the Social Democratic HSP. The majority of the Stalinist bureaucrats, now robbed of governmental power, have recently regrouped themselves. In Poland this process of Social Democratisation has created two parties, each calling themselves Social-Democratic. One of these parties still includes a series of old Stalinist leaders and maintains an organic relationship to the bureaucratic apparatus. It can not yet be characterised as Social Democratic in the scientific sense; it is rather a Stalinist party *in extremis*.

The Communist Parties in the GDR and Czechoslovakia represent different stages in the process of social democratisation. In the GDR the PDS (ex-SED) leadership is a clearly restorationist force that is still fundamentally loyal to the Kremlin. Its rapid demoralisation and decay continues. In Czechoslovakia the KSC survived only as a junior partner in government.



East Berlin youths display mementoes seized during a raid on the offices of the Stasi, the GDR security police.

Although it has not disintegrated to the same degree as the SED-PDS, it shows no sign of mounting any resistance to the restoration of capitalism.

The result of the revolutionary popular upsurges of 1989 is a situation that can be characterised as a kind of "dual power" or rather, "dual powerlessness". This will last at least up to the planned elections of spring 1990. The Stalinists cling to power even where they are a minority in government, but this power is greatly diminished. The party militias have been dissolved and the police and the army dare not enforce a crack down. But the opposition is still confused, incoherent and unable to take power.

As a result of the first phase of the political revolution a kind of democratic revolution has taken place. Different class objectives have been concealed behind common abstract democratic slogans. In the coming period this situation will have to be resolved. "Democracy" can only be realised either as workers' council democracy or as bourgeois parliamentary democracy. The situation is pregnant with three possibilities: Stalinist bureaucratic counter-revolution, pro-capitalist social counter-revolution or proletarian political revolution.

Factions in the Eastern European bureaucracy

a) The forces of bureaucratic reaction

Throughout the degenerate workers' states the conservative faction of the bureaucracy believes that discipline for the workers and for the bureaucracy can cut out corruption and restore efficiency to the bureaucratic plan. They idealise the period of the first and second five year plans in the USSR. They are vigorously opposed to democratisation: their real answer is a return to police state repression. In China this faction tightened its precarious hold on power after Tiananmen Square. In Hungary the reformed HSWP led by the conservative Grosz retains considerable support within the state administration.

In the USSR this faction is led by Ligachev. Subordinate to Gorbachev, the conservatives cling on to their posts and hope to return to power when the forces of reform are discredited and in disarray. Their base lies in the vast ranks of the party and state apparatus who are in a position to actively resist the implementation of social and economic reform. In particular this leaden rump looks to Ligachev to protect their positions, privileges and, in many areas corrupt mafia practices. However, the conservatives have no positive alternative programme to that of Gorbachev.

The bureaucratic conservative faction can rely on the support of the secret police, the army chiefs and above all on the powerful passive resistance of the lower echelons of the bureaucracy. This faction is the major force for brutal bureaucratic counter-revolution. It would trample on the democratic rights of the workers, the nationalities and the intelligentsia. The conservatives may use their "defence" of planning and the workers' gains such as "full employment" and "price controls" as a way of appealing to the working class. They will demagogically use the anti-working class measures of the pro-market faction to rebuild support, as in the case of the campaign

against rationing, shortages and unrestricted operation of the co-operatives in Leningrad.

Whatever the fortunes of the Stalinist bureaucracy in government, in every country it has retained control over the repressive apparatus and the levers of state administration, even though this control may have been substantially weakened. This illustrates one danger inherent in the present situation. So long as the Stalinist state apparatus is not smashed then the capacity remains for a bureaucratic counter-revolution which would wipe away the gains of the last period.

However, the likelihood of a bureaucratic counter-revolution in Hungary, Poland, the GDR and Czechoslovakia has receded and continues to recede. The national repressive apparatuses are greatly weakened, if not dissolved. Large parts of the state apparatus and the officer corps have defected towards the openly bourgeois parties. As dissent grows within the USSR, the SAF will be needed more and more within its frontiers. Moreover, any bureaucratic counter-revolution would only deepen and accelerate the crisis.

The Stalinists could not re-establish their dictatorship without a *coup d'état* which would probably split the armed forces and result in civil war. On the other hand, the new governments have, as yet, neither a crystallised party, nor officer caste, nor a restored bourgeoisie to rest upon. Both bureaucratic conservatives and restorationists thus face the danger that any conflict between them could result in power falling into the hands of the workers.

b) The market reformers

The "market socialist" reformers of bureaucratic planning oppose the conservatives but do not have a programme of out-and-out capitalist restoration. Gorbachev is their model. They wish to enlarge the area of the economy under the sway of the market and private property, without entirely dismantling the planning mechanisms. This programme is contradictory, inconsistent and untenable. A significant section of the pro-market faction is marked by authoritarianism. They are deeply suspicious of democratisation and look to authoritarian rule to introduce the market.

For the moment this faction holds the reins of power in Romania and Bulgaria, and shares the ministries in Czechoslovakia and Poland. In the USSR this faction has been in power since 1985. This relatively prolonged experiment has been possible due to the initially less serious nature of the USSR's economic crisis. But in Eastern Europe this faction has more or less had its day. It held office in Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia and ran these economies onto the rocks of debt and stagnation. As the crisis develops the "market socialist" factions elsewhere in Eastern Europe will disintegrate. They will either be ousted or will transform themselves into restorationists or bureaucratic conservatives.

c) The restorationists

The third principal faction is that of the "radical marketisers"—open or scarcely concealed restorationists. Radical marketisers can be found in both the increas-

ingly authoritarian Gorbachev camp (Aganbegyan, Schmelev) and in the radical democratic camp (the late Sakharov, Gavril Popov). This faction remains weak in the USSR although it has various economists who speak for it and Boris Yeltsin is increasingly becoming a potential leader. The "left" face of this faction is its espousal of democratic rights for citizens, its opposition to the leading role of the party, its support of the right to secession by the nationalities.

Its aim is the break up of planned property relations and the introduction of a "mixed" economy. This faction has its strongest representation in Eastern Europe. It has evolved furthest in Hungary where the HSP has a commanding position in the pre-election government. This party also has a base amongst those enterprise managers who are busy privatising the factories by selling them off to themselves. The logical political home and final destination of this faction is social democracy and the Socialist International.

The opposition in Eastern Europe . . .

In most of the workers' states the mushrooming of the unofficial opposition groups has proceeded at a faster pace among the intelligentsia than amongst the workers. Even in the progressive pro-socialist sections of this intelligentsia, however, this has created a situation where the far left is distanced from the workers and not relating to their concrete demands. A battle of ideas alone, an obsession with drawing up blueprints for the future, will only serve to allow the right wing to fill the vacuum. Now the burning need is to organise the masses to fight against the attacks that are being prepared.

A series of *ad hoc* united fronts of oppositionists has come into existence such as the New Forum in the GDR and the Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia. These groups initially consisted of prominent dissidents (often writers or academics) without any party affiliation and the nuclei of Christian Democrat, Social Democrat, and Liberal parties.

Social and Christian Democratic forces will seek to blind the working class to the cuts in subsidies and growing unemployment by preaching the benefits of bourgeois democracy and promising prosperity in an idealised capitalist consumer society. Clearly none of these represent the vanguard of the working class.

Nevertheless, the Social Democrats have had a considerable ideological success amongst sections of the Eastern European opposition and working class. The re-emergence of these parties is only one aspect of this influence, which spreads far further, penetrating the Stalinist parties and changing the terms of reference of political debate within the workers' states.

The political debates which marked the opening years of the century (reform or revolution, Leninist or Social Democratic party organisation, workers' power or parliamentary democracy etc, are being replayed, with the Social Democrats currently having the upper hand. It is on the result of this battle for proletarian leadership in the degenerate workers' states that the outcome of the current crises will be determined.

None of the left wing tendencies in Eastern Europe

have been able to advance a programme of working class power. The Left Alternative in Civic Forum, led by the self-proclaimed Trotskyist Petre Uhl, has acted as a left cover for the bourgeois leadership through their supine policy of "critical support" for Havel. He is now press officer for a pro-restorationist government.

In Poland the Polish Socialist Party—Democratic Revolution (PPS-RD) is small but it is nevertheless the most developed political organisation in Eastern Europe. Its programme is left reformist, combining bourgeois democratic forms (two chambers of the Sejm) with syndicalist proposals for the economy. This programme cannot defend the workers against the use of bourgeois democracy to install restorationist governments nor can it prevent the triumph of the market over planning.

The left wing opposition within the PPS-RD around Josef Pinior does defend planning but has no clear revolutionary strategy for the struggle for power. It has no programme for the building of workers' councils; it does not call for a clear break from the government, but concentrates its fire on the Mazowiecki-Jaruzelski austerity programme. Equally tellingly, it does not seek to build a revolutionary Leninist party.

The United Left in the GDR proved itself to be thoroughly reformist with regard to the weakened Modrow government. It entered, if only briefly, the Roundtable talks with the government, tailing the SED and New Forum's "defence of the GDR". It has concentrated on discussing "forms of alternative structures to parliament" instead of seeking to mobilise the workers to create factory committees and workers' councils for the seizure of power.

. . . and its role in the revolutions of 1989

The original project of New Forum and of Civic Forum, rather like that of political Solidarnosc in Poland, was simply to pressure the Stalinists into a process of reform. Contradictory class forces with different objectives could at least agree on a reformist project of parliamentary democratisation. The ends differed but the means were identical.

The speed of events was too great to allow this comfortable schema to be realised. Rapid changes occurred as a result of shifts in the international balance of power and the pressure of the masses for democratic change. The population refused to place any confidence in the "reformed" Stalinist leaders. They reacted vigorously against their manoeuvres, such as the KSC's attempt to hold onto a majority of the ministries or Modrow's attempt to re-form the Stasi.

After the first major concessions by the bureaucracy, the opposition leaders tried to put an end to "street politics". Unsurprisingly, the Stalinists immediately stopped making concessions. When the mass mobilisations continued the Stalinists completely collapsed. The SPD, the CDU and even the proto-fascist 'Republikaner' seized the leadership of the masses. The working class saw no possibility of reform either economically or politically and swung inexorably

behind "the only way out": re-unification. The SED, the New Forum and the United Left all tried to rally the masses behind them by alleging that unification would lead to the rise of fascism. Despite one big demonstration this policy failed to bloc the re-unification momentum.

The oppositionists were obliged to take either formal or informal responsibility for government (Czechoslovakia and GDR, respectively). The calling of early elections has proved to be the only road of escape for the powerless governments. In Czechoslovakia, the GDR and to some extent in Poland and Hungary too, the democratic phase is coming to a climax. The question of power is posed point blank.

This fact highlights the acute crisis of leadership which faces the reviving workers' movement. The working class has spontaneously rejected the Stalinist leaders but has found no alternative leadership with a strategy of class independence and workers' power. The vacuum has been filled by Social Democrats and social democratising former Stalinists or even by Christian Democratic or bourgeois nationalist forces.

Only Romania is a partial exception to this. In Braşov, Timisoara and the mining regions the NSF committees which were initially imposed by the army and the remnants of the RCP were purged or re-elected from below by the workers. Managers and officials of the Ceausescu regime who tried to hold onto their posts were ousted by mass pressure. However, the local committees remain loyal to the crypto-Stalinist NSF at a national level. The committees are rightly opposed to the restorationist forces of the National Peasant Party and the Liberal Party.

In Poland the Mazowiecki-Jaruzelski government is proceeding with its austerity measures, using the Walesa union leadership of Solidarnosc to prevent or abort strikes. Rank and file resistance exists within trade union Solidarnosc although it remains confused by anti-communist and nationalist ideas.

The March-June 1990 elections will give the pro-bourgeois forces in Eastern Europe the chance to en-

sure that the Stalinists are placed in a permanent minority. If the oppositions present themselves as a unified front on a democratic platform the Stalinists will undoubtedly be swept away. If they fragment then the Stalinists may be able to stabilise their position.

However, popular front governments which include Stalinist ministers are not the probable outcome of the coming elections. If the Stalinists are excluded or reduced to minor posts within these governments then they could well try and take advantage of workers' resistance against the effects of capitalist restoration. But without a credible programme or perspective they will not succeed for long. In most countries openly restorationist governments will be formed, led or supported by the Social Democrats, determined to quickly demolish the Stalinist apparatuses.

All this suggests that unless the crisis of proletarian leadership is resolved the main or sole beneficiaries of the revolution will be the pro-capitalist forces intent on a pushing through a programme of capitalist restoration. Apart from sections of the bureaucracy, these forces will include small-capitalist elements inside the country, minority sections of the crumbling bureaucracy, the imperialist trans-nationals and the exiled bourgeoisies.

The phases of capitalist restoration

Capitalist restoration will require the carrying through of several interlinked political and economic tasks. First of all, the restorationists will have to struggle for complete control of the state machine. They will have to secure and deepen political pluralism, free elections, the abolition of the leading role of the party, abolition of the party militias and of the Stalinist controlled secret police. They will have to totally destroy the Stalinists' hold over the interior and defence ministries; the hardliners' will have to be deprived of these bases for organising a backlash.



Conference of the United Left: GDR November 1989—"Self management not privatisation!"

The establishment of a government, able and willing to separate the state power from the Stalinist bureaucracy and use its monopoly of armed force to defend private property, constitutes the bourgeois counter-revolution. From this point on, the state is bourgeois. It must then proceed to dismantle the remaining proletarian property forms—the state monopoly of foreign trade and central planning. After this is accomplished, private property can be restored to a commanding position in economic life over a more or less prolonged period.

Although their state apparatus is not yet completely in the hands of pro-bourgeois elements, Hungary and Poland have already set the pace for the first phase of the economic restoration of capitalism. There have been massive rises in prices and taxes, and reductions in state subsidies for health, transport, housing and food. The aim of these measures is to restore a balanced budget, conquer inflation and forge a stable convertible currency. This will go hand in hand with legislation to allow private and foreign ownership of industry. There will also have to be an effective accounting of the national wealth (and debt) of each country.

These elements do not constitute in themselves the introduction of capitalism. But they are the pre-requisites of such a restoration. Without them no major investment and accumulation can be undertaken, no stable native capitalist class can emerge, no extensive pattern of trade with the capitalist world will evolve, no viable long term market for goods and services can be built.

Overlapping with this phase, but taking longer to fully implement, will be the radical restructuring of industry and finance. A national capitalist class will have to be created by stimulating small private commercial enterprises and entrepreneurial industrial capital. This process will be accompanied by the wholesale closure of unprofitable industries, particularly in the heavy industrial sector.

Most or all of these industries (even in Hungary or Yugoslavia) are in the state sector. Those that can be made profitable will be privatised; some will fall into the hands of the imperialist trans-nationals, some will be sold to bolster the indigenous capitalists. The closure and privatisation programme will create a huge reserve army of labour, thus providing a pool of workers essential to the creation of a genuine "free" labour market and a fully stratified system of wage rates; without this a competitive capitalism is impossible. In the course of this the fact that capitalism means savage inequality will become plain to millions.

When Eastern European industry is pared down to its narrow, potentially profitable, base then a fully functioning stock market would need to facilitate and regulate the free movement of capital in each of these countries. The bureaucratic planning mechanisms will be dismantled in direct proportion to the success of this process of restoration. The centralised regulation of investment, prices and labour would end, although an indicative planning system may remain for residual state industries. The conversion of the statified economy into a mixed economy composed of

private and state capitalist trusts would mark the final definitive act of the restoration of capitalism.

Is a peaceful restoration of capitalism possible in Eastern Europe?

In the 1930s Trotsky argued that the restoration of capitalism in a workers state could not take place by a process of gradual transformation: "The film of reformism cannot be wound backwards". A qualitative leap must take place in the nature of the state, he argued. In the case of the USSR he insisted that a social counter-revolution would not and could not take place peacefully, but would necessarily involve a civil war. However, in some countries in Eastern Europe the seizure of state power by the bourgeoisie and the decisive liquidation of planned property relations may take place without immediately provoking civil war. The possibility of a relatively peaceful counter-revolution in certain countries of Eastern Europe is opened up by a particular constellation of factors.

Firstly, the policy of the USSR and the action (or inaction) of its armed forces. Gorbachev has already accepted the inevitability of restoration in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the GDR and Poland. The prospect of bureaucratic armed resistance by the indigenous bureaucracies is opposed by the leading faction of the Soviet bureaucracy.

In those Eastern European countries where Soviet troops are stationed (GDR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland) a relatively peaceful capitalist restoration is not impossible because their ruling bureaucracies are not independent: They are subordinate to the Kremlin's military diktat. If the USSR were able to stitch up a deal with the west over disarmament, economic assistance and a common European security system, the Stalinists would be willing to police a "peaceful transition" against working class resistance. Indeed, the first stages of such moves are well underway.

Although the Soviet bureaucracy has used the degenerate workers' states of Eastern Europe as a strategic buffer zone since the Second World War, it has never totally abandoned the idea of a double layered buffer zone. Countries near to the USSR like Poland and Romania should be "friendly" or allied to it, and a broad band of neutral states, (e.g. Austria and a united Germany) would further ensure the USSR's security. A capitalist Eastern Europe with trading links firmly tethered to the east could be a useful conduit of necessary goods and finance.

As a second condition for a peaceful restoration the imperialists would have to approve and economically support such a process. For the moment they are cautious. Talk of a Marshall Aid package for Eastern Europe is misplaced. If the imperialists were to invest heavily in Eastern Europe, it would not be to reconstruct these nations as subordinate imperialist partners but rather to turn them into stable semi-colonial spheres of influence.

The dismantling of state property in Eastern Europe will be a long and difficult process, fraught with political dangers and likely to provoke resistance. Imperialist investments and loans can never be secure

while a strong native bourgeoisie is absent and there is no stable standing army loyal to this class. They are unwilling and unable to intervene militarily to secure their ends, and, with the partial exception of the FRG, there are no vast supplies of surplus capital to invest in Eastern Europe.

The decisive condition for such an initial period of relatively peaceful social counter-revolution would be for the working class to voluntarily accept the restoration of capitalism. The reasons why this might take place are not hard to find.

Firstly, in none of the Eastern European states do post-capitalist property relations have any historic political legitimacy. The bureaucratic social overthrows of the post-war period were imposed upon the working classes of these countries against the rhythms and natural development of the class struggle. These were not workers' revolutions but military-bureaucratic decisions emanating from Moscow. They were accompanied by the bureaucratic destruction of independent workers' organisations and, frequently, by forced population transfers.

In the absence of a revolutionary leadership and beguiled by promises of better living standards and greater freedom under capitalism, the workers of Eastern Europe may be prepared to accept the initial stages of social counter-revolution (e.g. German reunification, destruction of the plan, creation of Social Democratic governments etc) without civil war. This is most likely in the GDR where a large majority of the masses have been won to immediate and almost unconditional reunification.

The real price of the restoration of capitalism will rapidly become clear, in the form of soaring prices, massive unemployment and attacks on social services and working conditions. The immediate and dramatic reduction in living standards due to the "adjustment crisis" will coincide with the masses using to exercise their newly won rights and organisations to defend themselves. In short, the workers will fight back. However, they would then be faced with a bourgeois state which has resolved the dual power situation in its favour.

The conditions for an initially peaceful counter-revolution are not present in all the countries of Eastern Europe. Although West German imperialism has massive resources with which it can smooth the path of the first stages of the "reconstruction" in the GDR, in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland the transition will be much more socially disruptive and workers' resistance will undoubtedly be sharper.

Apart from the GDR, the new indigenous bourgeoisies will be relatively weak, and the armed forces will be uncertain in their allegiance to their new masters. Under these conditions a return to a dual power situation and a revolutionary counter-attack by the proletariat is possible given the right leadership.

The participation of the Romanian working class in a prolonged general strike and armed insurrection has created a situation where a peaceful overturn of planned property is highly unlikely. Even an electoral victory of counter-revolutionary parties could lead to a revolt by the workers and the rank and file of the army, and thus to civil war. Romania could stand in

the forefront of the political revolution and provide an impulse and encouragement to proletarian resistance to restoration in the whole of Eastern Europe.

The reunification of Germany

The economic prestige and resources of the West German bourgeoisie and its democratic credentials vouched for by its Social Democratic lackeys, creates the most favourable conditions for a peaceful and "democratic" restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe. Further, the restoration of capitalism in the GDR would not have to overcome the huge obstacle of the lack of a capitalist class.

Although immediate unification is not the FRG imperialists' only method for restoring capitalism, it provides the shortest route to the creation of a framework within which West German finance capital could directly intervene to restructure and rationalise the economy of the GDR.

Re-unification would mean incorporation of the territories of the GDR into the bourgeois Federal German state: the degenerate workers' state would thus be destroyed. However, capitalism could also be restored in the GDR by the dismantling of the essential elements of the degenerate workers' state by a pro-capitalist GDR government before the completion of formal re-unification.

Although Gorbachev does not want a united Germany as part of NATO, the Soviet bureaucracy is too weak to insist on this as a precondition. The Polish regime wants Germany to stay in NATO as a way of preventing any claims on former German territories that are now part of Poland. Imperialism is proposing a compromise solution according to which there would be no US troops in the ex-GDR. The USA is trying to convince the USSR that in the interests of Soviet security faced with future German imperialist expansion, better a united Germany dominated by other imperialist forces, rather than a "neutral" Germany which may later develop its own nuclear weapons.

Revolutionaries have to continue to argue in principle: no to capitalist re-unification, defend planned property, for revolutionary re-unification and a Socialist United States of Europe. But after the election the task will be to resist each and every attack on the workers and prevent a grossly undemocratic fusion of the two states.

The paralysis of the Soviet bureaucracy

The politics of Gorbachev and his factional grouping have developed pragmatically in response to the deepening crisis of bureaucratic rule, the failure of successive proposals for change and confrontations with various bureaucratic oppositions. He has constantly adjusted his economic policies to what is possible given the existing balance of forces within the bureaucracy.

Between 1985 and 1987 Gorbachev tried to inject life into the stagnant economy by redirecting invest-

ment and enforcing disciplinary measures against the workers. The situation only deteriorated even more. This led him to recognise that the opposition to economic reforms could only be addressed by a series of political reforms that would remove the obstructive layers of the bureaucracy.

From this point onward Gorbachev has stood firmly in the marketising camp of the Politburo. His closest advisers are explicitly pro-capitalist. He wants to significantly downgrade central planning and create a major role for the market and private property. Gorbachev seeks to use incentives and a restructured wages system to persuade the working class, and especially the skilled labour aristocracy, to support his plans.

The non-Gorbachev pro-market section of the bureaucracy is centred on the Inter-Regional group of deputies. This group is deeply divided over both programme and tactics and is one of the many potential bases for the formation of liberal democratic or Social Democratic parties. In the eyes of the masses the leader of this faction is the maverick populist demagogue Boris Yeltsin, who has increasingly put forward restorationist solutions to the crisis.

The economic changes involved in *perestroika* have not satisfied any section of the bureaucracy, and they have made life even more difficult for the masses. The laws on co-operatives, and on leasing property and enterprises have failed to meet the demands of the marketeers. At the same time these measures have alarmed the bureaucratic conservatives, who have it in their power to obstruct and sabotage any reform. In the aftermath of the 1989 miners' strikes the central planners, from Ryzhkov through to Ligachev, were able to postpone and stall certain reforms. The outline of the 13th Plan is far from a victory for the pro-market faction. Large elements of the old system have been dismantled but no attempt has been made to create a functioning new system.

The Soviet opposition

The range of political positions represented within the Soviet bureaucracy is also to be found within the oppositional groups. The Great Russian chauvinist unreconstructed Stalinist wing of the bureaucracy has links with the anti-semitic proto-fascist Pamyat and the United Front of Workers (UFW). The UFW is led by party functionaries and academics, but has a real resonance amongst those workers for whom *perestroika* has meant economic chaos and for whom *glasnost* has brought no gains.

The various popular fronts, which came together under the umbrella of the Russian Popular Front, are blocs of forces ranging from Eurocommunists and Social Democrats through to Cadets and monarchists. Unable to establish a clear alternative political programme, the popular fronts have become footsoldiers of the Inter-Regional Group. The expulsion of the Ivanov and Gdlyan from the party for investigating corruption at the highest levels and Yuri Afanasyev's project of forming a new party, will tend to push the popular fronts into becoming a formal organisation

under the leadership of sections of the bureaucracy.

The Democratic Union (DU)—a self-proclaimed political party—occupies a similar terrain. It too spans a political spectrum from Eurocommunist CPSU members through to Christian Democrats. Its two key demands are democratisation and the social market economy, posed in an ever more consciously bourgeois and reactionary manner.

The self-proclaimed left of the informal opposition is influenced by Social-Democracy and Eurocommunism and is set on forming a Socialist Party. For a significant section of the left, Scandinavian Social Democracy is the model. According to Boris Kagarlitsky, who stands on the left of this spectrum, their main strategy is that of reform from below. But in practice the left has formed blocs with the Yeltsin wing of the apparatus.

Apart from the new independent workers' committees, the only section of the informal opposition that does not echo the programme of a wing of the bureaucracy is the confederation of anarcho-syndicalists (KAS). However, by their rejection of the struggle for power and for a vanguard party the KAS effectively leaves the political initiative to the bureaucracy.

The trap of "self-management"

Much of the leftist official opposition to the bureaucracy advocates some form of self-management as a way out of the present economic chaos. Because the bureaucracy's plan appears as an alien dictatorship the workers do not spontaneously recognise the urgency of fighting for a plan based on the democratic will of the masses. The danger exists that rank and file workers will limit themselves to a syndicalist struggle to destroy the punishing work norms and to oust dictatorial enterprise managers. They seek through the introduction of self-management at the individual enterprise level to achieve partial or total independence from the plan. It is envisaged that the allocation of resources and the placing of orders between factories will either be left to the market, to decentralised "planning from below", or to a series of bilateral agreements.

The origins of the slogan of "decentralised self-management" lie in Yugoslavia, where this system led to an extreme bureaucratisation at factory level and to extreme fragmentation of the economy into factory and local party fiefdoms. In Poland in 1980-81 Solidarnosc was won to an idea of "self-management" with no clear answer as to how enterprises should be linked.

Yet all modern production must be organised nationally and internationally. Local and regional isolation will lead to economic chaos and breakdown. If the operation of the law of value—the market—is the predominant relation between enterprises, then sooner or later the big majority of these will be forced into private ownership. Co-operative ownership and self-management are no barrier to this.

Indeed, self-management degenerates into a struggle to raise the efficiency and potential profitability of each enterprise within the existing system. If

a restorationist political leadership is entrenched in government, the self-management movement will easily be co-opted by the restorationists. The market will be presented as the only mechanism for governing relations between the self-managing enterprises. As self-financing co-operatives they will be forced to turn to the banks and become indebted. In turn this will force them into bankruptcy or into accepting large scale capitalist investment.

The developing crisis and the role of Gorbachev

From the outset Gorbachev has faced stiff opposition and has been obliged to mobilise forces outside the bureaucracy and the party. This was the reason for his policy of *glasnost*. In the spring and summer of 1988 the bureaucratic factions were in more or less open conflict. In June Gorbachev succeeded in modifying the Constitution, became state President with enlarged executive powers and introduced multi-candidate elections.

Nearly all political prisoners were released and between the summer of 1988 and early 1989 there was a substantial growth of "informal" and non-party organisations.

The immediate result was the creation of a series of popular fronts in the non-Russian republics and in some Russian cities. The 1989 elections were a resounding defeat for the conservative faction, which only maintained a strong presence in the Congress of People's Deputies because of undemocratic restrictions on voting. Local elections in the "Slavic" republics in 1990 swept away even more conservatives.

Gorbachev seeks to create a power base for his policies outside of and independent of the party and the state apparatus. This is the meaning of the executive Presidency and Presidential Council which will give Gorbachev a new constitutional authority on an all-Union and republic basis.

This would put him beyond the control not only of a conservative majority in the Central Committee and Politburo but also of the CPSU Congress itself. He hopes to be able to overcome bureaucratic resistance to move against the new mass organisations should they escape his influence.

For the moment Gorbachev's balancing act is threatened by the independent organisations which have come into existence by *glasnost*. The oppressed nationalities, the civil rights activists and the working class have all taken action. The workers are fighting for their democratic rights (free trade unions, assembly, right to strike), for improvements in wages, for greater equality, and against bureaucratic corruption.

The conditions for political revolution are being created in the USSR.

The national question in the USSR

The most de-stabilising factor that Gorbachev has faced is the national question. A history of national coercion, forcible annexation and Russian settlement has meant that the USSR is not a free federation of peoples and that the right of self-determination up to and including separation, although contained in the Constitution, is completely fictitious.

Although Gorbachev initially won the support of the nationalities against the conservatives for his exposure of Stalin's crimes, these movements are now outside his control. Secession and independence are the order of the day from Lithuania to Azerbaijan. In



Ukrainian nationalist movement, Rukh, marches in Odessa

general, the popular fronts were formed as a bloc between pro-*perestroika* party officials and nationalists. As the crisis has deepened, the fronts have given birth to crystallized separatist and restorationist forces—e.g. in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Lithuania. The bureaucrats have been eclipsed despite their attempts to swim with the nationalists.

