



Two Steps Back, Any Steps Forward?

The collapse of the Soviet coup on 22 August 1991 was the most decisive turning point in the deterioration of Stalinism.

It was the last ditch attempt of the geriatric and homicidal generals of the Kremlin to halt the return of capitalism. They fell in a heap before a popular counter-revolution appropriated by the restorationist demagogue Boris Yeltsin.

The Soviet state still remains an arena of struggle, but the balance has been

decisively tipped in favour of the bourgeoisie.

The 'centrist' Gorbachev now stands on one leg. With the collapse of the 'right wing' of the bureaucracy, power has passed decisively to the restorationists.

Large numbers of nuclear missiles and other weaponry still threaten imperialism's New World Order, but their social base is now quite uncertain. It's not over yet, but the decisive social turning point has been passed. A counter-attack is not impossible, but it is highly unlikely.

Yeltsin's lynch-mob

One bourgeois commentator said; 'There is a danger of the movement for democracy becoming a lynch-mob'.

Yeltsin did win the masses, and he is unashamedly a capitalist restorationist, but this is a contradictory phenomenon.

Yeltsin, although he rose via the bureaucracy, and in that sense is but another Stalinist, has a social basis outside the bureaucracy, as an agent of the bourgeoisie.

As he challenged the generals, and called upon the Red Army divisions to obey his command, Bush, Major and Mitterand