The Baltic republics were particularly important to Gorbachev's programme of economic renewal. The resurgence of nationalism has posed a particular problem. A great degree of economic independence and political autonomy has already been accorded to the Baltic republics, but this has not defused the movement. The nationalists in the Baltics are weakened by the existence of large Russian minorities which could be mobilised against them, and the region's economic dependence on Soviet markets, but their movement shows no sign of abating.

Were Gorbachev simply to concede independence



Romanian women

there would be a massive wave of similar demands in the Caucasus and the Ukraine: the U.S.S.R. would begin to disintegrate. On the other hand, blunt refusal to allow independence would be ignored, and it would undermine Gorbachev's Bonapartist role. To use force would fatally alienate his supporters. The bureaucracy is effectively paralysed. Gorbachev will seek to embroil the Baltic Popular Fronts in a long process of discussion to try and exhaust the mass movement. This may involve negotiations around a treaty of independence for these countries in order to establish a relationship with them such as occurred with Finland during the 1920s or in the post-war period.

In the Caucasian republics Gorbachev has already been forced to use repression against nationalist uprisings. The brutal massacre ordered by the authorities in Tbilisi (Georgia) led to a wave of hostility and the development of extreme nationalist forces calling for complete independence. Gorbachev's policy on Nagorno Karabakh has proved dangerous for himself and tragic for the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The bureaucracies of both republics were old-style corrupt Brezhnevites. They stoked the fires of Azeri and Armenian chauvinism in order to preserve their social base.

The population of Karabakh used the new freedoms to demand the transfer of their region to the Armenian Republic. Gorbachev has repeatedly re-

jected this elementary and justified democratic demand. The Azeri masses, suffering very high levels of unemployment and detesting the old party leadership, were diverted by the local Stalinist leaders and by national chauvinist forces into a totally reactionary campaign to retain Karabakh.

Moscow's imposition of direct rule after one bout of murderous rioting and its return of the region to Azerbaijan as a result of a prolonged Azeri blockade led to a situation of impending civil war and the Baku pogrom.

It was, however, not concern for the welfare of the Armenians, but the imminence of the complete collapse of Moscow's authority and the outbreak of a full-scale war over Karabakh, that forced Gorbachev to send in the troops. This in turn resulted in a bloodbath. Intervention to protect the national minorities, to prevent civil war and the seizure of power by sections of the Azeri popular front and to break the blockade of Karabakh, were fully justified. However, these were not the central objective actions of the Moscow bureaucracy. What was at stake was Gorbachev's Bonapartist position.

The Kremlin probably feels that the current struggles in the Caucasus and elsewhere are fatally flawed by the internecine conflict between the various nationalities. In Bulgaria, Turkish workers have been expelled in a wave of racism; in Uzbekistan the

Meskhet minority has been oppressed, and in Azerbaijan and Tadzhikistan the Armenian and non-Turkish minorities were attacked. The Central government can demonstrate the continuing necessity of its role by holding the ring between these contending forces; it can also unload the blame on the local and regional bureaucracies for stoking up ancient antagonisms. The imperialists—who have few doubts on this area—have not objected to Moscow's military intervention.

Nationalist upheavals have also occurred in Tadzhikistan, but certain key republics have not to be touched by the nationalist contagion. Were secessionist demands to spread to the Ukraine and to Central Asia it would be difficult if not impossible to suppress.

However, virulent separatism is relatively weak in most of the Ukraine—with the partial exception of the western areas which were annexed in 1939. The reasons for this lie in the history of the Russian Empire itself, in the integration of the Ukrainian bureaucracy into the Soviet bureaucracy, the relatively privileged nature of this republic and the highly nationally integrated nature of its proletariat. All these features are expressed in the relatively progressive original programme of the popular Movement for the Reconstruction of the Ukraine (RUKH), adopted at its September 1989 congress.

Nevertheless, if the crisis deepens and there is a delay in the emergence of a powerful working class movement then there is a real danger that religious and separatist ideas will become more influential in the Ukraine.

Justified alienation from Stalinism, the absence of a revolutionary party and the re-emergence of bourgeois and pre-capitalist prejudices mean that popular protests are deformed by xenophobic and reactionary attitudes and religious bigotry. Sections of the Stalinists can flirt with these sentiments in order to preserve their own privileges and strengthen their hand against other sections of the bureaucracy.

We have to fight against all forms of bourgeois nationalism or religious fundamentalism, whilst of course supporting the right of secession for nationalities which have clearly expressed their wish to do so. We do not support the installation of a bourgeois nationalist regime in these states but fight for an independent revolutionary workers' state.

The situation of women in the Stalinist states

The degenerate workers' states have radically altered the position of women. In the USSR and in Eastern Europe women form a large proportion of the workforce. Women are included in many professional layers of the working class, and in certain traditionally male dominated industries such as engineering and mining. The political history of the workers' states also means that women have generally been granted full legal and political equality; there exists a formal ideological commitment to the liberation of women. Social provision for childcare has also been developed, although this varies considerably between countries.

Within the state and party apparatus women remain a small minority. Alongside a formal commitment to women's equality, Stalinist ideology also includes support for a strong family unit within which women play a central role. This proved necessary because of the Stalinist Thermidor in the family inside the USSR in the late 1920s.

Women had to play a central role when collective provision for childcare and household labour was ditched as a political priority in the USSR.

Command planning has proved incapable of providing the consumer goods which could ease the daily life of the workers. The resulting burden rests primarily on women. They have to queue long hours for inadequate quantities of food for their families. They have to cook, clean and care for children in overcrowded and inadequate housing, with very few labour saving devices. All this ensures that women endure long hours of hard domestic labour on top of their factory or office work.

A revolutionary crisis in the USSR

The USSR is moving rapidly towards a revolutionary situation. This is shown by the mounting economic shortages, the mushrooming of independent workers' organisations and the results of the spring 1990 local elections, which saw wholesale defeats for party candidates.

Faced with this growing crisis of bureaucratic rule and the threat of revolution, the Stalinists may launch a pre-emptive strike in the form of a Bonapartist coup by Gorbachev or by one of his opponents. But in a period of mounting mass struggles this could be only a temporary bureaucratic solution: there would inevitably be a massive protest and resistance. The crackdown would probably be defeated and usher in a dual power situation such as occurred in Eastern Europe in 1989.

Of course, it is by no means excluded that Gorbachev will put off the crisis for a while by making further concessions or by resorting to ever more bonapartist measures. But it is increasingly clear that his Bonapartism is an expression of the senility of the bureaucratic caste. He is the Kerensky of the political revolution: his rule will merely be an interlude in the inevitable decline of Stalinism.

Whatever the future holds for Eastern Europe, even an initial period of peaceful restoration of capitalism in the USSR is impossible. As in Eastern Europe, developments will be determined by three forces: the Stalinist bureaucracy, the imperialists and the working class. In each case, different conditions apply to the USSR as compared to Eastern Europe.

In both the USSR and Eastern Europe, the whole bureaucracy will not go over to the politics of restoration. At the moment such a policy is not widely held amongst leading sections of the Soviet party. The leading faction hopes to be able to use technological renewal and some market mechanisms to revitalise the existing social relations.

As the crisis develops, the bureaucracy will split into pro-capitalist and bureaucratic retrenchment fac-

tions who will mobilise different forces in society. Splits within the Soviet bureaucracy cannot be decided upon relatively peacefully by occupying armed forces, as was the case, for example, in GDR. The fractures will run throughout the state apparatus, including the armed forces.

The fact that USSR is by far the most powerful industrial economy of the degenerate workers' states and also the military command centre of the Warsaw Pact means that imperialism's attitude will be very different. They will intervene economically, and, finally, perhaps, militarily in the event of civil war and the danger of proletarian political revolution. Imperialism's policies have to ensure that Gorbachev opens the road to capitalist restoration but at the same time they must endeavour to make sure that he is not able to stop or slow down the process.

The Soviet working class has a different relationship to planned property than is the case in Eastern Europe. Although the Stalinist dictatorship itself has no historic legitimacy, the Soviet working class actively participated in both the creation of the workers' state in 1917 and in its defence during the Second World War. The introduction of the market, privatisation, growing inflation and inequitable wage differentials will all represent attacks on what remains of the historic gains of 1917. This will increasingly provoke a strong resistance from the Soviet working class, and the development of new independent workers' organisations which can and must become the organs of political revolution and of future workers' power.

The Chinese bureaucracy tries to stop the wheel of history

The particularity of the crisis in China lies in the fact that its dynamic does not directly stem from the changes within the USSR after 1985. As such it shows the USSR and Eastern Europe many features of the road ahead of them. Since its victory in the Civil War in 1949, the Chinese CP (CCP) has exhibited all the characteristic features of Stalinism but in a manner inevitably influenced by its unique circumstances. At

the time of its victory the CCP already had 15 years experience of territorial government behind it and a battle-hardened bureaucratic administration; the party itself was militarised to a greater degree than any other. In addition, Chinese Stalinism came to power by its own strength, based on the 500 million strong peasantry.

This peasantry was to shape many of the unique features of Chinese Stalinism in power after capitalism was liquidated in the 1951-53 period.

Highly centralised industry and aid from the USSR allowed rapid economic growth in the first five year plan (up to 1956). The CCP leadership, however, was already divided over the extent to which the Soviet model could be further emulated without alienating the peasant base of the regime or destabilising the economy by too great a concentration on heavy industry.

The debacle of the "Great Leap Forward", involving the withdrawal of Soviet aid and technicians, the onset of famine and its alleviation by market reforms in the countryside, all underlined the faction-ridden nature of the Chinese Stalinists. This was to be further emphasised when the factionalism broke out of the bounds of the party and assumed virtual civil war proportions during the Cultural Revolution.

The beginnings of working class self-mobilisation forced the warring factions to agree a truce but the ensuing stalemate, presided over by the aging Mao and the "Gang of Four", saw a steady decline in growth rates in all sectors except heavy industry. It was against this background that a radical turn towards reliance on market forces to stimulate production was adopted under Deng Xiaoping in 1978.

The first phase of this strategy effectively restored private farming to China and, by virtue of removing the strait-jacket of bureaucratic supervision, generated a rapid increase in output. Increased rural prosperity, however, necessarily entailed a rapid increase in inequality as capital was accumulated by a minority of farmers. Continuing central control based on state procurement at below market prices antagonised farmers and encouraged corruption within the bureaucracy.

The second phase of Deng's strategy was aimed at repeating the market experiment in the industrial sphere. Bureaucratic controls were relaxed on the basis of increased enterprise autonomy, and investment was increased by encouraging foreign capitalist investment and loans. Although some branches of production saw rapid growth this was by no means uniform, nor was it beneficial to the economy as a whole.

Factory-based decisions to alter production to suit foreign markets, regional rivalry to attract foreign investment,



"CONFIDENTIALLY, DON'T YOU JUST HATE IT WHEN THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD LINITE?"

corruption to obtain scarce raw materials oversteated the economy and created dramatic shortages and bottlenecks. By 1988 the consequences had spilled over into agriculture. Farmers found it more profitable to produce industrial crops than foodstuffs and the proliferation of investment projects was driving inflation up towards 40% per annum.

The technical intelligentsia played a central role in the growing political crisis. Based in factory management, in the university and research institutes and in the ministries, this stratum demanded freedom of speech and publication as it tried to grapple with the contradictions and rigidities of the economy. Leading sections of the bureaucracy recognised the importance of such academic and scientific freedoms and encouraged discussion as a way of building support for their own factional battles, in particular against the proponents of a return to more traditional centralised planning.

Against a background of steadily mounting economic disorder the debate again broke out of the ordained bureaucratic channels and poured onto the streets and into the Tiananmen Square. Typically, it was the students who opened the floodgates and generalised the demands into an attack on bureaucratic rule, privilege and nepotism which was then taken up by workers in all the major cities of China. It is a measure of the disunity of the bureaucracy that more than two months of steadily developing mass mobilisations passed before the movement was broken under People's Liberation Army tank tracks. It is also testimony to the deep social roots of Chinese Stalinism that it was able to inflict such a crushing blow to so widespread a movement.

The prime mover behind the repression of the Democracy Movement was Deng Xiaoping, but he had to rely on forces—principally the generals—whom he had attacked in earlier phases of his economic plans. In the aftermath of Tiananmen these forces have now insisted on a return to centralised planning and imposed tight restrictions on all economic development.

Neither the army nor the CCP is able to fully enforce these decisions. They are split over the question. Key figures, particularly in the foreign and economic ministries, are fundamentally opposed to this policy. Whilst no mercy has been shown to plebeian opponents of the regime there has been no systematic purge of the bureaucracy. The factions continue to battle behind closed doors.

Repression has driven opposition underground but it cannot eradicate it, nor motivate the workers to raise production. The growth of working class organisation during the spring of 1989, expressed in strikes throughout China after the massacre of Tiananmen, was too great to be totally or permanently liquidated. The bureaucracy tried desperately to limit coverage of the downfall of Ceausescu; nevertheless there were demonstrations in support of the Romanian revolution, showing that an organised opposition still exists.

The political character of this underground movement is far from crystallised. The Federation for a Democratic China—the leading force in the external opposition—shows the powerful influence of the overseas Chinese bourgeoisie with its overtly restora-

tionist programme. However, the decision of the major imperialists to continue to do business as usual with Beijing has tended to cut across the development of a coherent and organised opposition leadership. The decline in industrial production—2% per month since September 1989—shows the hostility of the working class and the economic impasse created by the bureaucracy's attempt to return to autocratic central planning.

Unlike the East European regimes, Beijing is not dependent on Moscow for its short term survival. It will not collapse overnight as Honecker or Jakés did. The accumulating contradictions will be resolved on the basis of rhythms and tempos not directly related to events in the USSR. Nevertheless, the contradictions of bureaucratic planning which produced the crisis of the USSR also operate in China. Indeed they have produced far greater crises, at almost ten yearly intervals since the 1950s. Given the resources of the Stalinists, over and above the support they retain within the peasantry, the convulsions of the political revolution in China will be longer, bloodier and more contradictory than any seen before.

The international effects of the crisis of Stalinism

The Gorbachev reforms in the USSR have resulted in pressure on an international level for a strong right turn by the movements and regimes traditionally linked to Moscow. In Mongolia the regime has advanced its own version of *perestroika* and has allowed street demonstrations and the organisation of democratic movements. The Mongolian Stalinists are now planning joint ventures with multinational companies like Amoco and British Petroleum.

In the wake of Gorbachev's strategic retreat on a world scale, Vietnam was forced to withdraw its 26,000 armed forces from Cambodia and institute its own version of *perestroika*. Now the Cambodian government is negotiating the formation of a united national government that will include Prince Sihanouk. But no serious attempt at *glasnost* has been tried as yet.

Cuba and Korea also retain the old one party system with the addition of a cult of the personality. Castro has said that instead of permitting democratic freedoms he will reinforce his party's monolithic discipline, and that instead of permitting mixed companies or "group capitalism" Cuba will become more "socialist". In the past Cuba has been economically and militarily dependent on the Kremlin. During both *détente* and cold war, the USSR used Cuba as a base to pressure the USA, as a bridge to Latin America and the semi-colonies, and for military intervention in Africa. The USSR no longer wishes to continue with this scale of subsidies. The Kremlin is pressing Cuba to open itself to the market political liberalisation and to pursue a less militant foreign policy.

Castro does not wish to relax his dictatorship. He aims to reinforce his position in order to bargain with imperialism. His verbal support for the insurrection of the FMLN in El Salvador was an example of this. Castro is offering his services to the semi-colonial

bourgeois governments as a point of support against the USA and also as a brake on the forces of proletarian revolution.

Gorbachev's foreign policy has meant that Moscow's client states have been told to make their peace with imperialism. The MPLA government in Angola, together with SWAPO in Namibia, was urged to compromise with South African imperialism and its UNITA puppet. In Mozambique, FRELIMO abandoned its designation as a Marxist-Leninist party and the Chissano regime is now congratulating the De Klerk government in order to attract investment. In Ethiopia the beleaguered Mengistu government has sought and achieved good relations with Israel, and the Zionists are supplying arms against the Tigrean and Eritrean rebels. The government of Benin has also abandoned its claim to Marxism-Leninism.

The USSR has forced Syria to abandon its attempt to reach military parity with Israel and under Soviet pressure Syria has re-established good relations with Egypt and other Arab regimes. The Qadhaffi regime has improved its relations with the most conservative Arab regimes and the Afghan regime wants to make a coalition government with reactionary Islamic guerrillas.

Gorbachev's policy has also meant that national liberation movements backed by Moscow have come under pressure to compromise. The PLO has recognised the Zionist state. The ANC is rapidly abandoning all its radical anti-imperialist and revolutionary postures and is prepared to accept a democratised version of the white racist state.

In Latin America the Stalinists are pressuring the guerrilla and left movements to move to the right. In Colombia the M-19 abandoned its weapons and is seeking to become a moderate bourgeois party. In Nicaragua the FSLN was suffered a major electoral defeat that will profoundly affect Guatemalan, Salvadorean, Colombian and Peruvian guerrilla movements. Already the majority of these guerrilla leaderships are preparing to betray the struggle by negotiating to form national unity governments with the same regimes and armies who have been murdering them.

Centrist confusion over the political revolution

The present upheavals in the degenerate(d) workers' states are of historic significance. As such, the weaknesses of a wide range of political tendencies are being clearly revealed under the test of events. This is particularly true with regard to the centrist organisations which claim to be Trotskyist. Every one of the major international tendencies has failed to meet the challenge of charting the road to political revolution.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), true to its right centrist reflexes, has sought to pressure the reforming wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy into pursuing a policy of "deep glasnost". The USFI has not even attempted to develop a programme for political revolution, culminating in workers' council power. Despite the desires of certain layers of the membership, the USFI has essentially be-



Down with the bureaucracy!

come transformed into a cheerleader for one wing of the bureaucracy, as has previously happened with regard to Cuba and Yugoslavia.

The International Workers' League (Fourth International), founded by Moreno, and the Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction) led by Lambert, have both refused to put forward a programme for political revolution. Like the USFI, they have peddled a programme of reform for the USSR. On the reunification of Germany, both groups call for unconditional and immediate reunification. Neither the defence of planned property relations nor the fight for workers' power interests these "democratic" cretins.

For the Morenoites, reunification will supposedly lead immediately to the seizure of power by the masses, so chronic is the crisis of imperialism. The organisation that called for "Solidarnosc to power" in Poland in 1980 today looks forward to power being in the hands of the various bourgeois democratic forces in Eastern Europe. The Lambertists have had a pro-capitalist position on German reunification for several decades. Their current campaign for capitalist reunification under a counter-revolutionary SPD government and their enthusiastic building of the pro-capitalist Chinese Democracy Movement in exile also shows how far this supposedly "orthodox" tendency is from proletarian politics.

The tiny Spartacist sect has made much noise about its intervention into the GDR. Like the Stalinophobe Lambertists, with whom the Spartacists share a common political tradition, these puffed-up Stalinophiles seek to hide their fundamentally right centrist politics under a gloss of orthodoxy and ludicrous bombast. Afghanistan, Poland and now events in the GDR show that they have a fundamental affinity with the other pseudo-Trotskyists: they concentrate their activity on support for one wing of the bureaucracy (in this case the most hard-line Stalinist elements) rather than fighting to organise the working class for political revolution.

Those tendencies which claim that the workers' states are in fact some form of capitalism have been particularly disoriented by the current crises. In every case, their passive acceptance of an extended period of bourgeois democracy has been revealed.

The tendency around the British SWP do not even attempt to put forward a programme for workers' power, preferring to wait for the spontaneous struggle to advance, and the French group Lutte

Ouvrière happily awaits the overthrow of the Stalinism in Eastern Europe as a herald of a phase of bourgeois democracy within which the workers' can learn about politics and . . . standing in elections!

In previous periods of massive crisis, both before and after the Second World War, international centrist tendencies underwent dramatic changes, splits and fusions. It is scarcely believable that the physiognomy of international centrism - especially that considering itself to be Trotskyist - will still be the same in five years time.

Rank and file militants in the workers' states who seek the road to political revolution will not find it in the writings and activities of the centrist groups. Quite the opposite. All that these organisations can offer is confusion, false promises and the building of a road-block to revolution inside the workers' states. Only the unfalsified programme of proletarian political revolution can steer workers to the overthrow of the hated Stalinist dictatorship and the defeat of the menace of capitalist restoration.

Towards a proletarian political revolution

Throughout the workers' states all the bureaucratic and pro-bourgeois forces have an interest in preventing the intervention of the working class as an independent force, fighting for workers' democracy and against capitalist restoration. Over the coming months and years the formation of factory councils and workers' councils will open up a new duality of power and a new, proletarian, phase of the political revolution.

Years of repression and the devaluation of the idea of socialism have scarred the proletariat of the workers' states. Trotskyists must be prepared to support and participate in the ousting of Stalinist dictatorships even where the majority of the working class has no other clear objective and even when pro-capitalist forces are involved. Whoever expects a pure political revolution will never live to see one. The task is to struggle within the revolutionary mass movement against the Stalinist dictatorship for a political revolution, for workers' democracy and against bourgeois counter-revolution.

There will be a more or less prolonged struggle between the enfeebled but still vicious bureaucracy, the increasingly confident and aggressive bourgeois counter-revolution and an at first confused working class movement. As the events of 1989 showed, the political revolution rapidly comes up against the limits of a more or less concealed dual power situation. From here on the key task is to quickly develop concrete action programmes for political revolution and Trotskyist parties to fight for them.

Such parties would have to centre on the need to oust the Stalinists from their remaining hold over the state apparatus and prevent the bourgeoisie from seizing power. The workers cannot rely upon the "hardliners" in the bureaucracy to defend the gains of the post-war system. It is they who have undermined the planning system, they who would rather see it dismantled before the god of profit than see the plan

transformed from below in the interest of the toilers.

Of course, we recognise the possibility of a tactical united front with those in the bureaucracy who are willing to obstruct the process of dismantling of the planning mechanisms, who agree to refuse to co-operate with the accounting procedures demanded by the IMF and so on. But the tasks of fighting for independent working class power and for the defence of planned property relations are indissolubly linked. There can be no question of an initial stage of defending the plan against the restorationist threat and only when that threat is over being prepared to move against the bureaucracy.

The workers can only defend their gains by building their independent organisations in order to crush the bureaucracy. This will entail seizing the current bureaucratic planning mechanisms, purging the bureaucrats, and restructuring the functioning of the plan from top to bottom, creating new arms of accounting and control and revitalising the old ones.

Union branches and committees of workers in agriculture and distribution should uncover the bottlenecks, the shortages, the irrationalities and corruption imbedded in the system of the bureaucratic command economy. All the resources of the economy must be accurately accounted for and the democratic organisations of the masses must set out an emergency one year plan. Any concessions or joint operations with capitalism must be approved by the workers' organisations. The right to work and the maintenance and extension of benefits must be guaranteed; rationing and price controls must be checked and approved by the workers.

The spontaneous demands of women and the new independent trade unions reflect the dual burden which women face. The Soviet miners' strike of 1989 and the newly formed union Sotsprof have raised demands for the protection of women workers so that they can carry out their household tasks. This has led to demands for seven years maternity leave.

Against this approach it is necessary to put forward the Marxist position on women: women's liberation requires that women be drawn into social production and not isolated in the home. In order to make this possible, and to go forward towards liberation, women must stay in work outside the home, with protection from work which may be injurious to their health, and the working class must fight for adequate child-care, housing and domestic labour saving goods.

Finally, there can be no prospect of a thorough economic regeneration of the workers' states while the workers have not seized political power. This can only be carried out by an armed workers' militia and by winning over decisive sections of the rank and file of the standing army. Workers must advocate the formation of soldiers' councils, the election of officers and the removal of the high command. The extent of the violence and civil war will depend on the roots and stability of the bureaucratic regime and its external support. The bureaucracy may depart the scene relatively peacefully in the face of a general strike and the loss of control over the armed forces, or it may engage the workers in a bloody civil war.

A revolutionary vanguard party is crucial to the success of the revolution. It will not emerge spontaneously; it can be built now by the bringing together of a nucleus of cadre around an action programme for the present crisis of Stalinism. Armed with these cadres will not rest content with idle discussion or drawing up blueprints for the future. They will intervene in the workplaces, in the unions, on the mass demonstrations and the elections that the regimes have been forced to call. The spontaneous vanguard elements will be those who fight the Stalinists' and the restorationists' anti-working class attacks. It is to these layers that revolutionary Marxists must turn in order to create a conscious vanguard party.

An action programme for the political revolution must centre on the following points:

- For the complete destruction of the Stalinists' hold over power! Down with the secret police! For a workers militia and workers' councils! For rank and file soldiers committees!
- For a democratic workers' plan to meet the economic crisis! For workers management in the plants and offices! For a congress of workers' councils to determine a new plan! Down with capitalist restoration! Stop the destruction of the planning mechanisms, nationalised property, the state monopoly of foreign trade, the right to work and social security!

Only a centralised plan and a centralised state power can co-ordinate non-capitalist production and thus protect the workers against exploitation, unemployment, social insecurity and bad working conditions. But only workers' democracy and centralisation can raise the productivity of labour and give a strong impulse to technological innovation so that an ever greater variety of new, improved, and cheaper goods can be produced.

Factory, local and regional representatives of the workers must have absolute freedom to discuss and initiate proposals and have their own local spheres of competence in economic management. National and international economic decisions must be taken by appropriate congresses. Only thus can conscious direction supplant the blind economic laws of capitalism or the diktats of a centralised bureaucracy.

- For international revolutionary solidarity, including armed support for all those fighting Stalinism, capitalism and imperialism.

The present series of elections in the USSR and Eastern Europe are an attempt by the Stalinists to gain pseudo-democratic validity for their continuing hold on power. At the same time the most pro-restorationist forces within the opposition hope to be able to grab the economic levers of power by means of the elections.

Should neither succeed completely in their aims, a Polish type solution is possible: agreement on a thoroughgoing package of pro-capitalist measures that stop short of restoration itself. Workers must resist all these potential outcomes, use their own power and put forward their own candidates to prevent bourgeois or Stalinist triumph at the polls.

- No to four or five year parliaments. For a maximum of one year for any parliament.
- Nominate workers' candidates in every factory, shop and office on a platform of opposition to capitalist restoration! Defend workers' living standards and overhaul the centralised planning mechanism. All such workers' candidates should be accountable and recallable to the workers' committees and assemblies that choose them.
- All party candidates must present their programmes to workers' mass assemblies in the factories and the estates.

In this way workers' illusions in bourgeois democracy (secret ballot, universal suffrage, multi-party elections, parliamentary assembly) can be tested by the emerging workers' organisations. Real workers' democracy can be tested against the alienated character of the parliamentary talking shops so beloved of bourgeois politicians.

With the formation and growing strength of the workers' councils the slogans of the vanguard will strike deeper and deeper roots:

- **All power to the workers, poor peasants' and soldiers' councils!**
- **For a revolutionary workers' government!**
- **For the proletarian political revolution!**

The political revolution in East Germany

Origins and nature of the GDR

The division of Germany into "East" (GDR) and "West" (FRG) reflected the balance of forces between the Soviet Union and the imperialist powers at the end of the Second World War. The Soviet plan of creating a series of neutral capitalist states as a buffer between the Soviet Union and the imperialist nations of Western Europe was quickly revealed as a utopia when the USA attempted to re-establish links with domestic capital in Eastern Europe via the Marshall Plan.

To definitively prevent this development, which would have led fairly immediately to the ousting of the Soviet-backed regimes, the bureaucratic workers' government in East Germany expropriated native capital. The SED (East German Communist Party) did this safe in the knowledge that they had already destroyed any semblance of genuinely independent working class organisation.

These newly established property relations, for conciseness, be called bureaucratic planning. This sums up an economy characterised by total state ownership of industry, banking, communication and distribution, which is supervised by a centralised plan run by bureaucrats and protected from the world market by a state monopoly of foreign trade. The state created in the Soviet zone was modelled on that of the USSR, that is, it was a military police dictatorship, disguised by the trappings of bourgeois parliamentarism. This state was bourgeois in form in that it was a bureaucratic machine standing above and oppressing the workers. This state stood in contrast to the semi-state of soviets envisaged by Lenin and partly realised in the early Soviet Republic. Yet at the same time it defended not capitalist but socialised property.

Political power was concentrated in the hands of an all-powerful bureaucracy which blocked the road to international proletarian revolution and hence the only road to socialist construction. The bureaucracy thus prevented the conscious planned development of production by the workers themselves, the gradual eradication of inequality and the withering away of the state. The only proper designation for this state is essentially the same as that given by Leon Trotsky to the USSR after 1936, namely, a degenerate workers' state.

Far from being a revolutionary attack on imperialism's world role, the creation of these new workers' states was, for the Soviet Union, merely a means of

achieving the goal of peaceful co-existence with imperialism. The creation of the GDR as a degenerate workers' state on part of the territory of the former German state took place against the existing consciousness of the working class and against the rhythm of the class struggle in Germany. Consequently its legitimacy has been in question ever since. This was clearly expressed in the uprising of 1953 when workers demanded all-German elections and the ousting of the regimes that had been imposed on both parts of Germany.

Because of its origins, the GDR has always been the symbol and the barometer of relations between the world powers. Its present rapidly accelerating destabilisation is, fundamentally, a consequence of the qualitative change taking place on a world scale, both between imperialism and the Soviet Union and within the imperialist camp.

On the one hand, the political and economic bankruptcy of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and its consequent weakness has obliged it to release its vice-like grip on its satellites in Eastern Europe. On the other, there is the weakening of US hegemony in the imperialist camp and the continual economic strengthening of its rivals, principally the FRG, within Europe.

Both of these processes have an especially powerful impact on the GDR. The FRG's development as the dynamo of the European Community (EC) involved, after the 1956 Treaty of Rome, a special dispensation for trade with the GDR. During the reconstruction period, and before the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the FRG drew heavily on labour from the GDR. Thereafter, under SPD-led governments, the FRG adopted an *Ostpolitik* which benefited both its own economy and that of the GDR. The latter became a source of products from the imperialist countries for the other Comecon countries.

Although this arrangement allowed the economy of the GDR to advance and develop more quickly than those of the other degenerate workers' states of Eastern Europe, the GDR's close proximity, and obvious national-cultural affinity, to the FRG required the maintenance of an especially oppressive military-police regime. This was the basis of the SED's reputation as a hardline Stalinist party. Even before the foundation of the GDR in 1949, the SPD in the Soviet zone had been forced to fuse with the slavishly pro-Moscow KPD to form the SED. Although a large part of the membership of both the KPD and the SPD in the Soviet Zone wanted the formation of a united



Mass demonstration in Leipzig

party, the foundation of the SED did not mean the breaking away of the majority of the working class from the SPD towards the Stalinist KPD.

The Soviet administration and the KPD resorted to force to guarantee the domination of the Stalinists. These methods were diametrically opposed to those by which Communist Parties seek to achieve hegemony in the working class by leading the rank and file membership of reformist parties to break with their leaders through intervention in the struggles of the whole class and the development of revolutionary class consciousness. All other expressions of working class organisation were similarly suppressed and coerced into Stalinist-controlled social organisations.

The Berlin Wall was the most striking example both of the Stalinist mentality of the SED leaders and of the politically contradictory nature of the bureaucracy. It was built to stop the continual drain of skilled labour to the west and as a barrier to the undermining of the OstMark. Both of these aims were in themselves legitimate to defend the post-capitalist property relations. However, a healthy workers' state would have achieved them on the basis of the conscious commitment of the working class to their state. The Wall was a classic bureaucratic solution to the threat posed to the very foundation of the GDR's economy by West German capitalism. The Wall was both a partial defence of post-capitalist property and an expression of the prison-house the Stalinist dictatorship had constructed in the GDR.

The Stalinists, contemptuous as ever of the working class, believed that all this could be compensated for by relatively higher living standards and by better social services as compared to other degenerate workers' states. Despite the SED's hardline reputation, these gains for the working class were largely financed by concessions to, and long term credits

from, the capitalists of the FRG. In addition the Stalinists mounted a permanent, state orchestrated campaign of GDR patriotism to assert the legitimacy of the state. Nonetheless, the ultimate survival of the whole regime was always based on the continuing requirements of the USSR's foreign policy.

The Crisis of the GDR

All these special conditions are now disintegrating before the bewildered eyes of the SED leaders. Driven on by its own crisis, the Gorbachev leadership in the Soviet Union is positively encouraging its satellites to junk their Soviet imposed economic systems and to trade directly with firms in the imperialist countries, above all the FRG. The Soviet bureaucracy, convinced of the impossibility of progress without the aid of imperialist capital, is now embarrassed by the rigid regimes it once installed and maintained with its tanks.

The lack of innovation in the economy of the GDR itself is leading to an increased difficulty in finding markets in the EC for its products. Worse, as Honecker was told in no uncertain terms at the fortieth birthday "celebrations", the Soviet Union would no longer tolerate, much less enforce, the tyrannical regime of the SED and the Stasi (secret police). There was to be no repeat of Tiananmen Square on the Alexanderplatz.

The slow but inevitable shift in the balance of international forces created the background to the destabilisation of the GDR. The regime, however, was also under mounting pressure from its own subjects. Any hopes that the SED might voluntarily relax its grip were disappointed by the blatant rigging of elections in May 1989 and dashed forever by its support for the

massacres of oppositionists in China in June. The immediate consequence was increased pressure for emigration, particularly via Hungary which as part of the pro-western measures of its Stalinists, had opened its borders to Austria.

Although freedom of travel is an elementary right of the working class, emigration clearly could not constitute a way forward for the vast majority in the GDR. However, the wave of emigrants, which turned to a flood after Hungary gave into the FRG's pressure to allow GDR citizens also to cross into Austria, gave a new impetus to those who, rather than flee, were determined to stay and fight. Faced with this and no longer able to rely on Soviet support, the SED regime was thrown into crisis and sacrificed half of its leadership to try to regain credibility.

Gorbachev's warning to the SED leadership sounded the death knell of Honecker's regime. Without support from the USSR, the East German masses sensed that Honecker could not last and so mobilised on the streets in increasing numbers. Leipzig led the way. Without Kremlin backing the SED had to seek a compromise with the masses; Honecker was dumped and Krenz appeared in charge as a born-again "reformer".

As incapable of independent initiative now as it ever was, the SED leadership is trying, under orders, to mimic the political tactics of its Polish and Hungarian counterparts and to present itself as the vanguard of reform and renewal. The working class of the GDR will not be taken in by Krenz's sudden conversion from support for the butchers of Tiananmen Square to fulsome praise for political freedoms. For all the charade of negotiations with the "block partners" of the minor parties, the bureaucracy which had made preparations to drown the Leipzig demonstrations in blood still hold the reins of power.

Any serious slackening of the mass movement, any change of direction in the Kremlin, could see the SED turn to reasserting its control by the old methods. The ruling caste is always a danger as long as they have the secret police, the special squads and the military under their control.

Redrawing the map of Europe

The destabilisation and crisis of the GDR has since reacted back upon the international balance of forces, accelerating trends that were already developing beneath the surface. Obviously taken by surprise by the success of its pressure on Hungary in the summer, the government of the FRG under Chancellor Kohl has suddenly become aware of the very considerable political power that its economic weight has brought with it.

For the first time in post war history the FRG or, rather, the dominant faction of its bourgeoisie, has given notice that it has its own agenda for the Nineties. For the first time, if only briefly, the mask of pan-Europeanism slipped and the German ruling class stepped forward to march to its own tune—"Deutschland Uber Alles"!

Upon reflection, however, the FRG will take a more

cautious approach. Formal reunification is likely to be subordinated to the prior restoration of capitalism in the GDR and Eastern Europe, under the effective economic hegemony of the FRG. To this end, German capital will be offered on condition of the removal of the principle obstacles to capitalist development. That is, the destruction of the main pillars of the post-capitalist property relations: nationalisation of industry, planning and the state monopoly of foreign trade. The constitutional framework within which this takes place will be of entirely secondary importance.

Nonetheless, even if Bonn continues to present its strategy as one of "European integration" it will not succeed in allaying the suspicions of its principal imperialist rivals. All of them are, first and foremost, nationally based ruling classes and all of them calculate on the basis of their national class interests.

Thus Mitterrand believes that the centrifugal force of a German expansion in the East can best be negated by rapidly increasing the pace of EC integration, thereby allowing France to become, at least, a favoured junior partner. The dominant Thatcherite faction of the British ruling class, committed to the City's role as a world-wide centre of finance, to Britain's role as a forward position for the USA and to the historic strategy of keeping Europe disunited, wishes to keep Germany divided and insists on the continued threat posed by the Warsaw Pact.

However, in the Kremlin, too, the shape of the political map of Europe is being re-considered. The 25 October Warsaw Pact meeting declared for the right of the nations of Eastern Europe to adopt whatever social systems they wish, including the restoration of capitalism. This is the Soviet leadership's chosen tactic for establishing a new basis for peaceful coexistence in the light of its own rapidly developing political and economic crisis. In effect, they are returning to Stalin's post-war plan for a neutral Central Europe. The Kremlin has for the moment excluded from this the possibility of changed frontiers, meaning a reunited Germany. But if the price was right, that is, if a united capitalist Germany were to leave NATO or if part of a treaty was the dissolution or scaling down of both the military alliances, then the USSR's attitude could change.

A united "neutral" Germany would be an imperialist state, just as the "neutral" Austria is. But the Kremlin hopes that a united "neutral" Germany might provide stability in Central Europe and lavish capital investment for the desperate Soviet economy.

This destabilisation, this disunity and disarray amongst the enemies of the working class, both imperialist and Stalinist, opens up a range of possibilities for the revolutionary movement which were, until recently, unthinkable. To take advantage of them requires the careful and consistent articulation of a programme which combines defence of the anti-capitalist elements of the economic order of the degenerate workers' states (stified property, planning, state monopoly of foreign trade) with support for working class mass mobilisation and direct action to impose workers' control and workers' democracy. In addition, revolutionary communists must seek to expose the plans of the imperialists and the Stalinists and

counterpose the revolutionary road to the Socialist United States of Europe.

The tasks of revolutionaries in the GDR

Because of the unique history and status of the GDR, its political crisis has not developed simply as a result of increasing economic stagnation and decline. The internal opposition movement has resisted political repression. Unable to form open political organisations, the opposition took advantage of the rights granted to the churches by the supposedly hardline Stalinists. Obviously the SED saw the church as a purveyor of religious opium for the "heartless world" of the GDR and even as a force for order and obedience.

Yet in time of crisis the churches provided a meeting place for the oppositionists to group themselves. As a consequence, the churches have gained considerable influence within opposition circles. This is made more significant by the fact that the churches long retained their all-German character, the Evangelical Church until 1979 and the Catholic Church until today.

The opposition has now won for itself the *de facto* right to organise publicly. As it organises itself it will differentiate into more or less politically distinct organisations. At present, this is at an early stage. The most widely visible current, New Forum, includes a spectrum of opinion ranging from SED members to pro-marketeters. It favours a dialogue with the SED regime and, like the church, would prefer the mass demonstrations to subside whilst "round table" talks take place. It has a popular frontist character and could become the vehicle by which pro-marketeters in the SED leadership establish some legitimacy and even a future coalition to oversee the final dismantling of the obstacles to capitalist restoration.

However, in the GDR there are also forces who recognise the need to resolve the crisis in a way that is positive for the working class, opposing the regime but wishing to defend and build on the post-capitalist economic foundations. They know perfectly well that "really existing capitalism" includes the unemployed as well as the labour aristocrat, the destruction of social services as well as DM 100 bribes. They recognise that the FRG's spectacular wealth has been sucked out of the immigrant workers from Turkey and Yugoslavia, the semi-colonies of Latin America as well as the working class of the FRG. Even before the fall of Honecker, for example, the United Left's Boehlen Appeal proposed a platform including defence of the post-capitalist property relations as the basis for a "democratic socialism".

The main strategy of such groups appears, to date, to be the formulation of reform initiatives based on the idea of "self-administration" at all levels of society and including factory based workers' organisations. This recognition of the need to reject the bureaucratic dictatorship and to develop a means of controlling and expanding the economy in the interests of the great mass of the population is indeed a vital element of any working class solution to the crisis of the GDR.

However, a serious danger lies in any belief that this can be achieved via reform based on well-intentioned constitutional projects and blueprints. Similarly, a naïve adoption of "self-management" schemes, outside of the fight to retain a centralised planning mechanism, has a marketising logic that leads in the direction not of workers' control but of enterprise profitability.

If the pro-marketeters of the opposition take charge then the working class will have to defend itself from the consequences of introducing "market reforms" in the form of social service cuts and the closure of "uneconomic" factories. If the defenders of the old regime win in the inner party struggle they too will seek to solve the crisis at the expense of working class living standards and their new political rights. This is the lesson to be learnt from the experience of both the rule of the "reformers" in Poland and Hungary as well as that of the "hardliners" in China.

The fight to defeat the bureaucracy is a political fight for state power. The organs of a future revolutionary workers' state will be built, initially, as organs of struggle against the plans of the bureaucracy. Although in the GDR, as in the other degenerate workers' states, this will not require the overthrow of the alien class power of the bourgeoisie, it is nevertheless a revolutionary struggle to smash the repressive machinery of the existing state. The struggle for "political revolution" (as opposed to the "social revolution" necessary against capitalism) requires the political and organisational forces capable of defeating the state: a revolutionary communist party and workers' councils.

Revolutionaries must seek out every opportunity to relate the spontaneous demands for democracy and freedom to the programme of political revolution. Wherever possible we do not counterpose our demands to those raised spontaneously, but rather utilise every possible variant of the united front tactic to go through the experience of the struggle with the masses, clarifying the class content of competing slogans and programmes at every juncture.

At the present time, the most important priority is to pose the need for independent working class organisation and politics. The Chinese events proved that, on their own, mass mobilisations and demonstrations of "people's power" are not sufficient to take on and overthrow the bastions of Stalinist dictatorship. Against such a perspective, which informs New Forum's tactics, we call for factory councils of elected and recallable delegates and for autonomous trade unions. Against "round table" talks we propose developing the mass mobilisations into overtly and consciously working class demonstrations, built for by factory-based agitation and organisation. Both as the means of organising the working class for the struggle to destroy bureaucratic rule and as the most effective means for forcing necessary reforms and concessions out of the regime as long as it clings to power, we argue for strikes, occupations and workers' demonstrations. We support demands for freedom of political organisation against the party's monopoly.

To those militants who believe it is possible to transform the party and the state unions we argue

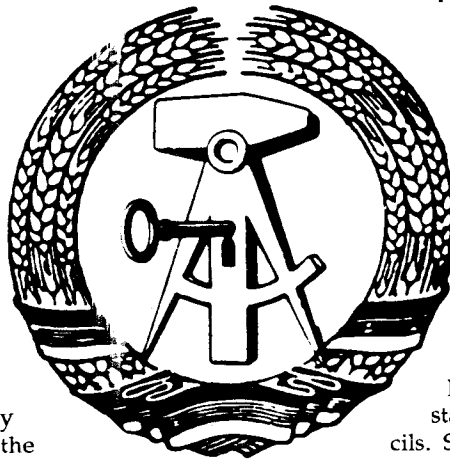
that this is structurally and politically impossible. If they remain unconvinced, we urge them to put their leaders to the test by demanding internal democracy at all levels of the organisations and the opening of archives to trusted representatives of the workers to reveal the true history of, for example, Soviet control of the party, collusion in repression of the working class, collaboration with the FRG and all other crimes against the working class.

Really democratic workers' organisations will not be built simply as a better system of administration. From the beginning, factory committees and councils, elected by and recallable to mass meetings of the workforce, must fight to impose workers' control in the workplace. This is not a question of developing "co-management" but a denial of the bureaucracy's "right to manage" and the first step towards working class power in society and control over the economy. Vital to this will be the demand "open the books" of the management, the planning ministries, the official unions and the party.

There can be little doubt that what will be revealed will be an economy undermined by crisis, chaos, debts and corruption. None of this will be accepted by revolutionary workers as a reason for allowing the bureaucracy to re-impose "stability". On the contrary it will be further proof, if such were needed, of the urgent need to oust the whole regime. It will also underline the impossibility of local solutions of the kind often proposed during the political revolutionary crises of other degenerate workers' states such as "self-management" or "enterprise autonomy". Workers' control will have to be extended beyond the factory to the suppliers and customers, to the planning ministries and the distribution agencies.

At every level the workers' themselves must be involved in revealing the facts and imposing their own supervision. In and through these bodies workers must fight for a full scale revision of the plan in the interests of all workers. Collectively the workers must set new goals for the plan that meet the most urgent needs of the masses, which preserve and increase real social equality, which banish privilege. No state functionary should receive more than the wage of a skilled worker. The creativity and knowledge of production and distribution of the working class must be mobilised to replace the diktat of the bureaucrats. GDR workers must strive to replace bureaucratic command planning, not with the anarchy and inequality of the market, but with democratically centralised planning.

Recallable delegates should be elected from the workers' organisations in the plants and the housing estates to local, regional and state-wide workers' councils. The ultimate goal of the struggle has to be a government responsible to the workers' councils: a revolutionary workers' government. Such a movement, striking at the very heart of bureaucratic power and privilege, will not be tolerated by the regime. The



bureaucracy will attempt to suppress or to integrate the movement, just as workers' councils were suppressed and integrated under the early Weimar Republic. The only guard against this lies in a political leadership that will not lose sight of its goal: the seizure of state power by the workers' councils. Such a political leadership would have to prepare the workers' organisations to resist suppression, and could only be the product of struggle. We categorically reject any suggestion of a constitutionally guaranteed leading role for any party.

A new revolutionary (Trotskyist) party will on the contrary strive to politically convince the GDR vanguard and so win and retain the loyalty of the revolutionary working class. In doing this such a party will rescue the concept and practice of genuine democratic centralism: the fullest debate and the right for tendencies to organise, alongside disciplined unity in action against the enemy bureaucracy and the imperialists.

This new party will be built by those who prove themselves in struggle to be not only the most determined fighters for workers' power but also the most far-sighted, the most able strategists. Workers' democracy, the only framework in which competing strategies and tactics can be tested in front of the working class is, therefore, an absolute necessity.

Within the workers' movement we stand for open debate and acceptance of majority decisions. However we argue for the workers' organisations to deny free speech to fascist and racist organisations. We fight to convince the workers to reject the programmes of those who, consciously or not, support the restoration of capitalism. An essential component of workers' democracy is free access for the workers' organisations to all mass media. Workers in the printing industry, in broadcasting, cinema and theatre must mobilise to impose workers' control in their industries, demanding the right of reply and editorial control for workers' organisations and parties.

In the streets of Leipzig and Berlin, demonstrations have raised the demand of free elections—for freedom of political parties and for the abolition of the "leading role of the SED", that is, for any guaranteed role for it in government. The tyranny, corruption and deceit of the existing system are so manifest to the masses that the defects of bourgeois democracy seem minor by comparison. But they are real nonetheless.

A system of four-yearly elections of a few hundred deputies, who would be neither accountable to nor controllable by their electors, alongside a permanent and unelected state bureaucracy, police and military force, cannot be a vehicle for the class rule of the proletariat or for the transition to a classless, stateless society.

Only a system of workers' councils composed of elected and recallable delegates can simultaneously perform the legislative and executive functions that minimise and progressively eliminate bureaucracy.

Only a workers' and popular militia and the universal right to bear arms can prevent the usurpation

of political and economic power by a class of exploiters.

In reality parliamentary elections have an unlimited ability to deceive the masses. This can and will be used by the SED bureaucrats and the newly emerging bourgeois and social democratic parties. Rushed elections before there is full and real freedom of the press, elections with reserved places for the SED or indefinite delays could all prolong the rule of the bureaucracy and demobilise the real force for revolutionary change—the mass mobilisation and direct action of the working class. The working class can and should start the process of “free elections” for itself by electing factory committees, town and city workers’ councils. In these elections there should be freedom of parties, programmes and platforms so that workers can decide which parties they recognise as their own.

If, however, 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 a system of workers’ councils fought for.

Equally revolutionising measures must be taken throughout society to deny the control of the bureaucracy and its reactionary political ideology in the armed forces, the educational system and in cultural and social organisations. The working class must not ignore the presence of Warsaw Pact troops within the GDR, troops which were used in 1963 to crush the general strike. We demand that they be removed, just as we demand that the NATO troops be kicked out of the FRG. At the same time we resist chauvinist anti-Russian sentiments and at all times defend the USSR against the intrigues and interventions of the imperialists.

While not recognising the right of the Soviet Union to deploy troops in the GDR and calling on the GDR to break with the Warsaw Pact, the revolutionary working class will see in those rank and file soldiers potential working class allies, not “foreign armies”. Through direct contact and fraternisation it will undermine their potential as a repressive force and play a key role in spreading the ideas of political revolution to the most important single force in Europe, the Soviet working class.

The national question in the GDR

Although the division of Germany was a reactionary denial of the right of self-determination, it resulted in the creation of a degenerate workers’ state whose principal economic features are obstacles to capitalist exploitation, the basis for present economic and social advantages and the starting point for future advances of the working class of the GDR. Communists, therefore, oppose in principle the reunification of the GDR and FRG where that entails the destruction of the

post-capitalist property relations of the GDR and the expansion of FRG imperialism.

At the present time, the mass movement in the GDR has not generally raised the question of reunification as an immediate issue. This flows partly from the dominance of the official ideology with its constant assertion of the legitimacy of the state, partly from a “realistic” assessment of what the imperialists and the USSR would allow and partly from a recognition of the reactionary character of the FRG.

Nonetheless, it is almost inconceivable that continued political crisis in the GDR will not see the emergence of re-unification as a possible solution to economic weakness and political instability. Therefore, the demand for the revolutionary reunification of Germany is not a subordinate or merely tactical one but rather a central component of the programme. This does not imply that a reunited Germany is a necessary pre-condition for a victorious workers’ revolution in Europe.

We recognise, however, that the national question in the GDR is an Achilles’ heel which does not exist in any of the other East European degenerate workers’ states. A revolutionary answer to this specific problem would have a decisive significance if nationalist illusions came to prominence in the consciousness of the proletariat. Communists must emphasise that there can be no solution to the problems of the GDR within its own borders. We recognise the huge economic weight of the FRG and its capacity to support the economic reconstruction and development of all the degenerate workers’ states. However, revolutionaries will oppose the idea that such a role could be achieved by reunification under the imperialist FRG.

The prosperity of the FRG is not the result of any inherent superiority of the capitalist system. Throughout its post-war history the German ruling class, based in the FRG, has benefited from the existence of its Stalinist controlled neighbour. Ideologically it helped to bind the working class of the FRG to its capitalist but “democratic” master. Economically it has supplied both skilled labour (in large numbers before the building of the Wall) and access to East European markets. The ruling class of the FRG, controlling an export-led economy facing the prospect of a recession and consequent downturn in world trade, now sees the crisis of the GDR and the other degenerate workers’ states as an opportunity for maintaining and even expanding production. It hopes that this will be the basis for a new role for West German imperialism in the European and world order.

The bosses in the FRG are already calculating how best to profit from the crisis of Stalinism, how to undercut wage rates with “refugee” labour, where to relocate industry, where to obtain cheaper raw materials. The engineering employers are already demanding a return to the 40 hour week abolished by trade union pressure in the mid-1980s. To safeguard their own interests and those of the workers of the GDR, the workers of the FRG must oppose their bosses’ plans. They must learn to speak to their bosses in the same language as the Polish, Russian and GDR workers—that of the mass strike and demonstration. They must demand not only equal pay and equal

rights for all workers but also an end to the current offensive against the GDR. As long as the GDR is based on post-capitalist property relations its right to exist must be defended. The FRG must recognise the legitimacy and the citizenship of the GDR.

Revolutionaries in the FRG must also demand the opening of the books of the capitalists who have profited from trading contacts with the degenerate workers' states. They must demand the creation of direct links between rank and file working class organisations on both sides of the border and the granting of no-strings credit and aid to the GDR. Against plans to re-incorporate the GDR into the FRG as part of the restoration of capitalism, we counterpose the progressive potential for the whole of Europe of a revolutionary reunification of Germany, the overthrow of the capitalist state in the FRG and of the Stalinists in the GDR.

Fight Social Democracy

Before the division of Germany, the SPD was the majority party of the German working class, despite its history of suppression of the workers' movement in 1919 and its clearing of the way to the victory of the Nazis before 1933. Today, it is to be expected that many workers in the GDR, formerly one of the main regions of SPD support, will see the creation of a new social democratic party as the political expression of their interests.

The prospect of a form of re-unification of Germany on a social democratic basis might appear more acceptable, less reactionary, than subordination to the historic class enemy represented in Bonn by the CDU, CSU and the Liberals. Certainly, in Hungary and Poland, illusions have developed in a peaceful, prosperous social democratic future. This is fantasy since the economies of these countries could not foreseeably generate the wealth necessary to sustain the reforms and concessions to organised labour required by a social democratic regime on the Scandinavian model.

However, this is not necessarily the case for a reunited Germany. All the structures and mechanisms for this already exist in the FRG, and many of them also exist in the GDR. What is lacking is the economic and financial base necessary to maintain an enlarged FRG. The only possible basis would be the subordination of other economies to that of Germany, through, for example, the semi-colonisation of Eastern Europe.

Such a development would be a disaster for the working class of the whole of Europe, reviving nationalism in all its sections and preparing the basis for future conflicts. The working class of Germany must oppose this strategy and take up the fight for true internationalism in Europe. Both the SPD and the trade union federation, the DGB, should be forced to

reveal their relations with both the Stalinists and the restorationists in the GDR.

The SPD was the major financier of the Portuguese Socialist Party which in the mid-1970s aborted workers' revolution against dictatorship and was the main instrument for claiming back for the bourgeoisie the gains of the mass struggles of 1974. The SPD is already planning to repeat this tactic in the GDR. The party of Noske and Scheidemann is preparing to do the dirty work of the German bourgeoisie once again! It must be stopped by the opposition of its own working class base!

The progressive content of re-unification can be summed up as the reunification of the German working class. Revolutionaries will agitate and organise for the right of working class organisation across the border at every level, between factories, parties and trade unions.

- For the right of free access to all parts of both states for the workers of both states!
- For the right to take solidarity action with workers in struggle across the border!
- For the opening of the archives of both states to reveal the secrets of their security police and the involvement of foreign powers and the agents of the Nazi regime in the construction and consolidation of both states!
- For the opening of the books of companies and states to reveal the true extent of cross-border collaboration between Stalinists and imperialists!

Workers' organisations must also build direct links with the already existing workers' movements of Eastern Europe. Their common experience and common problems can become the source of strength for a new international workers' movement that will not be divided and weakened by the cramping ideology of nationalism and its Stalinist perversion, "socialism in one country".

Comecon has failed to integrate the Eastern European economies even to the extent achieved by the capitalists of Western Europe. However the existing economic links and natural geographical coherence of Central Europe provide a solid foundation for an expanded division of labour and economic revitalisation.

- Down with Stalinist and imperialist plans to restore capitalism!
- For political revolution in the degenerate workers' states! For socialist revolution in the capitalist states!
- For workers' councils and workers' militia throughout Germany, and for the convocation of a congress of workers' councils as the organ of state power of a German Workers' Republic!
- For the radical revision of the centralised plan in the interests of the workers!
- For the revolutionary reunification of Germany!
- For the United Socialist States of Europe!

Revolution in Romania

Eastern Europe's most repressive regime has fallen. Its most hated Stalinist dictator is dead. But the Romanian revolution is not over, as the bourgeois rulers of the west would like to believe. Only its first phase is at an end. The most important tasks lie ahead.

The workers must retain their arms. The bourgeois democratic counter-revolution must not succeed. Close the door to the social counter-revolution! The workers and peasants must take power into their own hands!

The revolution and civil war between 16 and 25 December 1989 was the most courageous uprising against Stalinism since the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Beginning with the mass demonstration in support of the persecuted pastor Laszlo Tokés and ending with the formation of the Provisional Government of the National Salvation Front (NSF) these were indeed ten days that shook the world.

Ceausescu's repressive regime

The hypocrisy of the imperialists in their rejoicing over Ceausescu's downfall is staggering. For years, decades even, they toasted and fêted Ceausescu. The man who demagogically denounced the USSR's invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan was the west's favourite communist. He was hosted by the President of France and knighted by the Queen of England. His wife was given honorary degrees for bogus scientific talents. All this cant was tolerated out of pure political calculation that the Kremlin's enemy must be the west's friend.

And all the while, from the moment of his "election" as Romania's despot to the moment of his flight from Bucharest, he killed and imprisoned those who even voiced support for democratic rights. Where were the imperialist preachers of "democracy" then?

Since 1965 Ceausescu has ruled Romania in an increasingly autocratic and brutal style. It was this as much as anything that underpinned the country's stability in the 1980s. The bureaucracy ruled through terror, it could allow of no dissent, not even of the most sanitised kind. Its ubiquitous internal security force (the Securitate) spied and pried, harassed and murdered its enemies whether at home or abroad. No larger machine of terror per head of population existed in any Eastern European country.

This level of repression flowed entirely from the project of the Ceausescu-led caste since the 1970s. On the one hand they eschewed military pacts with the USSR and fashioned a political independence from it. On the other hand, Ceausescu drew Romania back from its growing indebtedness to imperialism, fearing a Polish-style reaction from the working class.

Consequently, Ceausescu embarked on a more autarchic path. Clinging firmly to the reactionary theory of socialism in one country, the bureaucracy cut back its debt and set out for self-sufficiency. In a country of few resources this inevitably involved a great increase in labour discipline and an even more heavy-handed attempt to boost agriculture and direct it increasingly to export markets.

Ceausescu's assaults on the workers' standard of living undercut any support for him. His policies of forced destruction of villages and the creation of "agro-industrial complexes" further alienated the peasantry. In recent years the bureaucracy became an isolated caste relying on naked repression alone to rule.

In its final years, Ceausescu's repression was increasingly directed against sections of the bureaucracy itself. The inner clique grew narrower with Ceausescu's family playing an ever more central role. They displayed all the traits of the Stalinism of the 1930s: the cult of the personality and a failure to comprehend the reality around them. By the end the Ceausescus lived in a fantasy world of "Potemkin villages".

Although they vilified Gorbachev's process of bureaucratic reform after 1985, when the Ceausescus went to the wall on Christmas Day they were its indirect victim. Slowly but steadily the effects of *glasnost* in nurturing oppositional movements throughout Eastern Europe penetrated the borders of Romania. The efforts of the workers of the GDR and Czechoslovakia in particular gave hope where none existed before.

But the first mass protests of the Romanians did not result in the strengthening of the hand of the reform wing of the Romanian bureaucracy and the relatively peaceful eclipse of the Ceausescu dynasty. Unlike in the GDR or Czechoslovakia, such a reform wing barely existed, still less did it form a silent majority. All key "reform" figures in the ministries or the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) had been purged by the mid 1980s.

Unlike elsewhere in Eastern Europe Romania was not subordinate to the command structure of the Warsaw Pact and had no Soviet Armed Forces on its soil. Therefore the Moscow bureaucracy had little control over events. Gorbachev had restrained the "hardliners" in the GDR from a violent and bloody clampdown on protests.

In Romania Gorbachev's political pressure on the Ceausescu dynasty was barely felt. The Kremlin could not hope to stay the hand of the Bucharest executioner. Rather, civil war ensued, precipitated by a split in the bureaucracy and above all in the armed forces.

It was natural that the gathering storm should first appear in the border areas inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, a population with more grievances than most. The students of Timisoara played a vanguard role. Then the workers moved into action. Together, they paid the first and heaviest sacrifice for the revolution. They rose in mass support for a local dissident pastor. The security apparatus moved in to quell and isolate the movement between 16 and 18 December. At this stage the army joined the fray against the workers and students.

The insurrection begins

Soon the 500 on the streets turned to 5,000. The Securitate tried desperately to drown the rebellion in blood. But on 19 and 20 December the workers in the factories around Timisoara went on strike, some threatening to destroy their factories. Up to 80,000 took to the streets, stole their first few arms and stood firm. Faced with this resolve the first units of the mainly conscript army refused to continue shooting the workers. Disaffection spread like wildfire. At last Bucharest rose; once again the students initiated the action and led the storming of the key installations.

Under pressure army chiefs agitated for a return to barracks. The army saw its own caste interests as lying in the ousting of the Ceausescu clique and making a pact with the process of "reform". Faced with the "fight to the death" stance of the security services loyal to the clique, reforms could only materialise by the army chiefs siding with the revolution from below. On 22 December Milea, the Defence Minister, agreed to withdraw troops from the fighting. The Securitate promptly murdered him.

This act finally provoked the bulk of the 140,000 strong army into open revolt against the ruling regime as they sided with the workers and peasants. Open civil war raged the length and breadth of Romania. Dual power was established, especially in the provincial towns and cities, where the workers and peasants set up armed revolutionary committees to fight alongside the army.

The final days of the civil war witnessed the most tenacious and vengeful actions of the security services loyal to Ceausescu, as the leader and his inner clique fled the retribution of the proletariat. Thousands died in the course of eliminating the rats of the Securitate from the underground passages where they infested Bucharest. Ceausescu was tried and executed by a military tribunal and a new Provisional Government announced, formed from within the NSF.

The NSF had no existence prior to the uprising and is at present a loose, politically incoherent coalition of purged bureaucrats, members of the bureaucracy outside the Ceausescu clique, workers and sections of the intelligentsia. It is reported as aiming to establish a free market economy and multi-party (bourgeois) democracy out of the ruins of the Stalinist dictatorship. The new government is led by President Ion Iliescu, a minister under the old regime up to the mid-1980s. He is a well-known Gorbachevite.

The imperialist powers are even now seeking to develop political leverage within the NSF through swift recognition of this unelected government and the deployment of their international aid agencies. The Kremlin, by contrast, was cautious in the midst of the storm. In order to prove itself to Washington and Europe it observed its "non-interference pact" even in its own "backyard". It was willing to risk the possibility of a victory of a vicious Ceausescu backlash.

Both the Kremlin and the White House can agree: the Romanian revolution is over. Should it refuse to lie down, however, and the workers take the offensive against the new government, then the Kremlin has already been given the green light by the imperialist powers to intervene and establish a stable, reforming pro-imperialist government.

The new government's final physiognomy is not yet decided. Although all factions are keen to end the remaining elements of dual power and to disarm the workers and students, it is to be expected that the most pro-capitalist elements will seek to strengthen their position via the manipulation of popular protests.

For proletarian political revolution

The Romanian workers must not be deprived of the fruits of their sacrifice! They must stop the bourgeois democratic counter-revolution in its tracks! The second phase of the revolution, the proletarian political revolution must now begin in earnest!

The most urgent task for the revolutionary committees is to refuse the calls to give up arms to the forces of "law and order". The armed power of the workers is the only guarantee of further success: of implementing the promised reforms; of rooting out every last agent of the security services now that they have gone to ground.

The workers must spread the distribution of arms to the revolutionary committees and form militias attached to them.

In the civil war rank and file soldiers played a crucial role in defeating the armed resistance of the Securitate. The officer corps, now in open conflict with the inner clique, tolerated this situation. But this corps is itself part of the state bureaucracy. Having removed the dictatorship over themselves they are calling for a return to law and order.

This will involve a clamp down on dissent within the army itself. They will seek to ensure that the crimes of the officers carried out in the past remain hidden or unpunished. Democratic soldiers' committees must therefore be urgently built with the right to elect their own officers, to investigate and punish the misdeeds of the officers.

Arms in hand, the workers must continue the unfinished business of the first phase of the revolution: the crimes of the old regime must be brought fully to light! No one will grieve over the summary trial and execution of the Conducator and his wife. But those figures from the past who remain, including many in the army and NSF, hope that the Ceausescus will carry their secrets to the grave.



The workers and poor peasants must not let the crimes of the bureaucracy be buried along with the bodies of its leaders!

The revolutionary committees in every town and village must establish elected tribunals to investigate the activities of party bosses and local bureaucrats. Peoples' courts need to deliberate and judge any charges. Uproot the corruption! Reveal the tyranny! Punish the guilty!

After many years of savage repression the first signs of political crystallisation of parties and programmes is emerging. The result is an acute crisis of leadership. None of the competing leaderships which have so far appeared can lead the workers and poor peasants to power.

The workers, having achieved so much, must not stand aside and let the intelligentsia and discredited RCP bosses form the political parties of reconciliation, pro-imperialism and social counter-revolution. The working class needs a revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) party that can consolidate the gains already won and establish proletarian power in Romania.

For workers' democracy

Already there are signs that the Romanian workers are taking the talk of democracy seriously. While the NSF appoints from within its ranks a government to speak for the people and promises elections next April, the workers in the factories are beginning to oust hated managers and elect new factory committees. Once again the workers of Timisoara are in the vanguard. For elected and recallable factory committees in every enterprise! For new and independent trade unions!

It is essential that the urban workers develop and lead the revolution in the countryside. Ceausescu began to tear up the villages and herd their population into "agro-industrial complexes", both to destroy the homogeneity of the dissident national communities and raise agricultural output for export.

The workers must help organise the peasants into their own revolutionary committees with their own militia in alliance with the workers and soldiers. For workers' management in the state farms; in the co-operatives there must be genuine democracy and the ousting of the managers. There must be new elections in the co-operatives.

The peasants' own organisations must be won to the drawing up of a plan for the modernisation of the villages and agricultural production itself. This plan must be integrated into a workers' plan for the entire national economy.

Factory-based organisation of the workers appeared only after the workers and students were on the streets, arms in hand. It is essential that these are linked up with the local revolutionary committees at town and especially at regional and national level. This organisation of the workers must be independent of the Provisional Government.

This is the key to further progress in the proletarian political revolution. Workers' and poor peasants' councils must urgently be built in every village and town. Do not leave politics to the politicians, do not entrust the running of the economy to the "professional administrators".

Stalinism has only been partly smashed, the revolution is stuck half way. The workers and youth, having spilled their blood to down Ceausescu, are excluded from the Provisional Government. Instead, purged ex-bureaucrats now emerge from their bunkers to claim the spoils of victory. These enemies of the work-

ing class want to maintain their rule behind the facade of parliaments and the promise of elections every few years for representatives that cannot be made to account for their actions. The Romanian workers must hold full power! For a government, not of the NSF or National Christian Peasant Party, but of the sovereign workers' and poor peasants' councils. No support for the Provisional Government! No return of King Michael to the Republic of Romania!

While this government remains in office, the revolutionary committees must demand that it recognises their authority and organise an election for a government based on these committees. The government must submit itself to the will of the workers and peasants. It must immediately repeal all the hated laws of the old regime. It must take measures to improve the position of women who, amongst many features of oppression, have been subject to the death penalty for abortion. Romanian women must have full access to free contraception and abortion, for a woman's right to choose.

Ceausescu tried to eliminate religion by bulldozing churches. The only effect was to ensure its survival in the workers' and peasants' homes. Socialists must insist on the full freedom of religious observation, but without any privileges or subsidies by the government for any religious institution. For the strict separation of church and state!

The Romanian proletariat and poor peasants know only too well what a sick joke the statistics of socialism were in their country. Pampered luxury for the Ceausescu dynasty, vast privileges for the hired killers, court poets and servile propagandists. For the majority of toilers there were only punishing work norms, lengthening queues and empty shelves. This misery was not the fault of "communism" or "socialism", which have never existed in Romania, and were never the goals of the bloated bureaucrats of Bucharest.

The economic shortages were not the result of trying to plan the distribution of Romania's economic resources. The objective of the bureaucrats' plan was primarily to maintain their rule and their social privileges. Such planning could never create a genuine socialist society. Deprived of real workers' and peasants' democracy, the plan degenerates into a farce. It becomes the planning of the plunder of the workers. All this was the direct result of the strategy of "socialism in one country", the attempt at autarky and the

resultant destruction of peasant agriculture from above.

The road from starvation and autarky must not lie through opening up Romania to the bloodsucking western banks. From these institutions we demand aid without strings, not further rounds of indebtedness, as well as unlimited material aid without strings from the USSR. The government must demand emergency and unconditional aid from the west, the USSR and Eastern European states to fill the shelves with basic foodstuffs and other goods.

The rural and urban workers must seize control of the factories, offices, banks and means of communication from the bureaucrats. There must be no privatisation of industry, no sell-offs to imperialists or exiled Romanian capitalists. The workers must take control of the central planning organisations. They must draw up a new workers' plan whose objective is to meet the consumption needs of the masses, to increase equality and to open the road to genuine socialism and communism.

The Romanian degenerate workers' state came into existence without the participation of the workers themselves. The borders were carved out in such a way that national minorities (Germans, Hungarians) were imprisoned inside its confines. Ethnic Romanians were moreover forcibly incorporated within the USSR in 1940. The political revolution in Romania has had a major effect on all these groups. The legitimate grievances of many, incapable of public expression before, are coming to the surface.

Romanian workers must grant autonomous status to the regions of the oppressed national populations, including the right to be educated in their languages, the right to cultural facilities. For the right of all oppressed nations to self-determination! For the right of Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic to unify with the Romanian nation if it so wishes!

The heroic actions of the Romanian workers and peasants have shown the path for liberation of all republics of the USSR. Not fratricide between the national groups, but unity against the hated Stalinist bureaucracy. Such must be the lesson for all the peoples of Eastern Europe and the USSR.

- **No to social counter-revolution!**
- **For proletarian political revolution throughout Eastern Europe!**
- **For a free federation of workers' states on the road to a Socialist United States of Europe!**

On the use of Soviet troops in Azerbaijan

Gorbachev's decision to send the troops into Azerbaijan seems to have been motivated by the accelerated disintegration of central government authority in the republic. Moreover, on the eve of the intervention by the Soviet Armed Forces (SAF) there was a possibility that the extreme nationalist elements in the Azeri Popular Front were about to seize power.

The horrific pogrom in Baku—whether it was initiated by local party and KGB chiefs or by “black hundred” elements in the Azeri Popular Front—provided a pretext for the SAF to go in. It appears that the Popular Front attempted to end and suppress the pogrom. An added political complication is that the Soviet bureaucracy's two major factions (the bureaucratic conservatives and the marketising reformers) had clearly different objectives in Azerbaijan.

The “reformers” project was to encourage the Popular Front, with its CPSU component, to oust the old leadership and make it constitute part of the Azeri forces for *perestroika*. Their opponents, on the other hand, set the ball rolling over the claims to Nagorno Karabakh. In the end all forces in Azerbaijan were competing in anti-Armenian demagogy with the party losing out and the most extreme anti-party nationalist elements coming to the fore.

Imminent insurrection in Azerbaijan.

With the arming of the militias, the disintegration of the Republic's forces, with the imminence of war with the armed Armenian militias, with the seizure and tearing down of certain border points by Azeris and finally with the Azeri Popular Front seizure of power in Pushkino, it appears that an insurrection to wage war against Armenia was close at hand.

If this was so, revolutionary communists could not have favoured the seizure of power by nationalist chauvinist organisations, whether in Azerbaijan, Armenia or for that matter Georgia. Under these conditions the intervention of troops and the prevention of such an outcome would have to be supported, although we would not express any political confidence in the Kremlin or the tactics of the troops. It is not clear, however, whether this was the case in Azerbaijan. Certainly, given the lies of the bureaucracy after the massacre in Tbilisi, we do not automatically accept the Kremlin's explanation of events.

The whole policy of Gorbachev has encouraged and conceded to national chauvinism. He initially refused to grant self-determination to Nagorno Karabakh, then he imposed direct rule, then he returned Nagorno Karabakh to Azerbaijan. The intervention of the SAF was a desperate last minute action and may well be part of an unjustified bid by the conservatives to smash all dissent and all political life in Azerbaijan and beyond, in order to coerce and overawe all the

nationalities who are threatening to disintegrate the USSR by their demands for self-determination.

We are therefore in favour of the presence of the SAF in order to carry out the following tasks: preventing pogroms and forced population transfers; preventing war between Armenian and Azeri militias; preventing the armed seizure of power by nationalists; defending the borders of the USSR; breaking the blockade of Nagorno Karabakh. On this basis we do not call for the withdrawal of the SAF from Azerbaijan. Armenians in Baku had and have the right to call on the state forces, including the troops, to defend them against pogroms and evictions.

Revolutionaries can give no overall support to Gorbachev's policy in Transcaucasia. No support whatsoever can be given to a blanket ban on organisations or a general ban on strikes and street demonstrations. That is why we oppose the declaration of a state of emergency. In so far as the troops enforce such bans we condemn their actions. Whilst it is necessary to take determined action against those who fomented pogroms or insurrection, this should not extend to other political and social organisations. Suppression of such organisations would further inflame nationalist and anti-communist sentiments.

Nationalities within the USSR should have the right to self-determination, up to and including the right to leave the USSR if they choose. However, in exercising this right, one nationality cannot be allowed to trample on the national rights of others. Armenians and Azeris are clearly nationalities with such a right. But they have disputed territorial claims. Disputes over these claims must be decided on the basis, not of historic claims to land, but of the free self-determination of the people inhabiting a given area.

The people of Nagorno Karabakh have an incontestable right to secede from Azerbaijan and to become part of Armenia or become a separate republic within Transcaucasia if they wish. They have clearly expressed their desire to secede and this must be supported by all democrats, let alone by all socialists. To rule this out in advance, as Gorbachev has done, merely inflames Armenian nationalism, leading to the growth of some groups within the republic which call for total independence from the USSR.

Azeri grievances

The Azeri nation has justified grievances. Its territory is divided between the USSR, Iran and Turkey and in none of these countries have its democratic rights been fully recognised. The revolutionary solution to this situation would be the unification of a workers' council Azerbaijan, as a voluntary part of the USSR. Only on the basis of the democratically planned integration of the economy with that of the whole USSR

could the economic backwardness of Azerbaijan be overcome. Features of this backwardness, such as the lack of investment and high unemployment, have fueled nationalist sentiment.

The Azeri Popular Front does not have such a positive programme. Its struggle has been aimed at using force to retain a region, whose population is not Azeri, within their republic, and to assert physical control of this area. It is a reactionary struggle for national privileges, not a progressive struggle against national oppression.

The Azeri-speaking people of the whole region doubtlessly have very genuine national grievances and aspirations. Some ten million Azeris live in Iran where they enjoy little or no self-government, where their language and culture are ignored and discriminated against. Similar conditions affect the smaller number of Azeris in Turkey. Yet the Stalinist and popular front nationalists place little or no stress on the struggle for a united and independent Azerbaijan that would free those peoples from national oppression.

For all these reasons, support for Azeri national demands must be conditional on their acceptance of the right of Nagorno Karabakh to secede. This would have to be accompanied by conscious and determined defence of the rights of all Azeris within Armenia, and of Armenians within Azerbaijan to live without threat of violence or discrimination.

Those who have been forced to flee must be able to return if they wish, with their safety guaranteed by armed militias if necessary. Positive propaganda, which counters national chauvinist sentiments and espouses the right of all national minorities to practice their culture and language, is needed.

To solve the national tensions in the Caucasus all national rights must be respected. But secession from the USSR is not the best way forward for these

peoples. To be independent would mean developing greater links with world imperialism which would step in to exploit the resources and masses of the region. Under the influence of neighbouring Iran, an independent Azerbaijan would be pushed towards creating an Islamic state, a thoroughly reactionary development which all workers, peasants and in particular women must resolutely oppose. Rather than seceding, the nationalities should seek to unite in a struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy to turn the USSR into a free federation of republics. A Transcaucasian Federation of Soviet Republics, itself part of a free federation of the whole of the USSR could help overcome the problems of the fifty plus different intermixed nationalities and ethnic groups of the Caucasus.

But most importantly, the masses of Azerbaijan and Armenia need to be won to a programme which tackles their fundamental problems—a programme of political revolution.

There must be a massive injection of central investment funds as part of a revised centralised democratic plan.

- A massive expansion of social provision and housing; sharing out available work with no loss of pay to end unemployment
- For workers' management of the enterprises through elected factory councils; workers' councils in every district, city and republic to take control away from the parasitic and corrupt bureaucrats
- For workers' management of the plan to ensure that production is geared towards the needs of the workers, not the bureaucracy or the world market.

A revolutionary, Trotskyist party, committed to the rights of nationalities, resolutely opposed to any national oppression, is the only force that can unite the oppressed nations in a struggle against oppression and bureaucratic rule.

Revolution and counter-revolution in Poland, 1980-81

Theses agreed by the Gruppe Arbeitermacht,
Irish Workers Group and Workers Power, July 1982

The bureaucratic caste that usurps political power in the workers' states and parasitically lives off the planned property relations cannot co-exist with independent organisations of the working class.

Neither can it tolerate the erosion of its privileges, its political power or the destabilisation of the repressive internal security apparatus upon which its power ultimately depends.

For these reasons it was inevitable that the Stalinists would launch a bid to take back the gains made by the Polish workers since August 1980. This is the objective of the military coup.

The coup could only have been prevented or resisted by the working class taking political power directly into the hands of its own workers' councils (soviets) and workers' militia. A failure to take political power—to make a political revolution—paved the way for the Stalinists' bloody counter-attack.

But the bureaucracy's privileges, its inability to rationally plan and effectively organise the economy coupled with the political oppression of the working class all mean that open conflict periodically erupts between the working class and their bureaucratic overlords in the workers' states. The political revolutionary situation that Poland experienced after August 1980 had its roots in the following factors:

a) Crisis of the bureaucratically planned economy

The inability of the bureaucracy to sustain and develop planned property became increasingly evident during the 1960s. While national income increased by an average of 8.6% between 1950 and 1955, this figure had dropped to 5% between 1966 and 1970. In 1970 the bureaucracy failed to force the working class to pay for the crisis of the stagnating economy with higher prices for essential foodstuffs.

After 1970 the Gierek regime hoped to finance a new round of industrialisation by massive borrowing from western banks and governments which was to be repaid by the export of Polish manufactured goods to the west. By late 1981 Poland was *per capita* the second most indebted country in the world.

But the bureaucracy proved incapable of raising the productivity of the working class to which it denied elementary rights of organisation and self-expression.

Between 1976 and 1979 labour productivity grew by only 3.8%. Recession in the western capitalist economies definitively removed the hoped for markets of the Polish bureaucracy and further undermined their entire economic strategy.

b) The militant tradition of the Polish working class

The working class in 1970 and 1976 had forced the bureaucracy to carry an enormous subsidy on prices of essential foodstuffs. Bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption ensured continued scarcities of essential goods. In the face of mounting foreign debts the Gierek regime sought to push down the living standards of the working class through the price rises of the summer of 1980.

c) The crisis of agriculture

Approximately 75% of Polish agricultural land is in the hands of the small-holding peasantry (the average size of holdings being around 12.6 acres). The Stalinist regime tolerates this anachronistic agricultural system for fear of conflict with the peasantry and the Catholic church whose roots lie in rural village Poland.

But the shortage of needed manufactured goods, and the small peasantry's control of essential food supplies provoked a "scissors crisis" in Polish agriculture. The peasantry refused to sell their products to state agencies because the state could not, in exchange, provide goods required for agricultural production. Hence the tendency of the peasantry to hoard and to sell goods on the more lucrative private market served to further impoverish the living standards of Poland's industrial working class.

d) The bureaucracy's refusal to honour the deals struck with the working class after previous conflicts

After 1956, 1970 and 1976 the bureaucracy promised the redress of grievances and the extension of workers' rights. On each occasion the Stalinists, having secured the demobilisation of the working class, ripped up the agreements and attempted to re-institute repression. This meant that by 1980 there existed a definite layer of workers ready to fight in their own defence but deeply distrustful of the official unions as a direct result of their own experience.

e) The flagrant corruption of the leading beneficiaries of the Gierek regime

The special rations, fine houses and fat salaries of the bureaucracy stood in sharp and visible contrast to the hardships and privations of working class life. The inability of these privileged parasites to organise production and distribution effectively further sharpened Polish working class hatred.

f) The national question in Poland

The social and political regime that has existed in Poland since the end of the Second World War was imposed on Poland by the Soviet armed forces against the rhythms of its class struggle.

Since that time the army of the Soviet bureaucracy has served as the ultimate sanction against political change in Poland. Hence all struggles against the bureaucratic caste, against political oppression and inequality are necessarily interwoven with the sense of national oppression bolstered by the very existence of the Stalinist regime in Poland.

The developing crisis and its revolutionary solution

The crisis of the summer of 1980 was sparked initially by a struggle against food price rises but was dramatically intensified by a struggle in defence of victimised militants in Gdansk.

It passed through a stage of immediate local economic demands on work conditions and wages to the formation of national Solidarnosc and the demand for free independent trade unions.

In the face of a mass exodus out of the Stalinist official unions, mass recruitment to Solidarnosc among rank and file party members and universal hatred and contempt for the corrupt and discredited Gierek regime, the Stalinists had no immediate alternative to the official recognition and registration of Solidarnosc.

But the concessions wrung from the regime—on pay, on union recognition, on Saturday working—and the new self-confidence of the working class could only have been defended and extended by the working class finally destroying the political power, repressive apparatus and economic privileges of the bureaucracy: by *political revolution*.

Having taken power into the hands of its own workers' councils and militia, the working class would proceed to re-organise the plan from top to bottom under workers' management.

The potential for such a political-revolutionary resolution to Poland's crisis was always present in the dynamic of the workers' struggles from August 1980. The inter-factory strike committee could have laid the basis for soviet-type organisation and at a number of stages workers were forced to form their own rudimentary workers' defence squads.

The working class base of Solidarnosc has consistently given voice to demands for an end to privilege, for democracy in the factories and for the extension of workers' control and management in the factories and in the economy as a whole.

None of these demands was realisable short of the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucratic rulers.

A trade union in a Stalinist state

Neither could Solidarnosc hope to achieve a permanent status as a trade union representing the Polish working class in negotiations and bargaining with the bureaucracy. The limited programme of establishing a trade union in a degenerate workers' state is a utopian one.

Under capitalism trade unions represent workers against individual capitalists in a market over which neither employer nor worker has control. The very dynamics of the market economy keep alive trade unionism as a form of representation of the working class within bourgeois society.

Within a healthy workers' state trade unions would initially continue to represent the interests of sections of workers under a state that was under the direct control of the working class as a whole. They would be essential training grounds for workers to learn to control and manage the economy; "schools for socialism", as Lenin called them.

But in a degenerate workers' state such as Poland neither the market mechanisms through which workers bargain with individual employers nor the prerequisites of the functions of trade unions in a healthy workers' state are in existence.

Every major demand of the workers—on the length of the working week, the sacking of an individual manager, the allocation of goods or wages—inevitably pits the working class against the central bureaucracy which monopolises the central planning mechanism.

Lasting success for the workers cannot be secured by bargaining with the central bureaucracy. The nature of its power and privileges is such that it cannot for long co-exist with the independent organisations of those that it oppresses.

The centralisation of its power and the scale of its privileges make it too tempting an object of revolutionary overthrow unless the masses themselves are forcibly deprived of the right to organise.

Solidarnosc could therefore only be a force for political conflict with the bureaucracy. Either it could have laid the basis for the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy that we have outlined above, or it could have developed a programme of collaboration with, and reform of, the Stalinist regime.

Thirdly, it could have moved in the direction of a counter-revolutionary overthrow of the regime which would have paved the way for the restoration of capitalism in Poland, and whatever the nationalist slogans it was fought under, this would mean the turning of Poland once again into a semi-colony of western imperialism.

The leadership of Solidarnosc, its conferences and national commission were overwhelmingly under the influence of tendencies supporting the latter two political programmes.

The tendencies in Solidarnosc

a) The Walesa group

This group was tied particularly closely to the Catholic hierarchy of Wyczynsky and Glemp who in their turn were the active agents of, and in regular contact with,



Gdansk, 1980

the reactionary Pope John Paul II. On a world scale the Catholic church is inevitably committed to the maintenance of the exploitative order of capitalism and to the destruction of those "godless" states that have overthrown the private property that the church sees as sacred. For that reason the Catholic hierarchy is ultimately a force fighting for capitalist restoration in the workers' states.

In the immediate situation of Poland's political-revolutionary crisis it fought to use the mobilisations of the working class and its hold over large sections of the working class to strengthen its own bargaining position with the regime.

This hold flows from: the rural background of a large proportion of the workforce, particularly the first generation workers of Gierek's "industrial boom"; the church's ability to pose as a force representing national independence in the eyes of the masses; the fact that in conditions of Stalinist repression, and of its oppressive and stultifying cultural life, the Catholic church was able to appear as what Marx termed "the heart of the heartless world. The soul of soulless conditions".

It sought to be a broker between the regime and the workers—before and after martial law—in order to guarantee both the preservation and extension of rural capitalism and church control over "social bodies". Notably the church wants to use its bargaining strength

to erode crucial rights secured for women in Poland, including abortion rights and contraception facilities. It aims to drive women back into family life as child rearers and unpaid child minders. In this way it hopes to tighten its own grip on the minds of the young by eroding the need for nursery and child care facilities in the hands of the "godless state".

It also intends to wring from the bureaucracy media time for religious sermonising and concessions in the field of education, of family life and even food distribution. The Stalinists were prepared to concede to the church in these spheres—including ministerial responsibility for "family life"—in exchange for church calls for order and calm.

While significant sectors of the working class looked to the Catholic hierarchy for a lead, celebrated Mass in occupation strikes and decked out their demonstrations in religious symbols, the Catholic church was not always able to force the ranks of Solidarnosc to obey its bidding.

On many occasions the same workers who would abase themselves before the cassock and cross would refuse to heed church calls for a return to work. Similarly the church, in Poland and Rome, has been set on doing a deal to find a Polish "Tito"—a patriotic decentralising authoritarian leader who would make concessions to the private farmers, to small businessmen and to the church itself.

This programme, that led Glemp ultimately to plump for Jaruzelski rather than for the struggle to overthrow martial law, runs objectively counter to the democratic aspirations of the base of Solidarnosc.

The Catholic hierarchy, which supported the anti-Semitic Great Polish dictatorship of Pilsudski after the First World War, has not changed its spots. Better a Stalinist Pilsudski figure and order, than the uncertainties and disorder of a political-revolutionary crisis. That is the reasoning of the Catholic hierarchy in the face of a working class striking for its own emancipation. Until the threat of a working class thus mobilised is removed the Catholic church is willing to temporarily hold back in its long term goal of restoring capitalism.

Until December 1981 Walesa's project crumbled before his eyes and the eyes of millions of Solidarnosc supporters too. But he continued to seek a compromise deal with the authorities that would guarantee joint participation in a National Front for the church, for Solidarnosc appointees and the Stalinists.

His programme included the distribution of state farm land to the private peasantry, self-management committees in the factories and "social council" control of the economy, by which he meant tripartite administration of the plan and the bolstering of the church's role in all aspects of social and political life.

In order to secure that deal Walesa attempted to hold back the unofficial strikes involving 250,000 workers in October and November 1981. In order to prevent reprisals against strikers and the passage of anti-strike legislation, he counseled Solidarnosc itself to outlaw unofficial strikes and to build a disciplinary machinery that could put such a ban into effect.

In late October and early November the Solidarnosc Praesidium called for an end to strikes. At the bidding of Archbishop Glemp, Walesa unilaterally left the

Gdansk meeting of the Solidarnosc National Commission for a meeting with Jaruzelski and Glempt to set up talks "aimed at specifying the general principles to which the construction of national agreement in our motherland should be subjected". Not until the Stalinists braced themselves for hard line action against Solidarnosc did Walesa break from his perspective of collaboration with the Stalinists.

b) The social democratic KOR grouping

The programme of this grouping, most notably represented by Kuron and Michnik and re-constituted in late November as the "clubs of the self-governing republic", was for the reform of Poland on the road to its "Finlandisation". By this they meant the establishment, by stealth, of a parliamentary democracy accepting the limitation of foreign policy alliance with the USSR, and decisive repressive machinery and foreign policy matters remaining in the grip of the Stalinists. Kuron explicitly calls for the replacement of centralised planning with a decentralised economic order.

Kuron, and the social democratic and lay Catholic intelligentsia, express a classic distrust (in reality a profound fear) of the self-organisation of the working class. At each key stage in the crisis after August 1980 they counseled against a show-down and conflict with the Stalinists. But the credibility of the KOR grouping as defenders of workers' rights after 1976, and their links with the Catholic intelligentsia, ensured for them an influential role in the counsels of Solidarnosc. It was Kuron, for example, who played a vital role in securing the agreed compromise deal between Solidarnosc and the regime on workers' management.

The social democratic intelligentsia in the workers' states is a central conduit of bourgeois ideas and programmes into the ranks of the working class. Most vitally they foster illusions in parliamentary democracy; yet this is a form of government that can only take root in a stable imperialist country capable of maintaining a relative harmony of interest between the political representatives of labour and capital.

To workers who themselves are not consciously restorationist they offer as an alternative to their political oppression the chimera of parliamentary democracy and the societies that can maintain it.

In the face of Stalinist totalitarian tyranny revolutionary Marxists must fight ceaselessly against the anti-working class programme and tactics of the social democratic intelligentsia. However in certain situations, and on specific issues, revolutionaries would find themselves (as an independent force) fighting alongside such groups as the KOR to defend the right of workers and militants to organise free of bureaucratic repression. In the wake of the 1976 riots, for example, communists would have found themselves alongside the KOR militants who were opposing the imprisonment of workers involved in the riots.

c) The consciously restorationist Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN)

The KPN explicitly aims at re-drawing Poland's borders so that they correspond with those achieved in 1921. It explicitly aims at re-establishing capitalist property

forms in Poland. In Poland after the First World War, only 69.2% of the population were Polish. The Poland of Pilsudski savagely oppressed the sizeable minority of 4.5 million Ukrainians who found themselves under Polish rule.

Whatever the claims of the KPN leaders, a capitalist Poland would inevitably become a semi-colony of western capitalism. The effects of the crippling debts that the bureaucrats have taken on and the attacks on workers' living standards to pay for them, are just a hint of the future open to Poland and the masses should the KPN leaders successfully carry through their counter-revolution and deliver up Poland to the imperialists.

Revolutionary Marxists have no solidarity with these conscious agents of counter-revolution and would give them no defence. For the Polish workers' movement, in the name of democracy, to have defended the KPN leaders as "political prisoners" along with the organisations of the trade unions arrested by the Stalinists, reflects the very real presence of counter-revolutionary forces within the Solidarnosc movement.

The drive for compromise and "national agreement" advocated by the Walesa wing and those around KOR served to strengthen the hold of the KPN over sections of Solidarnosc's rank and file. They were able to pose as intransigent opponents of the bureaucratic tyranny without their reactionary and anti-working class programme being challenged by a revolutionary internationalist party.

d) The Solidarnosc "radicals"

We see no evidence that those elements who opposed Walesa's collaborationist leadership—Jurczyk, Rulewski, Gwiazda—differed qualitatively from Walesa in programme or perspective.

All were committed to a programme that intended to prise control of the economy from the Stalinists and their chain of appointed managers, to take over local government through Solidarnosc candidates in "free elections" and to guarantee the security interests of the Soviet bureaucracy in Poland while leaving the central repressive apparatus intact. They differed with Walesa, and with each other, only over the pace at which to carry out this project.

The inevitable refusal of the Stalinists to negotiate such an erosion of their power forced these elements into empty demagogic conflict with the regime. By early December (as evidenced by the Radom Tapes) Rulewski was urging that Solidarnosc itself form a Provisional Government of National Unity, given the failure of the Jaruzelski-Walesa-Glempt negotiations to reach a National Agreement.

Knowing the depths of popular support for Solidarnosc against the Stalinists, the National Commission in Gdansk immediately prior to Jaruzelski's coup called for a referendum to back their claim for power-sharing with the church and, at least temporarily, with the Stalinists too.

Rulewski's formula announced in the Radom Tapes was for power to be shared until 1984 elections on the basis of 30% to the Stalinists, 25% to the peasants organisations, 25% to Solidarnosc with the rest going to lay Catholic organisations and the counter-revolutionary KPN.

But for all the demagogic froth of Rulewski there is no evidence that he was urging, or that Solidarnosc was preparing, an armed insurrection on the eve of Jaruzelski's coup. Jaruzelski had broken off negotiations with Glempl and Walesa. He was visibly preparing an offensive against Solidarnosc.

But still "the radicals" expected a referendum to defend them and their notion of power-sharing against the Stalinists. True, by December, leading militants were urging the formation of workers' defence guards (Bujak and Palka, for example). This call was strengthened after riot police broke up the Warsaw Fire Academy sit-in in early December.

The sporadic nature of the resistance to martial law underlines that there were no concrete and developed plans for Solidarnosc to organise to seize political power from the Stalinist bureaucracy on the part of Walesa's famed "radical" opponents in the Solidarnosc leadership. The political programme of these figures underlines that they were not qualitatively different in political character to the dominant Walesa tendency on the Praesidium.

e) The Solidarnosc left

There is evidence that a left current existed within Solidarnosc. This current was tied, however, to a utopian reformist programme for the working class. One well known representative of a left current in Poland is Henryk Schljajfer.

A sympathiser of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), as early as 1977 he produced a materialist analysis of the Polish economy and the Stalinist party bureaucracy. He concluded that the origin of the economic crisis lay in bureaucratic planning which was grounded in the material interests of the bureaucracy.

The only solution to this crisis for the working class was to be found in social planning by the producers themselves. This was possible through the creation of council structures such as those that the working class had in the past repeatedly begun to build. The defeats of the working class could ultimately be traced back to the lack of centralisation of the councils, he argued.

After the Gdansk strikes and the establishment of the trade union organisation Solidarnosc, the "Forum August '80" was founded. This was made up of intellectuals and Solidarnosc militants, and Schljajfer worked with it. In November 1980 this forum published a document that dealt with the founding of workers' councils in Poland. In this they criticised the defensive conception of Solidarnosc and argued that at best it left bureaucratic planning and administration to independent specialists.

Against this they posed an all-embracing programme for how planning and administration must be taken over by workers' councils. In this regard they started with the construction of a vertical system of self-management organs which would lead up to a second chamber of the Sejm (Polish parliament).

Kowalewski, an influential member of Solidarnosc's Lodz region took over this programme and brought it, as a delegate, to the October 1981 Solidarnosc congress. He was not able to carry the essential content of this programme (such as centralisation and opposition to

removal of price controls) against the Solidarnosc leadership's conception which was basically for decentralisation and a "national agreement".

When, in the course of the confrontation, General Jaruzelski threatened martial law, the regional congress in Lodz agreed to the immediate institution of an Assembly of Councils and, in the case of martial law, for an active strike in which control of production would be taken over. For this they wanted the support of the national commission of Solidarnosc. Martial law was imposed before this commission could be carried out.

To this extent these lefts differentiated themselves positively from the clerical and reformist leadership of Solidarnosc. However, they did not break with reformism.

Their concept of a second chamber contained the illusion that one could achieve economic power without the destruction of the bureaucratic state apparatus. Although they rejected a "national agreement", in their demand for a second chamber they began from a position of power sharing. Either power was to be shared with the bureaucracy, without the destruction of the repressive apparatus or—less realistically—with freely elected national and local parliaments in which the Catholic clergy would have a decisive influence. In this they capitulated before the clerical influence in the movement.

The aim of building a revolutionary party was robbed of any real revolutionary content for these lefts since they held a position, effectively equivalent to that of USFI's, of building such a party in the form of an organised group together with other existing tendencies on a programme of minimum demands. And they still held, until the putsch, that a reform of the party was possible.

The self-management movement

Tendencies did emerge within Solidarnosc against Walesa, Kuron and Rulewski that, albeit in a highly contradictory manner, reflected the pressure for and possibility of the direct seizure of power by the working class.

Such a tendency is visible within the self-management movement. On 14-15 April 1981 representatives of 17 key factories met on the initiative of the Warski (Szczecin) and Lenin (Gdansk) shipyards to establish the "Network" (siec) and discuss the issue of self-management. By August 1981 over 3,000 plants were organised to struggle for self-management. What did the self-management movement signify?

In the face of economic paralysis and desperate shortages it reflected the workers' distrust of the central planning apparatus and its appointees in the plants, and their inability to overcome the mounting material problems confronting the working class. This is reflected in the initial demands of the Network, which focused on the rights of workers to elect and dismiss their directors. This constituted a direct challenge to the central bureaucracy's *nomenklatura* system of appointments.

The movement reflected a conviction amongst large sections of workers that they alone had the knowledge, experience and interest to manage the plants in conjunc-



tion with their chosen experts. It constituted a challenge to the corruption of the central bureaucracy's representatives in the plants.

It reflected also a mounting distrust amongst the ranks of Solidarnosc with the performance and achievements of the Solidarnosc leadership in negotiation and partnership with the central bureaucratic apparatus. This was to become particularly widespread amongst Polish workers in the autumn of 1981.

To this extent the movement reflected a struggle by the working class to emancipate itself and destroy the political power of the bureaucracy. However, there was more to the self-management movement than this. Over thirty years of Stalinist planning has served to discredit the very idea of centralised planning in the eyes of large numbers of Polish workers.

A significant layer of managerial and technical intellectuals openly advocate a programme of dramatic decentralisation and the introduction of market mechanisms as a means of securing its own emancipation from the bureaucracy and the central planning mechanisms.

Taken together this explains the widespread belief amongst workers in the industrial plants that the workers could solve their immediate and historic problems through a programme of decentralisation, breaking up of the central plan, and through local plant-based initiatives. Deep-rooted Polish nationalism served to strengthen the illusion amongst layers of worker militants that "all Poles" had a common interest in securing a "rational" and "expert" administration as opposed to the irrational, corrupt and inept *nomenklatura* system of key managerial appointments.

The movement always contained within it the potential for the workers to lend their muscle and self-sacrifice to the technical and managerial intelligentsia's attempt to settle its own accounts with the central state appointees in the enterprises.

In its own particular way the self-management movement also gave expression to a militant tendency centred on the major factories. It had a strategy for crippling the central bureaucracy through achieving power in the factories and using the strength of the working class to declare their autonomy from the central bureaucracy. As with all the other reformist strategies this left the central armed power of the bureaucratic state intact and usable the moment the central apparatus resolved to break the independent organisations of the working class.

As a result the potential always existed for this movement to become the vehicle for the realisation of a programme counterposed to the programme of proletarian political revolution, unless revolutionary communists intervened and secured leadership within the struggles of the Polish workers.

To the objective restorationist social democratic and Catholic intelligentsia it was a means of securing a decentralisation of the economy on the road to strengthening the laws and norms of the market economy. It was for them a means of tying the working class to "participation" in a restorationist programme.

Despite this the movement retained a contradictory character: at key moments it contained the potential for the formation of factory committees and for co-ordinating them in workers' council bodies struggling to take the statified economy into the hands of the working class. This potential would only be realised to the extent that it became led and directed by a revolutionary Trotskyist party.

The logic of self-management or workers' control, which ignores the question of political power and control over the state, is necessarily a concession to "market socialism" and decentralisation. Syndicalism in a degenerate workers' state leads to a strengthening of the operation of the law of value and a disarming of the

workers against Titoite or Kadarite wings of the bureaucracy.

The Network and its experts resisted calls to put themselves at the head of a factory council movement embracing all the factories in Poland.

They exhibited a marked tendency to big plant chauvinism and disdain for the struggles of the smaller enterprises. Alongside the fight to elect and dismiss their directors they advocated a programme of economic decentralisation and the breaking up of effective central planning.

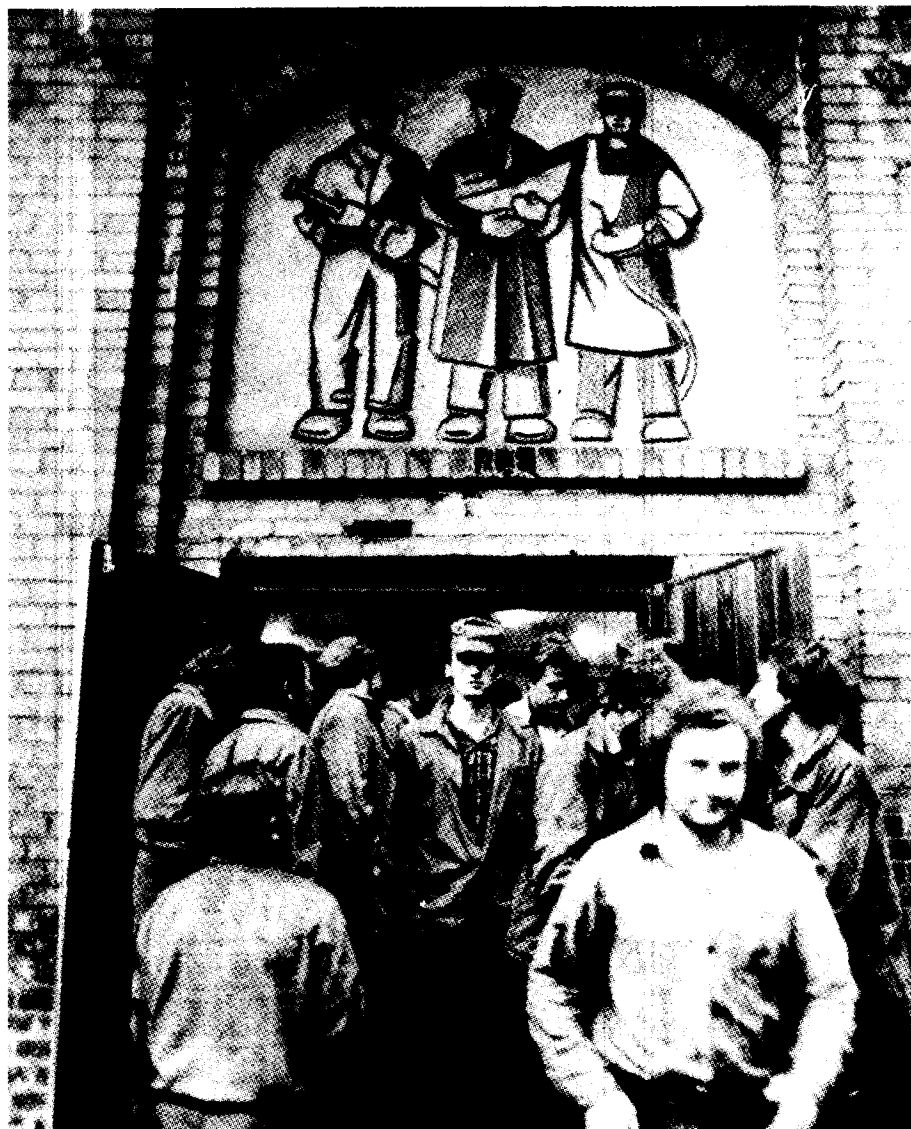
Their proposals made no mention of the plan and called for each of their enterprises to be "accorded all rights to the property apportioned to it".

The Solidarnosc programme drawn up for the conference with the advice of the Network experts explicitly advocates self-management as a means of decentralising the economy and strengthening market forces:

"The central organs of economic administration should not limit enterprise activity or prescribe suppliers or buyers for its output. Enterprises shall be able to operate freely on the internal market, except in fields where a license is compulsory. International trade must be accessible to all enterprises . . . It is necessary to use surplus stocks of materials, machinery and plant making it easier for them to be sold abroad and selling them to private enterprises within Poland. Present restrictions on the activity of such enterprises must be lifted."

In tendency this is a programme for the dismantling of the planned economy opening the road to the accumulation of private capital in Poland and, through the destruction of the monopoly of foreign trade, to open the floodgates to foreign capital.

On the other hand elements within Solidarnosc were attempting to develop the movement as a means of securing a degree of political power for the proletariat organised in workers' councils. The Lodz region of Solidarnosc—and those calling themselves the "Lublin Group"—organised an October delegate conference which established a national federation of self-management bodies (KZKNKPS) which set itself the task of organising a "national congress of workers' councils".



Workers on strike in Gdansk, 1980

They did so in opposition to Solidarnosc and the Network. Around Schlawfer (who advised the Upper Silesia self-management movement) and Kowalewski of Lodz there were distinct elements within this movement who opposed the programme of introducing a market economy, who criticised the model of parliamentary democracy and advocated a struggle to take political power into the hands of the working class via the self-management councils.

In the months before the coup the Lodz branch of Solidarnosc was advocating an "active strike" as a means of paralysing the bureaucracy and taking production and distribution into the hands of the masses. They advocated the formation of workers' defence guards to "defend industrial enterprises and distribution networks during the active strike".

Their political programme envisaged a network of workers' councils linked together in a "second chamber" alongside a freely elected Sejm. Jaruzelski's coup prevented the convening of the National Congress of Workers' Councils.

The task of revolutionaries in relation to the self-management movement at those points at which it embraced and represented workers pitted against the bureaucracy at plant level were:

i) To struggle against all those who wished to develop the committees *either* into participatory administrative bodies in plants and regions *or* into vehicles for strengthening the operation of the law of value. Their task was to build *factory committees* elected by the workers themselves and formed as *organs of struggle* against the local and national bureaucracy. We would oppose them taking on any managerial function until the power of the central bureaucracy was destroyed.

ii) To seek to extend those committees into a national workers' council which set itself the explicit task of seizing political power for the working class. While we would work alongside all those militants who tried to build such a movement we oppose the programme of establishing a national workers' council to rule alongside and in conjunction with a parliamentary based government.

However, the programme of the self-management movement, and the domination of the experts within it, meant that such an approach within the self-management bodies would only be applicable episodically. Therefore, within the plants revolutionaries would have to fight for independent factory committees—organs of struggle—whenever the self-management bodies became dominated by integrationist or restorationist tendencies.

Taken as a contradictory whole, the dominant tendencies in Solidarnosc revealed the following characteristics:

a) Subordination to the Catholic hierarchy which fought to implement its own anti-working class programme throughout the crisis, and do so on the backs of the workers' movement and in collaboration with the Stalinists.

b) Illusions in the bankrupt policies of Polish nationalism. We do not deny that Poland is nationally oppressed. But Polish nationalism itself, since the October Revolution of 1917 in particular, as an ideology and programme, binds and gags the working class, opposing any independent working class struggle.

Since 1917, when Poland achieved its independence because of the revolutionary workers in Russia, anti-Russian chauvinism in Poland has meant that Polish nationalism's content has been formed in counterposition to the October Revolution itself. Hence the character of Polish nationalist ideology has to be defined as overwhelmingly reactionary because it binds the working class to the capitalist, restorationist, clerical and even Stalinist elements in its society, in the name of the unity of the Polish nation. Moreover its anti-Sovietism opens the road for restorationist illusions in western democracy and in the capitalist market economy among broad sections of the masses themselves.

There can be no independence for the Polish working class without the active assistance of the workers of the other states at present in the political grip of Stalinism. Only as the spearhead of an international political revolution against Stalinism could the Polish workers' political revolution guarantee its own survival. The anti-Soviet, Catholic policies of the Polish nationalists are necessarily an inevitable barrier between Polish and Soviet workers. This division can be exploited by the

Stalinists of the Kremlin should they decide to use Warsaw Pact forces to finish the job for Jaruzelski.

c) A programme for the Polish economy that could strengthen the forces of capitalist restoration. Born of the collapse of the Polish plan and the continued existence of small peasant agriculture, the predominant tendency in the Solidarnosc leadership approved of the decentralisation of the economy, the strengthening of market mechanisms and the complete subordination of agricultural production to the law of value.

While elements of this programme could have been, and still can be, carried out alongside sections of the Polish bureaucracy (who look enviously at the market mechanisms of Hungary and Yugoslavia) they would inevitably strengthen the tendency towards, and the forces fighting for, the complete smashing of the planned property relations of Poland.

Our programme recognises that the centralised command planning of the Stalinists can never realise the *potential* of the socialised property forms and has, through its short-comings, necessarily blackened the very name of planning in the eyes of the workers of Poland.

We fight for a plan centralised in the hands of the organs of the working class itself. But behind the Solidarnosc leaders' talk of self-management lies a programme of "market socialism" which would firstly introduce the Catholic church, with its own anti-working class and anti-socialist priorities, into the central "social council" of the economy. Secondly it would through decentralisation, prevent the Polish workers, *as a class*, from managing their economy, strengthen the law of the market and necessarily drive down the living standards of the Polish workers. The Solidarnosc leaders, no less than the Stalinists, accept that their programme for economic "reform" will mean unemployment for Polish workers.

d) Crippling illusions in western imperialism. While Poland is politically oppressed by the Kremlin bureaucracy, the 1970s saw it becoming ever more economically exploited by the western banks and governments, albeit as a result of the policies of the Stalinists themselves. While ultimately aiming to prise Poland loose from Comecon on the road to restoring capitalist property relations, the imperialists therefore had no interest in a victorious political revolution of the Polish working class.

A victorious working class political revolution would jeopardise the debt and interest payments upon which the imperialists' exploitation of Poland rests. Polish nationalism has served to blind large sections of the Polish workers to the root cause of many of their present miseries—the rapacious demands of the financial institutions of imperialism.

e) The strategy for advance left the central levers of Stalinist power intact. It aimed instead to encroach on that power through its points of least resistance. The Solidarnosc strategy for challenging managerial power in individual factories, for standing their own candidates against discredited party candidates in local elections and, eventually, a referendum appeal for power

sharing over the heads of the Stalinists, *at every stage*, avoided a direct challenge to the armed central power of the bureaucracy.

As a result, the militia, the Internal Defence Force (WOW), the riot commandos (ZOMO) and the military high command remained intact to choose their moment to strike back. Once again the Polish workers learned the bloody lesson that Stalinism can only be overthrown by a movement that prepares an organised armed insurrection against its central political apparatus in order to pass power into the hands of the workers themselves.

In search of an illusory national agreement with the Stalinists and the church, the Solidarnosc leaders demobilised the workers' organisations. They held off strikes and, with Clemp's blessing, appealed for calm. The Stalinists showed their gratitude with a bloody coup, with a declaration of war against the Polish workers. Because the programme of the Solidarnosc leadership could not lead the ten million Polish workers who looked to them to final victory, it does not mean that we do not solidarise with Solidarnosc, as a movement of the Polish workers against their bureaucratic oppressors.

The existence of a mass base, often raising demands in conflict with the aims and intentions of the Solidarnosc leaders, clearly reveals that, despite its leadership, Solidarnosc was not a counter-revolutionary organisation *per se*. It was, and if it survives could well continue to be, a dynamic movement rife with contradictions, but possessing the potential of resolving them in the direction of political revolution, given the intervention of revolutionaries.

As is usually the case when workers enter into struggles against their capitalist exploiters or their bureaucratic oppressors, they do so without a ready made and fully formed revolutionary leadership. The task of revolutionaries in Poland was to struggle within the mobilisations of the Polish masses to support and extend those mobilisations against the bureaucracy to their victorious conclusions. In so doing revolutionaries would popularise the international programme of Trotskyism.

They would have fought to build the nucleus of a new revolutionary communist party that could expose in practice the bankruptcy of the programme and tactics of the clerics, nationalists and restorationists who drew strength (as they did in Hungary in 1956) from the first months of the political-revolutionary crisis in Poland.

The central problem facing the workers of Poland is that such a revolutionary leadership was not built. Revolutionaries were not able to elaborate the emancipatory programme of Marxism to the working class. The workers were prepared to make sacrifices and to struggle but they were at the same time blinded by Stalinist oppression and clerical obscurantism.

They failed to see the potential of workers' power and of a planned economy under workers' management, of *socialism* as the road to the equality and democracy that millions of Polish workers fought for.

The crisis of Stalinism

The August 1980 crisis paralysed the Stalinist bureaucracy. Significant sections of the party, approximately

one-third, joined Solidarnosc. The Polish Workers Party (PUWP) is the key mobilising agent by which the central Stalinist bureaucracy ensures that its wishes are carried out at every level of the economic and political apparatus, and in every social organisation. For that reason it must remain, essentially, the property of the central bureaucracy itself.

But in order to perform its function it has to organise layers of society outside of, and politically oppressed by the central bureaucracy. Hence any upheaval in the Stalinist states must necessarily send shock waves throughout the party, itself serving to weaken the mobilising potential of the party leadership.

Successive Stalinist regimes in Poland as elsewhere have deliberately nurtured a layer of privileged labour aristocrats as part of the Bonapartist bureaucracy's base inside working class. For the Gierk regime this had been most noticeably the miners and steel workers of Silesia. The defection of this group of workers to the ranks of Solidarnosc was decisive, both in undermining a vital base of support for the Stalinist regime, and forcing the recognition of Solidarnosc.

This was even reflected in a movement at the base of the PUWP for greater internal democracy, for the right to horizontal communication between party units, and for contested elections of party posts. While this movement represented a destabilisation of bureaucratic rule, it could never have become the means for replacing it. The Stalinist party is, by its nature, irreformable; it can only exist as the agency of the central Stalinist bureaucracy. If it ceases to perform this function it will be purged or even replaced as the immediate instrument of bureaucratic rule.

In the face of the Gdansk strike wave the central bureaucracy itself divided over the tactics for preserving their caste rule. A significant layer of that bureaucracy—security chief Kania for example—was prepared to jettison the discredited Gierk leadership and negotiate a compromise recognition of Solidarnosc. Only a small minority of the central bureaucracy attempted to resist this tactical retreat by the Stalinist core of the party.

But the party itself fragmented under the impact of the developing crisis. There was significant defections from its ranks. At the last central committee before the coup it was reported that the PUWP, which was three million strong in August 1980, had in "recent months" lost 244,000 members, expelled 180,000 and accepted only 30,000 new recruits. Factory branches of the PUWP joined Solidarnosc wholesale. In the face of the Polish workers' movement the party withered as an effective instrument of bureaucratic rule.

The hardline defenders of bureaucratic rule—Jaruzelski for example—conducted a concerted strategy of attrition against Solidarnosc and the compromisers in their own ranks. They did this by allowing economic chaos and food shortages to demoralise significant sections of workers and the population at large. They also hoped to swing layers of workers behind the administration through blaming Solidarnosc for privations and supply breakdowns.

Additionally they provoked conflict with the Solidarnosc leaders so as to play on, expose and exacerbate their divisions and demagoguery. In concert with Glem, Jaruzelski was prepared to open negotiations with Soli-

darnosc on power-sharing in exchange for their calling off strikes. Hardline anti-Solidarnosc bureaucratic militant Olzowski was the first to offer the carrot of a new National Front to the Walesa-Glemp axis.

Having lured Solidarnosc's leadership into negotiations, Jaruzelski proceeded to play on the divisions in Solidarnosc's ranks. While guaranteeing peasant property (to a doubtless unbelieving peasantry), promising electoral reform and attaching councils of "experts" to the Cabinet, Jaruzelski was not prepared to concede a union veto on Stalinist representatives in the National Front or on free elections. Instead the Stalinists braced themselves to apply military force against Solidarnosc.

In late November the police raided Kuron's meeting called to establish the social democratic clubs. The negotiations broke up and at a central committee meeting Jaruzelski announced his intention to ban strikes. In early December there was a raid on the Fire Fighters' Academy. All this represented a dress rehearsal for Jaruzelski's coup of 13 December.

Jaruzelski's provocation elicited squeals of protest from Walesa: "There is no national agreement, for there is no-one to agree with. The other side cheats". And at Radom: "They've been thumbing their noses at us from the very beginning". Finally, at the last Gdansk National Commission: "The policy of small steps has produced no results."

It placed him under great pressure within the Solidarnosc leadership which he tried to placate with the promises secretly captured on tape the Stalinists' at the meeting:

"Confrontation is inevitable, and will take place. I wanted to arrive at it by a natural way, when all sections of society were with us. But I have been mistaken in my calculations because I thought that we would be able to wait until the Sejm and councils would collapse by themselves. It has been proved that we can have no success with this tactic."

However, Jaruzelski knew that Solidarnosc was not prepared to resist a coup, that its leaders were long on words and short on preparations, and that Glemp would be continuing—until the very eve of the coup—to keep alive the hope of arbitration in the negotiations between the two sides.

The army and security forces had been consciously groomed for a *coup d'état*. The dramatic break up of the party's cohesion made it imperative that the bureaucracy prepare to defend itself through the hated armed squads (WOW, ZOMO), who also had everything to lose from a triumphant workers' political revolution.



Walesa

Not only were these forces politically reliable, but the army could appear as an arbiter, as a patriotic force, and an agent of national salvation. The beleaguered Stalinists prepared to raise a new military dictator to power.

The intended Bonaparte—Jaruzelski—replaced Kania as party chief in October. In the same month "operational" troop units were sent into the Polish countryside, supposedly to deal with local problems and food bottle-necks. They were withdrawn at the end of November in order to report to the Council of Ministers! The army had been practising. ZOMO had rehearsed the "Eighteenth Brumaire" of General Jaruzelski.

The coup was carried though with bloody precision. Crack troops were sent to strategic Solidarnosc strongholds—the Lenin shipyards, Nowa Huta, the Ursus works; Katowice and key Silesian mines. Most Solidar-

nosc leaders and noted activists were immediately interned. While thousands of PUWI members threw in their party cards the Stalinists prepared for a ruthless purge of the party. Even members of the Politburo were reportedly arrested.

The workers met the coup with heroic resistance even though their leaders had been rounded up. But the resistance was not sufficient to counter the tactics of Jaruzelski. The Stalinists hoped to use only reliable special units to attack the workers. They wanted to use the 350,000 strong army, half of which comprised of the conscripted sons of workers and peasants, only as back up and for patrol and supervisory duties. Only a struggle by the workers to win over the conscripts and their arms could have smashed Jaruzelski's coup.

The Catholic hierarchy openly counseled passivity in the face of the coup. While refusing to go so far as to condone the crack-down, they offered to calm the population in exchange for the release of detainees. And the Solidarnosc leaders counseled tactics that prevented the workers making an open bid to win over sections of Jaruzelski's army reserve.

How the coup could have been stopped

The bloody repression of Poznam in 1956 and the Baltic coast in 1976 has understandably strengthened a tendency amongst Polish workers to keep off the streets and to use the occupation and "go-slow" in the factory as the most effective means of resistance and defence against Stalinism's bloody militias. Yet, as a tactic this isolates the more militant workers behind their factory gates, they are at the mercy of the crack troops. Meanwhile the mass of the workers are consigned to passive resistance.

Only by pulling the vast majority of the working class onto the streets in demonstrations—defended by a workers' militia—can the workers ever prove to the conscript army that there is an alternative superior armed force with which to throw in their lot.

Only mass organised defiance can break the morale of the army, and therefore save the lives of the militants who otherwise are left alone to face the specialised paratroops and commandos; the latter can choose their moment to force their way into factories, docks and mines. That is why we say that at the time of the coup, and after, the workers' leaders should have fought for:

- An indefinite general strike of the entire working class to break the will of the military government. To conduct that strike, delegate committees of workers and peasants should have been formed under the leadership of a democratic national workers' council. This was the road of struggle along which the heroic Hungarian workers started in 1956.
- In the face of the Stalinist thug squads the workers must defend themselves and their organisations. They must build their own armed squads to protect their strikes and demonstrations, and seek to win over the conscript ranks of the army together with their arms. For workers' defence! For a workers' militia! Only an armed insurrection carried out by the militia of the workers' and poor peasants' councils and led by a revolutionary communist party, and an

insurrection which wins to its side the conscript ranks of the army, can destroy the central Stalinist bureaucracy and ensure the political rule of the Polish workers in alliance with the poor peasantry.

The question of power

We oppose the slogan of "Solidarnosc to power" as it was raised—for example by the IKL (International Communist League) in Austria and the Fourth International Tendency—at the time of Jaruzelski's coup. In the first place Solidarnosc was not organised as a soviet at local or national level.

Our task was to struggle for the formation of soviets, a workers' militia and a government responsible to them. As such the demand is not analogous to the slogan "All power to the soviets".

The programme of the Solidarnosc leadership was a one which, if implemented, would have strengthened the forces of capitalist restoration in Poland. We do not advocate that restorationists take political power from the Stalinists or that the working class should struggle to make this possible.

The introduction of the programme of Walesa, Kuron etc, would not represent a gain for the proletariat but would mean the implementation of measures directly counterposed to the programme of political revolution and the transition to socialism.

A programme of political revolution

- For workers' control of production! All decisions on the length of the working day, on the pace of work and on what is to be produced should be taken by factory committees and the workers' councils.
- Revise the plan from top to bottom in the hands of the national workers' council! Take the planned economy under the direct control of the workers themselves! State property in Poland must be defended as the means by which the workers can consciously organise production to meet their needs and those of the poor peasants, and not as at present organised to bolster the privileges of the bureaucrats or meet the rapacious demands of the western banks.
- Distribution and allocation of goods should be taken into the hands of the workers' and poor peasant co-operatives. In order to overcome the anachronistic system of small peasant farming, a triumphant political revolution of workers in alliance with poor farmers would commit itself to a programme of:
 - Taxation of the rich peasants.
 - Production of tractors, fertilisers and agricultural machinery to be done in democratic co-operation and consultation with representatives of poor peasant committees.
 - Cancellation of the poor peasants' debts.
 - Cheap credit, improved education and other social services—e.g. adequate guaranteed retirement pensions at 55 and free public water supply to provide the material base for, and win the mass of the poorer peasants to, co-operative farming as part of a planned economy.

Such a programme will mean a struggle to mobilise Poland's poor farmers in ever larger groupings of private plots, in voluntary co-operative sharing of land and of increased supplies of machinery, fertilisers, seeds, credit and transport within the guidelines of a central plan.

The programme of revolutionary communism (Trotskyism) opposes the forced collectivisation of the poor peasantry of Poland. We stand for the persuasion of the poor peasants of Poland by the workers in a regenerated Polish workers' state and by the revolutionary working class internationally, that private farming is historically obsolete. This means patiently winning the poor peasants to collectivisation through the transitional step of co-operative farming as part of a planned economy.

- Alongside the revision of the planning mechanism at the hands of the workers, all credit and trade relations with foreign states—in the west and in Comecon—must be open to workers' inspection.
- Renounce the debts to the western banks. End the economic exploitation of the Polish workers by imperialism. Only by renouncing the debts that have been piled up by the bureaucrats can the Polish workers free themselves and the poor peasants from the domination of the banks and finance houses of Western Europe and the USA.
- For the complete separation of church and state! The Stalinists have increasingly conceded control of family life, women's rights, and all education to the Catholic church. But that power will be used to strengthen the reactionary mission of the Catholic hierarchy to destroy the workers' struggles for their own emancipation, to further enslave women and bolster and extend capitalism on a world scale.
- Mobilise Poland's working class and poor peasant women for political revolution against Jaruzelski's dictatorship! Women have been amongst the worst victims of the degeneration of the workers' state in Russia, presided over by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

When workers' states, modelled on Russia, were imposed by force in the counter-revolutionary expansion of Stalinist rule into Europe after the war the counter-revolution that Stalinist rule represented for women's emancipation was exported there too. This was compounded in Poland by the massive popular power of the Catholic church.

To channel the anger of Poland's working class and poor peasant women into political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy, a fight must be waged in the councils of workers and peasants for:

- The full right to work for all women.
- Equal pay and access to jobs, training and education.
- Free, legal contraception and abortion on demand.
- Free and legal divorce at the request of one partner.
- For an immediate national crash programme of nursery building so as to make nursery provision available to working class and small-farm women at times that suit them, and for workers and peasants control of already existing nursery facilities.
- Fully paid maternity and paternity leave.
- For the fullest possible involvement and representation of women in the unions and councils of workers and poor farmers.

Defence of planned property relations

- Take Poland out of the Warsaw Pact! The armed might of the Kremlin has regularly reminded the Polish masses of the armed might they have at their disposal to intimidate and, if needs be, directly smash the workers of Poland.

The Warsaw Pact is the direct agent of the counter-revolutionary policies of the Kremlin bureaucracy. Its command structure embraces and co-ordinates all the national Stalinist armies in Eastern Europe. For that reason the USSR was actively involved in the preparations for the coup and plays its part in the administration of the crack-down.

Polish workers should refuse to subordinate their armed forces to the Kremlin oligarchy. But they will neither realise their emancipation nor defend themselves under the banner of clericalism and Polish nationalism.

The abolition of capitalism in the USSR, as in Poland, represents an historic gain without which the working class could not hope to plan production in its own hands and for its own purpose. That gain is at present in the hands of a bureaucracy but it nonetheless remains a gain that workers everywhere must defend against the drive of imperialism to destroy it.

An independent workers' council Poland should therefore guarantee that it will defend the USSR and the other workers' states unconditionally, against capitalist attack and restoration. In this way the Polish workers can hope to win real support amongst Soviet workers and soldiers and thus serve to initiate a struggle for political revolution throughout the states ruled by Stalinism.

In 1956 Soviet troops wavered in the face of the stark contrast between the lies of their bureaucratic oppressors and the aspirations of fraternising Hungarian workers. The only road to stopping the armies of Brezhnev, Husak and Honecker is to confront them with a programme of genuine proletarian internationalism, to win their troops to international political revolution. However, in the face of intransigent military oppression from Warsaw Pact forces, the Polish workers have every right to take all necessary steps to defend themselves. In these conditions underground and illegal work is a necessary method.

No deal with the bureaucracy!

Since Jaruzelski's *coup d'état* serious differences of tactics have emerged amongst leading members of Solidarnosc. Bujak, for example, has developed a tactical line of low profile protest in the hope of encouraging the Stalinists to gradually relax repression against Solidarnosc activists and permit limited forms of independent organisation. He has openly countenanced a deal with the bureaucracy which guarantees restraint and an abstention from political action on the part of Solidarnosc.

All such tactics ignore a crucial fact of political life in bureaucratically degenerate workers' states. The bureaucracies will only tolerate the self-organisation of the working class to the extent that they are incapable of mobilising the apparatus of oppression to crush the

independently organised working class. Even if the right of self-organisation is officially recognised it will remain in existence only until the point at which the proletariat seizes political power or the bureaucracy is able to destroy the independent organisations of the working class.

This means that the working class cannot win rights from the bureaucracy by exemplary self-restraint, nor can it hope to preserve the right to self-organisation through a non-aggression pact with the bureaucracy.

Such a strategy will necessarily serve to demoralise the working class and serve to strengthen the tendency towards terrorism and adventurism on the part of frustrated working class youth.

Kuron, on the other hand, has openly declared: "We have to acknowledge that violence only retreats in front of violence". (*Trybunnik Mazowze* No 13, 12.5.82) and has called for agitation amongst the soldiers and police. Revolutionary Marxists recognise that the Polish workers must organise for an uprising and must seek to break the morale and loyalty of the troops and police.

Against Kuron, we argue that the purpose of the uprising of the Polish workers must be to take political power into the hands of workers' councils backed by a workers' militia, not a government of national compromise and agreement that will inaugurate a programme for the restoration of capitalism and the subordination of Poland to the EEC.

Neither is our call to organise for a proletarian political revolution dependent on the refusal of the bureaucracy to open negotiations with Solidarnosc. Whether or not Jaruzelski opens negotiations the task of the Polish workers remains the political revolution to secure their political emancipation.

It is a matter of life and death for the Polish workers that a party is formed to fight for this programme, a revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) party. Of necessity it would struggle to build the nuclei of fraternal parties in the other degenerate workers' states as a part of a rebuilt revolutionary communist international in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky.

The question of the peasantry

Rural Solidarnosc mobilised both the oppressed poor peasants and the richer rural farmers against the regime.

In many areas it was the richer farmers and the local priests who gave leadership to the movement. To that extent it was a movement that aimed at bolstering and extending private property rights in the countryside, breaking up state farms and strengthening the role of the church in social and political life.

Within the mobilisations of the peasants in Poland revolutionary Marxists would fight for the formation of poor peasant committees with a national delegate council and representatives in the central and regional workers' councils.

We fight for unions of rural proletarians linked to the unions of workers. We therefore fight to drive the rich farmers out of rural Solidarnosc and constitute it on the basis of poor peasant committees, as a movement pledged to fight alongside the working class for co-

operative organisation of agricultural production in the hands of poor peasant committees.

The errors of the centrists

The international organisations claiming to represent continuity with Trotsky's Fourth International have yet again demonstrated their bankruptcy when it comes to presenting a strategy for political revolution.

The two largest claimants to Trotsky's mantle, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) and the Fourth International (International Committee)—FI(IC)—offer the spectacle of opportunist groveling before the existing leadership and consciousness of the Polish workers.

On the other hand, the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) demonstrate the truth of Trotsky's dictum on sectarianism—opportunism in fear of itself. In this case, their fear of the "impurities" of Polish workers' consciousness drives the iSt into support for Jaruzelski and the Stalinist bureaucracy.

In various declarations the USFI failed to raise the question of revolution against the bureaucracy. It has refrained from emphasising the necessity of a revolutionary leadership, except as an organisational grouping which builds itself, together with existing tendencies, around "minimal demands".

The USFI oriented to the workers' councils, which were built in the struggle around workers' control, with the dead-end schemes of "self-management and an alternative plan" from Solidarnosc. Trotsky's programme of soviets is robbed by the USFI of its revolutionary content in that they open up the perspective of a reformist strategy of power sharing by demanding the "free election of a second chamber of the Sejm by all the self-management bodies".

This naïve utopian scheme is justified in terms of the need to create dual power bodies. The Stalinists' first chamber would then "see its area of responsibility correspondingly reduced". Instead of challenging the programme of the Solidarnosc leadership, and seeking to transform the first attempt at council organisation into real soviets that can seize political power, the USFI enabled the Solidarnosc leadership to integrate the council organisations into the bureaucratic state apparatus. Decentralisation and market mechanisms are thus seen as a more realistic variety of ideas among reformists than the centralisation of self-management organs and the free election of a second chamber.

This lifeless schema, a farcical parody of February 1917 in Russia, presents soviets more as organs of dual power than as organs of struggle or of insurrection and distorts the real essence of actual soviets—the power of the working class.

The idea of "free elections" to the Sejm is rejected by the USFI not because of the parliamentary bourgeois democratic illusions it would foster, nor because such a parliament could be the summit of the forces of restoration, but because "this demand could lead to a confrontation with the bureaucracy on a terrain that is less favourable to the masses than that of self-management". The evolutionary logic of the USFI's position is more brazenly expressed by the SWP(US)'s David

Frankel (*Intercontinental Press* 20.4.81).

In quoting Joseph Hansen's definition of the political revolution as: "the total series of reforms gained through militant struggle culminating in the transfer of power to the workers", Frankel suggests that this transference itself can only be discovered after the event:

"It is only when the process is viewed as a whole, in its origin, its fundamental gains and final results, that it appears for what it really is, a revolution, an organic qualitative change in whatever structure is involved."

Since the qualitative leap (i.e. the point at which revolution has occurred) cannot be pinpointed in advance, it cannot for the USFI, be programmatically prepared and argued for. Such a position, worthy of a Kautsky or an Otto Bauer, indicates the organic centrism of the USFI's leaders. It explains, but does not excuse, their failure to offer a programme for revolution.

In contrast the IC(FI) seizes on the demand of Solidarnosc radicals for "free elections" and "plurality of parties", and develops this in a bourgeois democratic direction. Are these elections to be "free" to bourgeois, White Guards, restorationist forces? Is the plurality of parties to include parties openly organising for counter-revolution?

For the IC(FI), "democracy" is given no class content. The class rule of the proletariat, its dictatorship, is quietly shuffled to one side. The IC(FI) may write abstractions on paper, but political life will fill their empty democratic phrases with a real bourgeois content. If the USFI has its "second chamber" of the Sejm then the IC(FI) can go one better—a Constituent Assembly.

The IC(FI) identifies the slogan for "free elections", which in Poland expresses the bourgeois democratic illusions of the working class, with elections to a constituent assembly. Communists could relate to the illusions in "free elections" in a tactical manner. Where, for example, forms of soviets existed, but where the workers nonetheless believed that it was possible to solve the question of power (of the bureaucracy) on that level (e.g. Hungary in 1956).

In arguing against the illusions in "free elections" and showing the danger of a developing counter-revolution, communists would demand armed soviet control of the elections and oppose every disintegration of proletarian organisation or their disarmament. They focus thereby on the takeover of power through the soviets and on the basis of a soviet constitution. But a constituent assembly, which is the demand of the IC(FI), does not answer the question which class rules, paves the way for counter-revolution and deceives the working class.

What is a constituent assembly? It is a body elected by universal suffrage which shall decide the constitutional basis of the state. The call for one can be a revolutionary (bourgeois) democratic demand. Revolutionary communism makes use of this in capitalist countries where bourgeois democratic tasks (land question, national unity and independence, democratic rights) clash with

the conditions of bourgeois, pre-bourgeois or imperialist rule.

In such conditions revolutionary communists would pose a revolutionary answer to each of these issues, culminating in the transference of power to the proletariat. In a degenerate workers' state, the organ to which political power must be passed is an organ of proletariat democracy.

The iSt, in terror of contamination by devout Catholic workers, have rushed headlong into the embrace of the Polish Stalinists. They accept, without question, Jaruzelski's claim that Solidarnosc was organising a counter-revolutionary rising. They warn the Polish workers against any resistance to martial law.

These miserable pedants, who can only imagine winning the working class to Trotskyism in the propagandists' school room (i.e. in the absence of struggle), call for a return to Gierek's regime of the 1970s:

"If the present crack-down restores something like the tenuous social equilibrium which existed in Poland before the Gdansk strikes last August [1980]—a tacit understanding that if the people left the government alone, the government would leave the people alone—conditions will be opened again for the crystallisation of a Leninist-Trotskyist party." (*Workers Vanguard* 18.12.81)

They have blood on their hands. Safe at a distance from responsibility they content themselves with the call for the stamping out of political revolution, in order to allow for the "peace and quiet" (of a Stalinist dictatorship!) to allow them to build a "Leninist-Trotskyist" party. Thus the self-proclaimed inheritors of Trotsky's banner drag it in the mud of syndicalism, reformism and Stalinism.

Against all these defamations of Trotsky, we fight around the slogans:

- **Down with Jaruzelski's Bonapartist regime!**
- **Power to workers' councils in Poland!**
- **Defend the statification of the means of production, the monopoly of foreign trade and the centralised plan!**
- **Revise and democratise the plan from top to bottom in the interests of proletariat and the peasantry!**
- **No block with the priesthood, the mortal enemies of democracy and socialism!**
- **Defend the secular basis of the workers' state, and the rights of women against clerical obscurantism!**
- **For a revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) party of the Polish workers!**
- **For international solidarity with the Polish workers' organisations and the worker and poor peasant victims of Jaruzelski's repression!**
- **Boycott all imports from Poland whilst the repression continues!**
- **No unity with the imperialist or White Guard false friends of Polish workers! Defend the USSR!**

South Africa: No to a negotiated settlement! Fight ANC betrayal!

The release of Nelson Mandela has focused the attention of the world upon South Africa in a way not seen since the revolutionary situation of 1984-86. But this time we are not faced with workers' strikes or uprisings in the townships. Rather, we have the spectacle of the ANC preparing to sell a "negotiated settlement" to the black masses. This is nothing short of a betrayal of the South African workers and should be branded as such. The current stage of the struggle in South Africa is dominated by the ANC's perspective that apartheid can be abolished peacefully through negotiations with the white supremacist South African government. This policy holds grave dangers for the black masses of South Africa.

The roots of the negotiated settlement

The massive working class struggles of 1984-86 opened up the prospect, not only of the revolutionary destruction of apartheid, but also of the overthrow of South African imperialism. They offered the possibility of releasing the whole of Southern Africa from the domination of South African and western imperialism.

Today, the ANC and the SACP are willing tools to a settlement engineered by US and British imperialism. All these forces intend to oversee a settlement which guarantees the maintenance of a capitalist South Africa and of the profits extracted from the exploited black masses, and leaves power firmly in the hands of the white capitalist parties for the foreseeable future. At the same time they recognise that more significant reforms have to be granted in order to avoid the danger of revolutionary change. The imperialists are aided and abetted in this project by their "junior partner", the Moscow bureaucracy. Stalinism's counter-revolutionary role in the world arena is being demonstrated once again—this time under the guise of diplomatic *glasnost*.

Until the release of Mandela and the opening up of the negotiation process, the ANC was clearly a petit bourgeois nationalist organisation. The latest events indicate that it is now setting out to transform itself into a bourgeois political force. It is offering its services to the white imperialist bourgeoisie, the black and coloured middle bourgeoisie and the bourgeois Bonapartist frontline states with their Anglo-American masters.

If the ANC agrees to a slow and peaceful dismantling

of grand apartheid and the whites' exclusive hold on political power then it will clearly have become a bourgeois formation. This process will involve the dispersal of its exiled cadres, many of whom are subjective petit bourgeois revolutionists, into broad mass organisations (township, youth, women and trade union). The result will be the interposition of a party and union bureaucracy between the masses and the leaders. This will free the leaders to ditch their past anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist promises and direct the whole mass movement into a strategic compromise—a multi racial imperialist capitalism based on the super-exploitation of the black and coloured masses, and perhaps even a small section of poor whites.

The economic crisis of the apartheid regime

On the basis of the destruction of township resistance and the successful imposition of the State of Emergency in June 1986, the semi-Bonapartist Botha regime was able to inflict a partial but significant defeat on the South African masses and bring to an end the revolutionary situation which threatened the destruction of the apartheid regime. The failure of the Botha regime to definitively crush the revolt, coupled with the continued combativity of the masses, has meant that the South African economy has failed to recover from the crisis of 1984-86.

Since 1986 capital flight has reached R60 billion or almost 20% of the country's fixed capital. Growth rates (estimated at 1.5% in 1989) remain below those of the other imperialist powers and are historically extremely low for South Africa. Military spending has taken ever larger proportions of the national budget (from 21% of GDP in 1979 to 27% today), while inflation reached 16% in 1989 and shows little sign of falling.

Any rise in the price of gold may provide some temporary relief for the South African economy by boosting state revenues and the profits of the mining corporations. But in the medium or long term this has not offset the effects of political instability and consequent loss of investment confidence.

In addition to these growing economic problems, Botha's plans for minor cosmetic reforms to apartheid have been decisively rejected by the masses. The tri-cameral parliament, which sought to draw in collaborators from the Indian and coloured communities has

been reduced to a farce by the massive electoral boycott.

More importantly, the attempts to develop a significant layer of collaborationist black African middle class leaders through local structures has also met with defeat. The workers, youth and homelander-dwellers remain wedded to the aim of thoroughgoing democratic change: one person, one vote and black majority rule. More recently, the revival of workers' confidence, as shown by the protracted national railway and brewery strikes, has indicated that the masses were beginning to overcome the legacies of the defeat suffered in 1986.

It is these internal factors together with the external pressure from the major imperialist powers, that have led to a major shift in the white ruling class towards making a settlement with the ANC.

This change of policy was first apparent in relation to Namibia. The growing cost of the war, especially in Angola, and the defeat suffered by the South African armed forces at Cuito Cuanavale in the spring of 1988, convinced the Botha regime of the need to accept the imperialist peace brokered by Washington and Moscow and imposed on SWAPO. SWAPO's collaboration in this peace process, combined with the fact that South Africa was allowed a large measure of control in the transition, reconciled Pretoria to Namibian independence. South Africa will now rule Namibia as a semi-colony rather than by direct occupation. For the major imperialist powers and the reformers in the South African ruling class, Namibia was also a "dry run" for a similar compromise within South Africa.

Although Botha's Bonapartist rule was capable of securing a settlement in Namibia, it was too inflexible an instrument of white rule for the kind of bold far-reaching reform policies envisaged by the leading sections of Afrikaner monopoly capitalism. Botha would not countenance a dialogue with the ANC until it renounced violence, and certainly could not envisage a government of, or including, the ANC. A protracted struggle to oust Botha resulted in the more responsive De Klerk leadership taking office.

Following the re-election of the Nationalist Party government, the strengthening of the Democratic Party and the failure of the reactionary Conservative Party to seriously threaten Nationalist rule, De Klerk speeded up the search for a deal with the ANC. Since then the Nationalists have taken a series of steps designed to open the way for such a settlement; the release of the Rivonia Trialists including Mandela, the unbanning of the UDF, ANC and SACP.

The role of Stalinism

In its turn, the Stalinist leadership is now preparing to deliver up the mass movement to such a negotiated settlement. Their popular frontist strategy is that of a necessary democratic capitalist stage and of the postponement of the tasks of the socialist revolution. This programme, together with their use of the armed guerrilla struggle as a tactic to force a negotiated end to apartheid rather than carry out its armed over-

throw, has always contained the seeds of a betrayal of the revolutionary democratic struggle. The increased likelihood of such a betrayal arises from the impact of Gorbachev's global retreat on the policies of the SACP/ANC. The Stalinists now wish to prepare the masses for "partial victory", that is, a settlement short of thoroughgoing democracy.

The Stalinists have been establishing their hegemony in the mass movement and in particular within the working class and the trade unions. In the year following the defeat of the township rebellions, the pro-ANC forces were able to manoeuvre inside the COSATU affiliated unions, denouncing those elements of the old syndicalist and "workerist" independent black union leaders who would not fall in behind Stalinist leaders.

In this period the Stalinists insisted that unity be built around the pro-capitalist "Freedom Charter". At the same time they supported the development of "normal industrial relations" and of an incipient trade union bureaucracy. This was most graphically illustrated in the betrayal of the 1987 miners' strike, which marked a major step backwards for class struggle trade unionism and consequently for the class as a whole.

The year 1988 was marked by a supposedly less sectarian attitude. The "Freedom Charter" was no longer seen as a barrier to unity. Pro-ANC leaders no longer opposed the rank and file pressure for workers' unity in action against repression and the Labour Relations Act (LRA).

This shift in tactics had two aims. It was important for the ANC to be able to present itself, both within the republic and to the outside world, as the undisputed leadership of the mass movement. Secondly, it allowed it to introduce a new modified version of the "Freedom Charter", the "Constitutional Guidelines" which spell out the aim of building a democratic capitalist South Africa with a "mixed economy"—a position which was always present, but in a disguised form, in the original Charter. On this basis the ANC entered firm discussions with capitalist representatives from South Africa and the major imperialist powers.

Having established their hegemony within COSATU and within the revived and reconstructed youth and women's organisations, the Stalinists then moved to bring the rest of the movement under their grip. Every aspect of political and cultural life, from the youth to the sports organisations have been conquered from above by the ANC. Everywhere their purpose is the same: a propaganda war aimed at the generation of 1984-86, denouncing the radicalism of the township youth, attempting to temper their hopes and expectations, preparing them ideologically for a sell-out.

The ANC has also turned to the task of building bridges with other sections of the black and coloured population outside its domain. Already the possibility has been floated of the coloured Labour Party dissolving and coming into the fold of a revamped ANC. Many of Mandela's speeches since his release have preached co-operation between supporters of the ANC and the apartheid stooges of Inkatha. An even



South African miners

wider forum of black political representation could be created to accommodate both the ANC and Inkatha. But the precondition for this will be even further concessions by the ANC to traditional tribal leaders and private property.

The crisis of working class leadership

How has the South African workers' movement, which has the fastest growing trade union movement in the world, allowed itself to be hegemonised by those who represent hostile class interests? The explanation lies in the problem of political leadership. None of the political alternatives to Stalinism within the workers' movement put forward a programme or strategy which could prevent the growing dominance of the politics of the popular front.

The major opponents of Stalinist and class collaborationist policies had economist, left reformist or at best syndicalist politics. The weaknesses of the strategy of the old "workerist" leadership contributed to the defeat of the masses in 1986. The trade unions did not act to prevent the crushing of the township rebellion. A year later, there was little open opposition within COSATU to the NUM leadership's retreat.

By keeping the unions separate from the political questions being debated in the townships, the old "workerist" leaders of the independent trade unions left a vacuum of leadership which only the Stalinists were in a position to fill. Syndicalist politics denied the necessity for building an independent revolutionary workers' party and left the workers under the sway of the popular front. Even the most left of these leaders, such as Mayekiso, dropped the idea of constructing a workers' party, and instead pursued the need for workers' leadership within the mass demo-

cratic structures. Alone such a strategy will not build a workers' leadership to organise and fight against the betrayal of a negotiated settlement and for socialism.

The black consciousness or Africanist leaderships have been unable to provide an effective opposition to the Stalinists. The formation of the alternative trade union federation NACTU, initially under black consciousness leadership, was a blind alley for workers. It weakened the unity of the workers' movement without developing a leadership capable of resisting the popular front. It has now come under the domination of an Africanist leadership more favourable to the popular front policies of the Pan-African Congress.

The Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT) has continued to advance its strategy of building and transforming the ANC. The dangers of this strategy are ever

more apparent. It has led the MWT to defend the

"Freedom Charter" against the current revisionist "Constitutional Guidelines" of the ANC, attempt to lend the Charter a socialist gloss. The MWT continues to call for an "ANC Government of working class power" even at the time that those same ANC leaders are preparing to betray the masses. The MWT fails to argue the need for an independent revolutionary workers' party and programme.

The state of the working class

The workers' movement remains enormously strong. Despite a year of standstill or even retreat, the union movement has continued to grow. The COSATU affiliated membership is now over one million strong. A series of trade union mergers has allowed significant steps towards industrial unionism to be made. Work-



South African miners

wider forum of black political representation could be created to accommodate both the ANC and Inkatha. But the precondition for this will be even further concessions by the ANC to traditional tribal leaders and private property.

The crisis of working class leadership

How has the South African workers' movement, which has the fastest growing trade union movement in the world, allowed itself to be hegemonised by those who represent hostile class interests? The explanation lies in the problem of political leadership. None of the political alternatives to Stalinism within the workers' movement put forward a programme or strategy which could prevent the growing dominance of the politics of the popular front.

The major opponents of Stalinist and class collaborationist policies had economist, left reformist or at best syndicalist politics. The weaknesses of the strategy of the old "workerist" leadership contributed to the defeat of the masses in 1986. The trade unions did not act to prevent the crushing of the township rebellion. A year later, there was little open opposition within COSATU to the NUM leadership's retreat.

By keeping the unions separate from the political questions being debated in the townships, the old "workerist" leaders of the independent trade unions left a vacuum of leadership which only the Stalinists were in a position to fill. Syndicalist politics denied the necessity for building an independent revolutionary workers' party and left the workers under the sway of the popular front. Even the most left of these leaders, such as Mayekiso, dropped the idea of constructing a workers' party, and instead pursued the need for workers' leadership within the mass demo-

cratic structures. Alone such a strategy will not build a workers' leadership to organise and fight against the betrayal of a negotiated settlement and for socialism.

The black consciousness or Africanist leaderships have been unable to provide an effective opposition to the Stalinists. The formation of the alternative trade union federation NACTU, initially under black consciousness leadership, was a blind alley for workers. It weakened the unity of the workers' movement without developing a leadership capable of resisting the popular front. It has now come under the domination of an Africanist leadership more favourable to the popular front policies of the Pan-African Congress.

The Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT) has continued to advance its strategy of building and transforming the ANC. The dangers of this strategy are ever more apparent. It has led the MWT to defend the "Freedom Charter" against the current revised "Constitutional Guidelines" of the ANC, attempting to lend the Charter a socialist gloss. The MWT continues to call for an "ANC Government of working class power" even at the time that those same ANC leaders are preparing to betray the masses. The MWT fails to argue the need for an independent revolutionary workers' party and programme.

The state of the working class

The workers' movement remains enormously strong. Despite a year of standstill or even retreat, the union movement has continued to grow. The COSATU affiliated membership is now over one million strong. A series of trade union mergers has allowed significant steps towards industrial unionism to be made. Work-

ers continue to ignore the provisions of the LRA. Workers' Summits have brought together workers from the rival federations. Strike figures were up again in 1989 and black workers' wages have at least kept pace with inflation.

While much of the township organisation was smashed by the repression and the state of emergency provisions, local committees, including those organising the rent boycotts, did survive or re-emerge. The renewed mass activity, despite being carefully controlled during the Defiance Campaign of August-September 1989, together with the huge stayaways in June 1988 and September 1989, confirm that the black working class retains its potential as a revolutionary force for the overthrow of apartheid unless its leadership can carry out the planned betrayal.

The nature of the proposed sell-out

The outlines of the proposed settlement are gradually emerging. The unbanning of the ANC and the UDF will be followed by further measures including the relaxation of the State of Emergency. Further elements of apartheid legislation such as the Group Areas Act may also be repealed. But the Nationalists are insisting that the whites will not accept majority rule. At the moment they are offering only minority power-sharing to representatives of the black masses under the formula of "group rights". But even a Lancaster House type settlement with a predominantly ANC government could be conceded on condition that there are constitutional guarantees for white economic power and political privileges in the form of a white veto.

For decades the ANC has stood for "one person, one vote" and majority rule. Now there is talk of this being a long term aim, of "transitional arrangements" which fall far short of this demand—the so-called "partial victory". Mandela has made it clear he wishes to reassure the whites that there will be no prospect of "black domination". There is even talk of "an interim government" which would assume responsibility for apartheid while negotiations are taking place.

On economic policy, Mandela and other ANC leaders are busily creatively re-interpreting the "Freedom Charter's" commitment to nationalisation in order to comfort the monopoly capitalists. The ANC will settle for a minimum extension of nationalisation, or even merely opposition to privatisation of the existing nationalised industries (e.g. the railways), coupled with lip-service to the extension of fake "democratic accountability" within these sectors.

There remain certain obstacles to a sell-out. The SACP/ANC will have to use its hegemony over the mass movement to pressure the regime to make more concessions while making sure that the movement does not escape their control and endanger negotiations. The Nationalists have to deliver a settlement which is acceptable to the majority in their own ranks and to the armed forces and the police. They face potential opposition from the white workers and petit bourgeois, who will turn to reaction as their own

privileges and living standards are threatened.

The tempo of events is fast and all sides involved in the sell-out need to ensure a speedy process to prevent a crisis of expectations developing within the masses. While the South African ruling class aims to maintain its class rule through the medium of a negotiated settlement, it will not hesitate to use its armed might and renewed repression if necessary. Such a turn could occur if any serious challenge is made to the state or its capitalist paymasters.

Down with the sell-out! For working class power!

The urgent need of the moment is to organise against the negotiations. The negotiations are not intended to lead to a step by step transference of political power to the black majority, still less to end their economic super-exploitation. As De Klerk has insisted "I do not intend to negotiate myself out of power". On the contrary, negotiations are intended to prevent the victory of the black masses. De Klerk has laid a trap for the black workers into which they are being led by Mandela and the ANC.

The ANC leaders must be called to account. There must be no secret talks or deals. The organisations of the MDM and other workers' structures, must demand the leaders answer to the mass movement. Umkhonto We Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, must provide arms and help prepare workers' defence at work and in the townships. MDM leaders must support and build solidarity with all workers' struggles. They must not be allowed to restrict workers' action in the interests of the negotiated settlement.

The only guaranteed weapon against the sell-out being prepared by the ANC leadership is revolutionary mass action by the workers and the rural poor. Against the strategy of a negotiated settlement the black workers must demand the convocation of a sovereign constituent assembly to establish the opinions of the population. The convocation of such an assembly will have to be carried out by the workers' factory and township committees, by action councils uniting all the exploited and oppressed in a collective fist of mass revolutionary power. Only by this route will a constituent assembly stand a chance of being both democratic and sovereign.

- Down with a negotiated settlement. Down with the federal and power sharing solutions. For universal direct and equal suffrage. For the convening of a sovereign constituent assembly elected by all over 16 years irrespective of race or creed, where a simple majority will decide a new constitution.
- Smash the institutions of apartheid. Continue and spread the defiance campaign. Build workers' organisations to conduct the defiance campaign; for a workers' militia to defend the communities. Maintain the rent boycott. For a massive programme of public works and a programme of improvements under workers' and community control.
- Defend the workers' standards of living. For a renewal of the Living Wage Campaign and for the

sliding scale of wages. For factory occupations against retrenchments. Cut the hours not the jobs. For a general strike to smash the Labour Relations Act.

- Down with the State of Emergency and all anti-democratic measures. For the immediate release of all political prisoners and detainees. Down with conscription; organise the white youth to refuse to fight for the imperialists.
- For the occupation of the big estates. Down with the homeland system. Demand that the homeland leaders renounce their "independence"
- The workers and peasants must create their own organs of democracy, struggle and power. No to the popular front alliances. For the workers' united front against apartheid. Build and extend the shop stewards' locals within and between unions. For

the renewal of the township committees and for firm links with the factory committees—for the building of workers' councils to organise the defence of the communities, the seizure of the factories, the creation of a workers' militia and the expropriation of the capitalists.

- For a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government which will expropriate the banks, monopolies and land, break the power of the bourgeoisie, spreading the South African revolution by supporting the toiling masses in the whole of Southern Africa in throwing off the yoke of imperialism. Forward to the Socialist Federation of Southern Africa.
- Build the revolutionary workers' party to challenge the traitorous leaders and lead the struggle for working class power.

Free Latin American class war prisoners!

Victor Taipe

Victor Taipe Zuniga, President of the Miners, Engineers and Steelworkers' Union Federation of Peru, was arrested on 20 November 1989. Four months later he is still imprisoned under the state of emergency. Victor led 70,000 miners out on strike on 14 August. This was the miners' third national strike in 18 months. Over the last twelve months miners' wages have fallen by 40%. Faced with brutal repression and militarisation of the pits and villages, the miners called off the strike after 16 days.

Every militant should be concerned for the legal rights, health and life of Victor. He has been tortured

and been heavily beaten by his police guards. Leaders of the miners' union have been repeatedly subjected to beatings at the hands of the police. Over a dozen have been murdered by army-linked death squads, including Saul Cantoral Huamani, the General Secretary of the Miners' Federation.

Large numbers of union activists are "disappeared" by the state every year. Recently Javier Alarcón, leader of the Peruvian Teachers' Union and a leader of the ANP disappeared. No one knows where he is. In this context, world-wide action to free Victor Taipe and discover the fate of Javier Alarcón is urgent.

Get your trade union or political organisation to send letters to the Peruvian government protesting against Victor's imprisonment.

Send your letter to:
Presidente Alan Garcia
Palacio de Gobierno
Plaza de Armas
Lima, PERU.

Send copies of your letters and financial donations to:
Federacion Nacional de Trabajadores Mineros,
Jr. Apumirac 463
Lima, PERU

Eleuterio Gutierrez

Eleuterio Gutierrez, Bolivian miner and Trotskyist candidate in the 1985 Bolivian elections, is still languishing in jail. Framed by the Bolivian state for allegedly stealing mining equipment, Eleuterio's real crime has been to be a fearless fighter for workers' rights in Bolivia. Sentenced to seven years prison

in 1986, he can still be helped by international solidarity, which can put pressure on the Bolivian government to review his case and help build his morale and that of his family and comrades. Send letters urging action and indicating support to:

Corte Suprema de la Nacion
Sucre
Bolivia

Trade Union Federation of Bolivian Mineworkers
4th floor
Ayacucho 288
La Paz, Bolivia

Send copies of all letters to:
Free Eleuterio Gutierrez Campaign, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX, England

Soviet workers speak out

Interview with a Sotsprof militant

1989 was a remarkable year in the degenerate workers' states. Most spectacular, of course, was the overthrow of all the major regimes in Eastern Europe. Only the USSR seemed relatively immune. However, after over sixty years of political repression the Soviet working class reawakened as a force of political opposition. Here was a mighty historical portent.

Under Brezhnev, Andropov and during the first years of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, conscious and visible political opposition was primarily the preserve of the intelligentsia. In its turn the intelligentsia generally paid scant heed to the interests of the working class. All too often the workers were dismissed as a force for political change. The 1989 miners' strike changed all that.

Since the strike independent workers' organisations have been formed throughout the USSR. There is mounting evidence that elements of the "democratic opposition" are beginning to recognise the workers as a positive force. The working class is also being increasingly recognised as a threat by the regime. Gorbachev himself has attempted to introduce laws enabling him to outlaw strikes.

The reawakening of the Soviet working class has taken several forms. Permanent unofficial workers' organisations have been created in the Soviet coalfields, centred on the miners' strike committees and drawing in workers from other industries in the region. In the Donbass these committees stood their own candidates in the March 1990 elections. In the Siberian Kuzbass a Union of Workers of Kuzbass was formed in November 1989 at a meeting attended by delegations from the Karaganda, Inta, Donbass and Vorkuta coalfields. In Vorkuta a democratic workers' movement has been formed.

The new unofficial workers' organisations have not simply concentrated on economic demands. They have posed the question of the working class leading the struggle against bureaucratic repression.

As the Vorkuta strike committee put it in November 1989:

"Comrades! The workers of the polar circle from Vorkuta call on you to support our demands. Vorkuta, where tens of thousands of political prisoners were killed by cold and hunger under the Stalinist system, has given birth to a workers' movement which fights for the destruction of the bureaucratic system. The death of so many thousands of innocent victims will not have been in vain."

Elsewhere the independent workers' movement has taken on different forms. In the minority republics the workers have raised their voice through independent national trade unions (e.g. Lithuania, Byelorussia). In Leningrad a small circulation newspaper,

Workers' Messenger, has been published. One writer for this paper, V Lapevtinev, argues: "Only when the means of production are under direct workers' control can there be real workers' ownership in Russia". In countless other Soviet towns and cities workers' committees have been formed.

Soviet workers have invaded the exclusive circles of the democratic intelligentsia. The Vorkuta strike of October 1989 saw the creation of solidarity committees and collections and direct links were established between miners and independent union activists elsewhere. In November meetings and pickets in support of the Vorkuta strikers were organised in Moscow, Kharkov and outside factories and metro stations in Leningrad.

We are pleased to publish here an interview given in London with Oleg Voronin, a representative of the independent trades union Sotsprof—Ob'edinenie Sotsialisticheskikh Prof-soyuzov SSSR. This organisation aims to organise the whole Soviet working class, on the basis of the defence of planned property relations and against capitalist restoration.

Sotsprof is one of the many independent workers' organisations that have emerged in the last period. We do not agree with all of Sotsprof's programme, but we feel that their voice must be heard in the West. The debates taking place between the different tendencies within the new Soviet independent workers' movement are of crucial importance not only for the Soviet proletariat, but also for the world working class. The crisis of leadership facing the workers of the USSR and their ability to resolve it will play a crucial role in the years to come. It is up to revolutionaries to help them in this task, through fraternal debate and criticism, as well as by material and moral solidarity.

Q: Can you tell us about the origins of Sotsprof?

A: Sotsprof came into existence because there are no real trade unions in the USSR. The official trade unions are simply part of the state structure and cannot defend the workers' interests. And because workers' resistance continues, independent trade unions are necessary to defend their interests.

18 months ago three activists from the democratic movement—an academic, Sergei Khramov, an engineer, Lev Volovik, and a worker in a footwear factory Valeri Korolov—came together to form a coordinating committee for an independent federation of socialist trade unions, "Sotsprof" for short. They managed to get their own bank account and official stamp.

Under the Constitution, in order to establish a trades union organisation you simply have to register

with a higher trade union organisation. Having announced itself as a trade union organisation, the co-ordinating committee was then able to legalise other unofficial or independent trade unions around the country. For the first three or four months of its existence this was all it did. With the official co-ordinating committee stamp, independent unions were able to get their own bank accounts and their own official legal stamps. There are now about 60 organisations within Sotsprof with about 60,000 members. Sotsprof really took off last summer during the miners' strikes. Our members played an active role and helped the miners to formulate their demands in all the major regions and after the strikes Sotsprof organisations sprang up in all the major coalfields which had been involved.

Q: Why was it impossible to reform the official bureaucratic structures?

A: We tried to do something inside the official unions before Sotsprof was set up but found that if the workers simply chose new leaders they rapidly became corrupted, went over to the side of the official leadership or found themselves hemmed in by the apparatus. The leaders of the official unions are not trade union activists. They are Party workers who are not interested in working for the membership. In practice it is impossible to reform the leadership of the official unions.

Q: Are there any divisions in the official unions? Are there any sections who are allies of Sotsprof?

A: Amongst the rank and file, yes, but amongst the leaders, practically no one.

Q: Do you think there is a danger that you will become isolated from the members of the official trade unions?

A: No, all Sotsprof members were or are members of the official trade unions. The official unions' dues are deducted automatically from our wage packet; mine still are. I don't consider myself a member of the official union—I don't even know where my card is!

Q: Are Sotsprof members victimised by the official unions?

A: Not directly, but we suffer a black out of information. There is a total silence about us, nothing is written about us in the newspapers. Where our demands get through to the workers they are extremely popular. When workers ask about us, the union leaders say we are just a bunch of intellectuals with no connections in the workers' movement. Today however I got hold of a copy of *Workers' Tribune*, the paper of the official union, which has a big article on us. Everything that is written is a lie—they say that our leaders are working to destroy the economy and create chaos. We will have to take out a court action against the newspaper.

Q: Do the workers' committees have any powers over management? Have they won any elements of workers' control?

A: During the strike the workers' committees of the

Donbass, the Kuzbass and Vorkuta were in effect the only power in the coalfield towns. They organised the distribution of goods, they set up workers' militias under their own control to keep order, they closed down shops selling alcohol, they established patrols on the main routes into the town. If they found speculators bringing in alcohol they stopped them and smashed all the bottles there and then. In the Donbass and Prokopyevsk there are workers' committees everywhere.

There is a big struggle taking place between these committees and the local state apparatus. For example in Karaganda the workers' committee supported the Committee for a New Socialist Party¹ but its members had to hide their identity from fear of repression. In the mines the managers have been able to maintain some of their control through their policy of leasing the mines.

We don't believe that this is the best route for us: the ministry still takes a large chunk of the mine's profits. They do nothing to assist the mine but still demand a lot of money. The Vorkuta miners' committee is fighting for changes in conditions in the mines. For example in the Halmeriu pit miners have to work in almost vertical shafts, hanging on to a ladder with one hand and digging coal with the other. In such conditions it is inevitable that new strikes will break out. Where conditions are particularly bad, the committees are demanding that the shafts be closed down.

Q: Can you tell us about the different organisations in Sotsprof and in particular about Shield—an organisation of army officers.

A: Railway refrigeration workers have joined Sotsprof. We've been able to win retirement at 50 years of age, higher wages and a number of measures related to safety at work. At Moscow University we have a branch of Sotsprof which managed to get some students reinstated who were dismissed for political activity.

As for Shield, middle ranking army officers live in very bad conditions. The armed forces are highly stratified. Even a pilot receives only 300 roubles a month². Rent can take one-third of their wages and the food is very bad. There are no nurseries and their wives can't get work. And pilots are a relatively well paid privileged stratum of the armed forces! Meanwhile the Moscow generals live on enormous wages, with big flats, special shops etc and do nothing to defend the country.

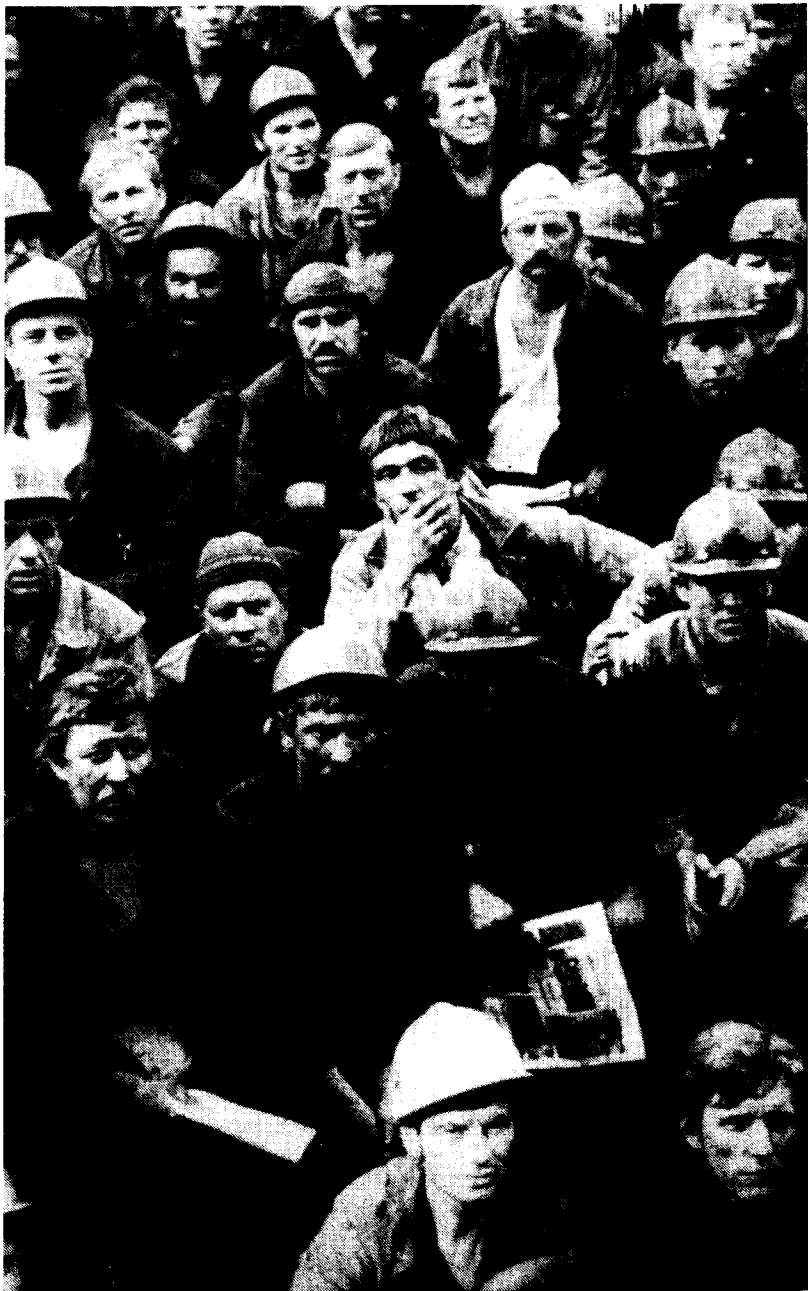
Discipline has fallen sharply in the army. It is supposed to be a threat to the west but it's not true. It has a very low state of readiness. Shield calls for a 50% cut in the size of the army and the withdrawal of troops from Eastern Europe, Mongolia etc. They also want an 80% cut in the high command. Because of this Shield members inevitably suffer repression from their commanders and so their members are anonymous. We don't know how many members they have.

Q: How does Sotsprof organise on the ground to achieve its demands?

A: All the independent unions are still very small.

1 A national network of groups committed to forming a new socialist party, which Sotsprof supports.

2 The average industrial wage in the USSR is around 200 roubles a month.



Striking miners in Prokoplevsk, July 1989

should be maintained. The remaining Sovkhoz and Kolkhoz should be sold off to those who want the land. The law we need for this reminds me of Abraham Lincoln's Homestead Act.

Part of this plan would involve the creation of a powerful Agrarian Bank which would give credit to farmers. The state would be able to regulate agriculture through its own Agricultural Bank. Prices could be frozen for several years until the new enterprises were stabilised.

There will be competition between the private and collective sectors in agriculture. The private farmers will have to come together to market their goods, in other words form some sort of collectives.

Q: Perestroika seems to be in a terminal crisis. What is Sotsprof's attitude to Gorbachev and the government?

A: We are against the government's economic policy because they are attempting to bring in a capitalist market which will simply maintain the positions of the ruling groups. We think that the liberal tendencies within the Party want the same thing. The only difference between Gorbachev and them is the speed at which things should be moving. We don't want to be just an opposition; we want to be a real left wing alternative.

Q: Democratic forces in Eastern Europe tend to be based on the intelligentsia. What relationship should independent unions and workers' movements have to them?

A: At the moment, the movements in Eastern Europe are general democratic movements which involve many social layers, including workers. We fully support them but we understand that there is a process of differentiation taking place between the bourgeois elements and the working class.

Q: And would you say it is necessary to build an independent workers' movement to intervene into this process?

A: Of course.

Q: Will Sotsprof be contesting the coming elections? How will your intervention be organised and what will be the key issues involved?

A: We are taking part, but the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) has refused to register Sotsprof candidates. At the moment we are conducting a court case against the CEC. Nonetheless in the work places many Sotsprof candidates have been nominated for the elections.

Q: Are you running candidates common candidates with the Popular Front in Russia?

A: Not in Russia as a whole, but we are in Moscow and Leningrad. There is no longer a united Popular Front in Russia. It has reached its peak and now it is in a state of decline and degeneration.

Popular Front candidates in Moscow have formed a bloc called Democratic Russia and are standing on that platform. They have taken several ideas for their platform from Sotsprof. There is a similar situation in Irkutsk where I am involved in a bloc of left democratic forces.

Q: What are the main points of the Sotsprof platform?

A: Our main points include general democratic demands such as the removal of Article 6 which looks like it is going to happen soon anyway. We also fight for the repeal of the anti-trade union laws. At the moment most workers are legally forbidden to strike.

We are also for the repeal of the anti-democratic laws which ban meetings and demonstrations and for the breakup of the Spetznaz (Soviet paramilitary police). In general our platform includes demands for workers' self-management.

Q: Can you give us some idea of the participation of women within Sotsprof including on its leading bodies? Does Sotsprof raise women's demands and try to organise women?

A: Nearly 30% of Sotsprof members are women. In light industry over 90% of Sotsprof members are women. Last weekend the first congress of Sotsprof took place. The Co-ordinating Committee which had consisted of three people was expanded to seven, of which one is a woman. The Secretariat is over 50% women; it has ten members.

One demand which we fight for—this is put forward by women in Sotsprof—is that women should receive up to seven years maternity leave. We accepted this demand without any objection although it would be likely to cause economic difficulties.

Q: Doesn't it also play into the hands of the Gorbachevites who want to drive women out of the labour force?

A: No. The demand was formulated by the women in the Sotsprof themselves. It is difficult for Western socialists to understand the situation: there is as yet no feminist movement in Russia. Most women in industry do not want to work but would rather stay at home quietly bringing up their children. If this is their demand we should support it.

On the other hand, many women will still want to work even if this demand is fulfilled, and so we need many more nurseries. You don't understand the terrible conditions of life in the USSR. Women play a major role in childcare. They can't work and do this

as well. They do extremely heavy work, on the railways and in the mines. We believe that women should be forbidden to do this kind of work. I don't think this is a discriminatory demand although I suspect that Western feminists might not agree with me.

Q: Do you see the changes Sotsprof wants in the economy and the political system coming about by a series of reforms within the existing system, or by a revolutionary struggle to oust the bureaucracy from power?

A: Once again, the level of the workers' movement is the key question. If the mass movement reaches a high level then political change can happen very quickly. If not—and I believe this to be more likely—then there will be a long drawn out series of struggles. In my view we need a political revolution from below. *Perestroika* is reform implemented from above. The form which the political revolution will take is a matter of terminology.

Q: Why do you think that change will take place slowly? Surely Eastern Europe shows that when things start they gather momentum and are concluded swiftly. Why should the USSR be different?

A: The USSR is not Eastern Europe. Its huge population and vast distances make things very different. I come from the workers' movement and I know it well. I know the strengths and weakness of the democratic forces. That is why I am less optimistic than you about the pace of change.

Previous issues of
**TROTSKYIST
 INTERNATIONAL**

Price: £1.50 per issue (incl. p & p)

Issue No 1 (Summer 1988)

- MRCI Theses on Gorbachev (July 1987)
- MRCI Resolutions on Afghanistan and Austria (April 1988)
- Arbeiterstandpunkt leaflet on the Waldheim affair
- A balance sheet of the "Open Conference" project
- The French LCR and Pierre Juquin
- Archive: The Pulacayo Theses (1946)
- A history of Morenoism

Subscription rates (three issues):

Britain: £5 (Individuals), £10 (Institution)

Overseas: £7 (Individuals), £15 (Institution)

Cheques to Trotskyist International: BCM 7750, London, WC1N 3XX, England

Issue No 2 (Winter 1989)

- MRCI Theses on Zionism, Israel, Arab Nationalism and Palestine (September 1988)
- MRCI Theses on Nuclear Power (September 1988)
- Poder Obrero leaflets on Peru
- Archive: The French Miners' Strike of 1948
- The USFI 1963-1988, part one

Issue No 3 (Summer 1989)

- MRCI Theses on women's oppression
- China: revolution and repression
- The MAS Izquierda Unida and the Argentine Elections
- "Left" republicanism in Ireland

Boris Kagarlitsky: the thinking reformist

Boris Kagarlitsky is undoubtedly the best-known representative of the newly-emerging socialist left in the USSR. Born in 1958, the son of a prominent cultural academic, Kagarlitsky became involved in the dissident movement in the last part of Brezhnev's rule. In 1982 he was imprisoned for 13 months for involvement in the production of oppositional publications. In the same year he wrote his first book, *The Thinking Reed*, an analytical history of the Soviet intelligentsia.

Kagarlitsky is not just the historian of the radical intelligentsia; he is also one of the most articulate representatives of a newly emerging tendency. Enormously impressed by the revolutionary events in Poland in 1980-81, a number of young intellectuals began to realise that the working class is the only social force capable of forcing the major democratic changes they so longed for.

As Kagarlitsky wrote in 1982:

"Whereas in the sixties and seventies the democratic intelligentsia, despite its immense moral superiority over the bureaucracy, was like Pascal's thinking reed, in the eighties it can already rely on the movement of wide sections of the working people and become part of that movement. The Polish experience has once again confirmed what Marxists always said: social transformations are impossible unless the working class participates."¹

Given Stalinism's role in discrediting communism and socialism during its long night of repression, anyone who openly proclaims themselves a Marxist and also regards the working class as the decisive subject of the struggle against both the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy shows considerable intellectual and moral courage. Kagarlitsky's writings indicate a

wide knowledge of western thought, both bourgeois and "Marxist". In addition he has read and critically absorbed the classics of Russian Marxism, including the work of Trotsky.

As an example of the current direction being taken by Soviet oppositional currents, Kagarlitsky is particularly interesting. His ideas represent a challenge which revolutionary Marxists will have to answer. We publish here an interview with Kagarlitsky which he gave to a group of British socialists in Moscow—most of whom were not members of our tendency—in the middle of December 1989, and a review of his latest book *The Dialectic of Change*.

The interview, which was conducted after he had completed his book, shows some interesting and important differences with his previous positions. In the wake of the Soviet miners' strike and the development of new, independent organisations, Kagarlitsky uses the historic organs of workers' power—the soviets of 1905 and 1917—as a point of reference. Similarly, on the question of Boris Yeltsin, the populist pro-marketeer, the interview reveals Kagarlitsky as beginning to be much more critical than he has been in the past.

Although Kagarlitsky's politics are still fundamentally reformist, his willingness to re-examine previous positions in the light of experience indicates an openness which is both refreshing and hopeful. Kagarlitsky has repeatedly pointed out the importance of political debate in charting the way forward for the Soviet masses. Our review and our fraternal explanations of the major political differences which exist between us should be taken as a contribution to this vital debate.

¹ *The Thinking Reed*, Verso 1986 313pp

From Millerand to Mitterrand

A review of *The Dialectic of Change* by Boris Kagarlitsky, Verso (London) 1990 xi+393pp £10.95

The Dialectic of Change falls into three main sections. The first deals with the fundamental methodology of socialist politics, the second with an analysis of the Russian bureaucracy and its crisis and the third outlines a political strategy for Russia today.

Kagarlitsky looks back to the methodological debates that wracked the Second International between 1899 and 1914, and in particular the debates around Millerandism in France and Bernstein's revisionism in the SPD. Whilst Kagarlitsky praises Luxemburg, Trotsky and Lenin for their defence of the final goal of socialism against opportunism, he repeats the common Social Democratic or Eurocommunist charge that the revolutionaries did not understand or appreciate the nature and possibilities of bourgeois democracy.

For Kagarlitsky, neither Bernstein nor Luxemburg can be a model for today's socialists. Rather he looks to Jean Jaures as having correctly attempted to combine a radical reformist strategy with the pursuit of a genuinely revolutionary goal: "Jaures's starting point was the dialectic of reform and revolution" he claims. Jaures saw bourgeois democracy as a vital step on the road to socialism, as creating the political space within which society can be transformed by the action of the masses. Thus Jaures rejected the exclusively parliamentary piecemeal reformism represented by Alexandre Millerand, and the do-nothing sectarian abstentionism of Jules Guesde.

Jaures, however, did not worship the *existing* bourgeois republic because it was founded on an economy based on despotism and exploitation. According to Jaures, the proletariat's task is to refine and enlarge republican democracy, to isolate the ruling class and thereby ensure that each stage of the social revolution is peaceful. Kagarlitsky agrees with this perspective, which he hails as a middle road between revolution and reform, or—more precisely—as a dialectical combination of these qualitatively different strategies. As he writes: "the goal of reformism is not in petty and partial improvements but in the transformation of the state."²

Since it can be transformed, Kagarlitsky insists that the "democratic state system must be seized, but under no circumstances must it be smashed, de-stabilised or endangered; it must be re-fashioned from within."³ This is clearly a reformist strategy which goes against the theoretical insights of Marx and Lenin, and crucially shows that Kagarlitsky has not assimilated, or even rejects, the lessons of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

Kagarlitsky justifies his position on the basis that the western proletariat is not revolutionary and that the countries of the "third world" are not ripe for socialist construction. There is thus no alternative to a strategy of reforms, he argues. However, by combining the methods of direct action—up to and including the general strike—with electoralism, major reforms

can be won. These "structural reforms" will become a part of the very fabric of society, a sort of ratchet mechanism for the steady advance towards socialism.

Marxists and the state

The Marxist analysis of the state, as developed by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, is in no way based on an "underestimation" of the possibilities associated with bourgeois democracy. This criticism originated with Menshevism and has been repeated in recent times by the Eurocommunists; it does not withstand a minute's examination if one looks at the writings of Lenin and Trotsky on "West". It is quite understandable that Marxists who have lived under dictatorship should overvalue and exaggerate the potential of bourgeois democracy, just as it is possible that revolutionaries in the west may undervalue it. However, in the final analysis such subjective considerations are neither here nor there.

Revolutionary Marxists—including Lenin and Trotsky—have always understood the importance of democratic liberties as a conquest of the working class and the democratic petit bourgeoisie. Furthermore, bourgeois democracy has always been seen as an arena of the class struggle. Nevertheless, revolutionaries have refused to embrace parliamentary democracy as part of a *strategy* for working class liberation because the constitutional mechanisms of bourgeois democracy are not the essence of the bourgeois state.

The bourgeoisie will tolerate and use the trappings of bourgeois democracy only so long as it can afford to make minor concessions, and the working-class is led by those who accept the eternity of the capitalist system without question. Whenever these conditions are not fulfilled, the bourgeoisie will readily junk all vestiges of democracy. This has been shown repeatedly throughout this century in both imperialist and semi-colonial countries, where economic crises and political upheaval have led to an often vicious destruction of bourgeois democracy. Pinochet's bloody coup in Chile (1973) shows the price that will be paid if workers follow Jaures' and Kagarlitsky's notion of the proletariat "sharing power" with the bourgeoisie.

Linked with Kagarlitsky's idea of structural reforms is the idea of a class collaborationist government—the Popular Front—and a self-limiting, stageist approach to the struggle for socialism. It is indeed ironic that this programme—essentially that of Menshevism and its latter-day Stalinist disciples—is being advanced by someone who has proved himself to be a principled fighter against Stalinist dictatorship.

Kagarlitsky does not seriously examine the Stalinist contribution to this strategy. Rather, he identifies with its early roots in Jaures, and then leaps to Gramsci and the notion of a bloc of classes and a "historic

² *The Dialectic of Change* p37

³ *Ibid*, p37

compromise". He then makes another leap to what he considers as the creative modern application of this approach in the work of Chévènement's "CERES" grouping inside the French Socialist Party. (It should be noted that today Chévènement is the Minister responsible for the French imperialist armed forces!). Thus, in this journey from Millerand to Mitterrand Kagarlitsky leaves out what is probably the broadest mass application of this strategy: the Popular Front of the 1930s.

The ultimate weakness of the revolution by reform is that it fails to address one simple question. Why should the bourgeoisie—which, as Jean-Pierre Chévènement knows only too well, controls the monopoly of military force—allow itself to be deprived of any essential aspects of its rule or system of exploitation? Which ruling class has ever peacefully departed the scene of history?

The capitalists' absolute control of economic life allows them to create economic conditions (inflation, unemployment, lack of investment) that drive the masses to desperation and pose the question of seizing control both of the economy and of the state.

Kagarlitsky writes as though the revolutionary crisis were some kind of tactical option to be rejected in favour of a safer, slower method. This is not the case. Revolutionary crises develop whether or not there are revolutionaries to take advantage of them. And if there is not a Lenin and a Bolshevik Party to provide leadership, the result is a Hitler, a Franco, a Pinochet or a Jaruzelski. Neither parliamentary speechifying nor even a limited defensive general strike will prove able to stop the carnival of reaction which will ensue if the working class does not seize power. And for this the working class needs a revolutionary party, not a popular front or a bloc between revolutionaries and reformists.

Three "proofs"

Keen to root his argument in practical examples, Kagarlitsky provides us with what he considers as three major proofs of the validity of his approach. These are the French Socialist Party (PS) from 1981 onwards, the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and Solidarnosc in Poland. Far from proving his point, these three unfortunate choices only reinforce the strength of the Leninist-Trotskyist critique of reformism and the weakness of the reformist strategy. From the vantage point of Moscow, in the period of brutal state repression, these three examples may have seemed attractive. For the workers involved, however, the truth is somewhat different.

Following Mitterrand's election as President of France, the PS managed only a nine month "state of grace" during which it nationalised the banks, abolished the death penalty and indexed wages against inflation. Then the pressure of the economic crisis put an end to all reforms. Under IMF insistence, 1982-83 became an "annus horribilis" of anti-working class measures similar to those experienced in other imperialist countries. Today, little remains of Mitterrand's reforms. Real wages in the public sector have been cut

by 10% since he came to power and French imperialism's interests in Africa and the South Pacific have been served by war (Chad) and bloody repression (Kanaky), meted out by these "socialists".

In Nicaragua the FSLN broke the impetus of mass revolution to entrench "progressive" national capital. Workers' rights and independent organisations were repeatedly attacked by the FSLN, who—like Kagarlitsky, Kautsky, Martov and . . . Stalin—were determined to limit the revolution to an initial, "democratic" phase. Sensing this fundamental weakness, the "patriotic bourgeoisie", aided by the USA, launched a bloody civil war that wrecked the economy. Under pressure from Gorbachev the FSLN restored "democracy" whilst simultaneously launching a vicious anti-working class austerity programme. The result was February's electoral debacle. This would hardly seem a recommendation for the stageist approach.

Kagarlitsky devotes a whole chapter to Solidarnosc and the Polish events of 1980-81. His detailed analysis only shows up the weakness of his schema. Firstly, he fails to understand the true nature and weaknesses of Solidarnosc:

"The Polish Revolution showed that a trade union can become an organisation uniting the whole class on the basis of its most general interests both economic and political. This is its advantage over parties. It is not restricted by ideological purposes and a specific programme. It sets itself the most general of class goals and provides more space for the spontaneous initiative of the masses themselves".⁴

This is an entirely syndicalist appreciation of trade unionism. The "advantage" of trade unions, their all-inclusiveness, their involvement of the multi-millioned masses, is also a disadvantage when it comes to political struggle.

If they are to truly mobilise the mass of the working class they cannot (and should not) require adherence to a general political strategy—a programme—from their members. Instead it is in the nature of a trade union to organise all workers for the defence of the economic and workplace interests of the proletariat. Its task is certainly also to participate in the political struggles of the proletariat, thus mobilising the broadest masses. But for this reason a strictly trade union leadership is utterly incapable of leading the working class in a situation where the question of power is posed objectively by events. For this task, as Trotsky put it, a party is the first, second and third necessity.

In reality however, Solidarnosc was more than a trade union. It was also both composed of workers' councils and political parties in embryonic form. And yet it was also an obstacle to both of these features developing. In the first year of its existence its proto-soviet characteristics—especially in the form of the inter-factory committees—gave it the capacity to resist the twin pressures of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the Catholic church. As mediated by the Walesa leadership group and the KOR, these two sought to break the impetus of the revolutionary struggles which were paralysing Poland.

Like the intellectuals around the KOR, Kagarlitsky finds this revolutionary instinct of the Polish workers deeply disturbing. He describes it as a recrudescence

of "Polish gentry anarchism"⁵, an excessive (!) love of freedom. He insists that "at a definite stage [...] spontaneity must give rise to organisation."⁶ For Kagarlitsky it is impossible to manage without a "workers' bureaucracy", although such a bureaucracy must not be "too rigid" and it must be founded "on a class and not on an ideological basis".

Kagarlitsky praises KOR leaders Kuron and Michnik for seeking to limit the workers' struggle in accordance with "Poland's position" (i.e. the danger of Soviet intervention). This geopolitical argument is based on the view that ongoing revolutions do not spread to other countries. Only the consolidated achievements of a revolution draw workers in other countries towards it.

Once more the irony of history bites hard. This is nothing other than an understated version of the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country", whether Kagarlitsky acknowledges it or not. The whole experience of the political revolution contradicts this pessimistic position. The Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968 and, above all, the wildfire of political revolution in Eastern Europe in 1989 all show quite how false Kagarlitsky's view is.

Serious, deep-going revolutions enormously stimulate other countries which have their own revolutionary contradictions. An internationalist leadership multiplies the possibility of this a thousandfold. A blinkered and timorous reformist and nationalist leadership limits such a possibility and can eventually stifle it.

Kagarlitsky draws entirely the wrong lessons. What the Polish worker lacked was not a reformist trade union bureaucracy but a Leninist revolutionary party with a clear programme for political revolution. If such a leadership had existed, spontaneous 1905 and 1917-type workers' councils could have developed out of the inter-factory committees, providing the basis for a new form of revolutionary workers' state which would have involved the smashing of the old organs of state power (the secret police, army, riot police etc).

Kagarlitsky suggests that if Walesa and Kuron had been able to come up with some structural reforms that left the Stalinist PUPW with its political power intact, then a temporary compromise could have been thrashed out:

"the free trades unions should have focused their attention on a number of realisable demands and decisively insisted on them. Other demands should have been sacrificed."⁷

But which demands could the workers afford to sacrifice? The massive economic crisis forced the bureaucracy to attack the workers' living standards. The totalitarian nature of the utterly illegitimate and discredited caste made it impossible for the bureaucracy to tolerate democracy in the factories, or in society as a whole. In 1956 compromises were forced on the Polish working class and they lost all their gains. In 1981 it was the workers who refused to compromise, and they were right! Kagarlitsky's programme, like that of Kuron and Walesa, is a subordination of revolution to reform; it is not a dialectical combination of them.

Kagarlitsky and the USSR

The sections of the book dealing with the USSR are the most disappointing. Kagarlitsky's analysis of the developing crisis of the Brezhnevite bureaucracy is interesting, especially his description of the way that the atomisation of Soviet society was overcome at all levels. The bureaucracy split into different factions, the democratic intelligentsia produced a new layer of young thinkers (including Kagarlitsky himself), and the working class produced a strike wave which is little appreciated in the West.

Kagarlitsky's reformist strategy also holds good for the USSR: "A consistently implemented democratisation is already in itself a movement towards socialism", he says⁸. But what sort of democratisation? Democracy is never abstract, never the same for all classes. Those who wish to restore capitalism in the USSR concentrate on all the aspects which characterises bourgeois democracy—private ownership of the press, parliamentarism, an "independent" judiciary, the rule of law, a professional army.

Workers on the other hand must establish the right to strike, democratic and free trade unions, the right to form political parties. For a short period it may well be that the bourgeois democrat and the proletarian will have certain common demands such as the right to demonstrate, to publish leaflets, to register parties etc. But the two democracies must increasingly diverge and come into conflict as the pro-bourgeois reformers use their newly won rights, their seats in parliament, to introduce restorationist "reforms" which break up planning, introduce ever more private ownership and the market into economic life. Then the workers' democratic right to strike, for example, will come into conflict with the newly emerging bosses' "right" to a profitable enterprise.

Kagarlitsky's view of a democracy that simply has to be extended to all social and economic life leads him to treat the working class as a locomotive of radical reform rather than the historic actor in the establishment of its own power. His democratic programme is summed up thus:

"Only if the real collaboration of the intermediate and lower strata can be secured within the framework of a radical reformist project will it be possible to forge a powerful social bloc capable of opposing the bureaucracy..."⁹

This 'historic compromise' between pro-market reforms and the workers' class interests expresses itself at different levels. With regard to the economy he asserts:

"It is not a matter of choosing between plan and market (in any modern society there are both). The genuine choice today is between a developing civil society and bureaucracy."¹⁰

The struggle for power

Kagarlitsky outlines a radical reformist strategy aimed at "securing an irreversible shift in the social structure"¹¹ in the spheres of production, management and ownership. Revolutionaries insist that if

5 *Ibid*, p190

6 *Ibid*, p191

7 *Ibid*, p195

8 *Ibid*, p195

9 *Ibid*, p359

10 *Ibid*, p359

11 *Ibid*, p331

such measures were truly strategic—i.e. involved a decisive shift away from the bureaucracy to the working class—then they would never be conceded as reforms but would have to be fought for with revolutionary intransigence.

Under these circumstances, Kagarlitsky (at least at the time of writing this book) would either counsel caution or retreat under the banner of “self-limitation”, on the basis that these particularly “provocative” reforms were not possible for the moment. The only alternative for Kagarlitsky would be to break with his reformist schema and fight for revolutionary mass action by the proletariat.

This shows the way in which the struggle over reforms can tend to become a struggle for power. However, to suggest as Kagarlitsky does that the workers should limit their activity from the outset and should avoid a fight for power at all costs is to sabotage the working class struggle. What is needed is a party which will take up every immediate demand of the working class, but which warns and prepares the workers for the inevitable crisis which will pose point blank the question of power.

The reformist strategy of stageism also leads directly to collaborationist and opportunist organisational conclusions. Starting from the Gramscian/Eurocommunist notion that “conflict does not directly occur between classes but between social blocs formed on a class basis but not identical to classes”¹², Kagarlitsky draws the conclusion that “It is essential to work for the creation of a revolutionary-reformist bloc capable of implementing changes”. According to Kagarlitsky, “all programmatic demands and slogans must be subordinate” to this tactic.¹³

This is presumably also the position of the Moscow Popular Front, a bloc of radical reformists, libertarians and anarchists which has been informally linked with Boris Yeltsin. Such a strategy may not seem a betrayal in times of relative class peace. But what happens when the tempo of mass struggle and the rising demands and expectations of the masses clash with the resistance of the bureaucracy? If the self-proclaimed revolutionaries maintain the bloc at all costs, restraining and impeding the masses, tailoring their politics so as not to alienate their cross-class allies, they will have betrayed the mass struggle and fully embraced reformism.

If the more perceptive elements realise their mistake and seek to mobilise the masses, it may already be too late. The caste enemy may have grown too strong, and the workers too weak. Here lies the danger of such a reformist schema. It will not only confuse and disorient the would-be revolutionaries; it also runs the risk of fatally demobilising the all-too-revolutionary working class and leading the movement into a dead end.

The method of revolutionary communism is quite different. Our programme and our strategy is based not on what can be agreed by reformists, but on the objective needs of the working class. The fundamental question in any serious revolutionary situation, such as that which existed in Poland in 1980-81 or

that which is developing today in the USSR, is to develop a strategy for taking power. For this we need a revolutionary Leninist party, not an unclear opportunist bloc.

United action with reformists—be they intellectuals or workers—will be a necessary tactic involved in the construction of the revolutionary party. But such a united front will only involve the temporary organisation of united action for common goals, with complete freedom of criticism on all sides. Furthermore, to be true to the interests of the working class, revolutionaries will have to be prepared to break the united front wherever the reformists betray or shy away from the agreed action. In this way the united front combines unity of the widest possible forces for limited tactical goals with preparing the masses to overcome the inevitable betrayal of the reformist leaders.

Kagarlitsky's approach to party-building is very different. It is fundamentally opportunist and flows from his reformist analysis. The problem he fails to recognise is that the social democrats and Trotskyists (real Trotskyists, that is) do not have a common cause. The social democrats want to save capitalism and have done so on many occasions (1918/19, 1936, 1945, early to mid 1970's). Trotskyists wish to destroy it and replace it with workers' democracy. Social democrats wish to restore capitalism (the “mixed” or “social market” economy) in the workers' states. Trotskyists wish to defend planned state property and put it under workers' democratic management. In 1914, and in 1939, enormous chasms of fundamental class interest separate reformist and revolutionary strategies for combatting war.

Kagarlitsky is on the left wing of the reform movement inside the USSR. Rejecting the programme of political revolution, he fails to offer workers the lead that they require. His book is a thorough exposition of pre-1914 left reformism, which in the late twentieth century is a reactionary and stale utopia. His popularity amongst socialists and workers in the West is understandable—he represents a struggle for independent working class organisation and the creation of a socialist party in the USSR. But our solidarity for his working class orientation must not lead us to ignore the fundamental flaws of his political method and programme. Reformism has been the curse of the workers of Western Europe for nearly 70 years. It must not be allowed to drag the workers of the USSR and Eastern Europe towards a utopian goal of some kind of Swedish nirvana.

As this book shows, Kagarlitsky has addressed the strategic problems facing the Soviet working class. The answers he has found are the wrong ones. Whilst it is understandable that even a leading oppositionist should still bear the marks of the Stalinist reformist deformation of “Marxism”, it is nonetheless sad that on a whole series of points Kagarlitsky should be so close to his Stalinist opponents. Under the impact of the miners' strike he appears to be changing certain aspects of his politics. Good. But if he is to complete his political evolution, he will have to decisively turn his back on the strategy outlined in this book.

by Mike Evans

¹² *Ibid*, p331

¹³ *Ibid*, p331

Beyond the left wing of perestroika?

An interview with Boris Kagarlitsky in Moscow by supporters of different political tendencies from Britain

Q: Are people enthusiastic about Gorbachev?

A: Disenchantment is growing rapidly. The First Congress of Deputies was the turning point. People were excited and had great hopes. People had become more active politically and generally more interested in politics. They then realised that the Deputies didn't actually change anything! There was also substantial disillusionment with the opposition's activities within the Congress. They made very radical speeches but did not challenge any government policies. They said that something was wrong, or that things were not going fast enough, or that a particular bureaucrat was not competent, but at the same time they always supported the general line. They always supported Gorbachev as if there was no possible alternative. Yeltsin himself suddenly switched from being some kind of radical left-wing populist to a free market liberal position! People have become tired of the personality cult which has been created around him. His behaviour in the USA also made people unhappy.

Q: Do you have any orientation to the reform wing of the bureaucracy?

A: We can have a dialogue with them. However, the general feeling—for example in the mining areas—is that people are much less enthusiastic about Yeltsin. That is one of the reasons why the miners went on strike. They decided that there was no one to help them, there was nobody to solve their problems for them. The only solution was to go on strike!

Q: How does the intelligentsia view Gorbachev and the government?

A: I think that most of the intelligentsia does not realise the importance of the proletariat. On the other hand the growing working class militancy has a lot of its own problems. The workers don't have any experience; they don't know the most elementary things. Sometimes it seems like people are reproducing episodes of the history of the western labour movement. It is a bit like re-inventing the bicycle! There is one point that makes me very optimistic: people are learning very fast. They've gone a lot further than in the west and faster than in Poland. Things which took years elsewhere are being understood after a few months experience of moving very fast. For example, a few months ago the workers went on strike spontaneously without any strike committees and without posing any demands. So they formulated the demands during the strike—or sometimes at the end! The strikes represented a spontaneous movement rather than any really conscious decision. People just expressed their feelings on how they felt about the system.

This is what happens when reforms are non-existent, incompetent or even counter-productive. People have the worst of everything. That's why the workers

were angry. They formed strike committees which were then transformed into workers' committees. They represented some form of popular power; in practice they function like the soviets in 1905 or 1917. People didn't go to the authorities to solve their problems, they went to the workers' committees. These committees also managed the strike, acting like free trade unions. They also acted like political parties. They were very synchritic: they were everything at the same time. However, they had no ideology, experience nor links, so there were a lot of weak points.

The workers' committees became overloaded with different responsibilities and became more and more contradictory. The apparatus tried to manipulate them from one side and the liberals from Moscow tried from the other side. The Party sometimes succeeded but the liberal Deputies never did. The workers hated the Party officials but realised they were powerful. They didn't hate the people from the Inter-regional group of Deputies and had some sympathy for them—Sakharov was popular amongst the workers—but when they called for the workers to go on strike in July 1989 the workers' committees decided not to go on strike for fear of being manipulated. We have all had experience of people being corrupted by the apparatus.

Q: How did the demands of the strike develop?

A: At the beginning they were mainly economic demands. Every mine had its own list of demands and sometimes they contradicted each other. So the strike committees tried to coordinate things. At this point they added some political demands. The authorities said that political demands were unacceptable and most of the strike committee replied that they only had economic demands. Then the authorities said that economic demands could not be met! "Political" demands were seen as being anything except wages and conditions. Finally there was a strike in Vorkuta, which was extremely political.

Q: Did you influence these strikes?

A: I was invited to Karaganda as a consultant of the workers' committees. In Karaganda and Prokopievsk our Committee for a New Socialist Party has some influence amongst the workers. In Karaganda the majority of the strike committee wants to create a free trade union and affiliate to Sotsprof.

Q: Will they form a trade union or a political party?

A: At the beginning of the movement the strike committees played all roles. The problem now is that the workers have to create the basic structures of a labour movement and of trade unions. They also need to build cultural organisations and to create a political party. These functions need to be separated. At the beginning the committees became overloaded be-

cause they had to deal with all the different kinds of problems: economic demands as well as political and cultural questions.

Q: As a consultant were you asked to formulate a programme?

A?: No. Different people had different responsibilities. My role was at Karaganda. I was there in July and they said that I could stay. At the beginning there was a lot of sectional feeling amongst the workers. The miners elected their own strike committee which had nothing to do with other sections. Now there is a move towards unions which organise the whole working class. This step is a stage beyond the strike committees. However the fundamental problems faced by the strike committees will still exist: they will effectively be functioning both as trade unions and as a political party. If you have a party with a close connection with the trade unions then it may not have an independent identity. There is a firm commitment from some of the leaders of the new labour unions to form a socialist party. In the draft programme of the Workers Union of Kuzbass this is one of the tasks of the union. In Karaganda the workers called for a party that will defend the workers and is based on the principles of socialism.

Q: Are the workers leaving the old trade unions and joining the new ones?

A: The problem is that the workers are creating parallel unions without leaving the old ones. For example in Prokopievsk the authorities proposed that the workers' committees should be included in old trade unions. This would mean the dissolution of the workers' committees. In some cases the workers stood for positions in the official trade unions but they never won. In Karaganda the idea of forming new trade unions has been put forward.

Q: Have the workers raised the call for the democratisation of the official trade unions?

A: They said it wasn't worth it.

Q: How do the workers understand socialism? Do they see it in the social democratic or revolutionary sense?

A: This is an important question. It depends upon the relationship between the workers and the intellectuals. If you look at the experience of Solidarnosc in the early 1980s there were intellectuals from the KOR who worked as consultants. They were mainly social democrats who were interested in self-management. They were not interested in forming a socialist party or in the creation of independent class organisations because they saw Solidarnosc as the tool for the democratisation of Poland. They thought that this was the way to show the workers what democracy meant.

I think that this has nothing to do with democracy. Democracy begins when different layers of society defend their rights. It is not a question of general ideology. Thus in the case of Poland, when the consultants degenerated, so too did Solidarnosc. They were under the pressure of the liberal right and the bourgeois elements. Instead of trying to develop a specifi-

cally working-class ideology they tried to de-politicise the movement as much as possible. Their kind of democracy could not work; real democracy is based on the interests of the working class. We have contacts with the KOR and we have learned from their mistakes. That is why the creation of the nucleus of a socialist party is very important for us. Free trade unions should not just be a tool for the democratisation of society, but tools in the struggle for workers' rights and interests.

Q: Will the socialist party's programme be one of self-management within a social market?

A: We are not anti-marketeters, nor are we for a free market. In the Soviet situation the paradox is that privatisation is an obstacle to normal market relations. In a society where there is no bourgeoisie the only people who will gain from privatisation are the mafia and the bureaucracy, and that is already happening!

Q: How does the question of self-management link in with the plan? Are you in favour of the democratisation of the plan?

A: We don't have any clear-cut solutions. At the moment we need planning because the economy and the infrastructure of society are in such a mess. We will need planning to resolve these problems. Centralised planning is not popular in the USSR. This raises the question of who is doing the planning.

Q: In the programme of the Polish PPS-RD self-management is seen as affecting government and the economy. Is your model akin to this?

A: We haven't seen the documents of the PPS-RD yet. For us the problem is who controls the plan. The only way to make the plan serve the interests of society is for the enterprises to be self-managed. You would also need to have control of all property through a system of soviets. Ownership would not just be state ownership, but ownership by different levels of society. Investment would be controlled from above and the enterprises would be controlled by collectives from below. This will create problems because there will be two kinds of democracy coming together from above and below, representing the interests of the factory and of society as a whole. Their interests are not the same. We therefore have to create a type of society which can solve these problems without resort to a third kind of institution—a bureaucracy outside of society which resolves problems in its own interests.

Gorbachev is the only politician who can stabilise society. The army is too involved with all layers of the system to be able to do this. Even the old-style bureaucrats realise this. They put up with his liberalisation and with some of his economic reforms because they make a profit out of it. A lot of people will not break with Gorbachev because even if they don't like what is happening, they realise that things could be a lot worse. Gorbachev can thus play an important role in disarming resistance.

The real movements in the USSR are not the results of his policies but are due to the extreme disillusionment of the population and the movements initiated

Publications of the LRCI

All journals available from our British address at £2-00 (inc P&P) except * which is £2-50 (inc P&P). Papers are 50p per copy inc (P&P). For details of subscriptions, write to the addresses below.

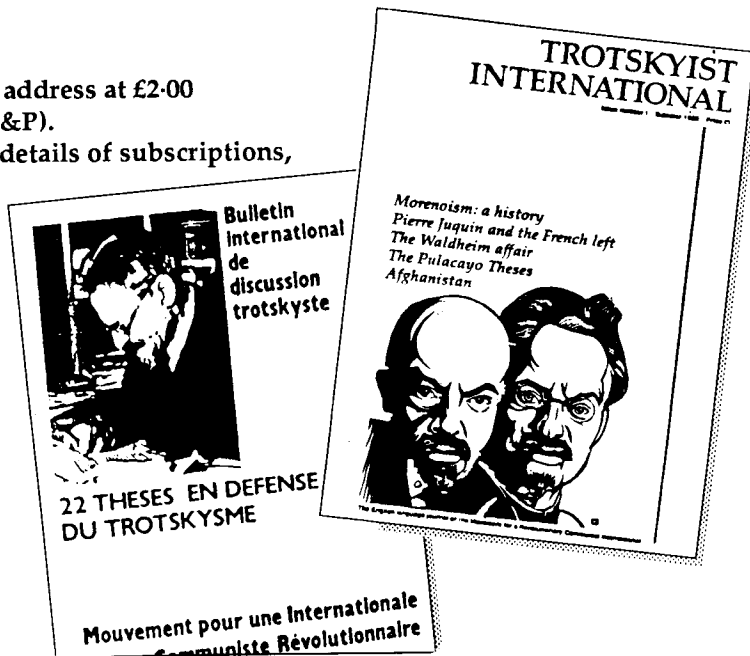
Arbeiter Standpunkt
Journal of the Gruppe Arbeiterstandpunkt
Postfach 265
1140 Wien
Austria

Arbeitermacht
Journal of the Gruppe Arbeitermacht
Postlagerkarte 039964 B
2800 Bremen 1
Germany

Class Struggle
Monthly paper of the Irish Workers Group
c/o 12 Langrishe Place
Dublin 1
Ireland

Pouvoir Ouvrier
Journal of the Pouvoir Ouvrier Group
Stenberg, H
EP 166
75564, Paris
France

Workers Power
Monthly paper of the Workers Power Group
Also *Permanent Revolution* *
its theoretical journal
BCM 7750
London
England WC1N 3XX



The LRCI's "Twenty-two theses in defense of Trotskyism" is available in French, German, Spanish, Swedish and English. 50p (inc P&P).

Also available: back issues of *Trotskyist International* 1 which includes articles on Morenoism, the Pulacayo Theses, the LCR and the French election campaign as well as LRCI theses on Gorbachev, Afghanistan and the Palestinian uprising. Price £1-50 (inc P&P).

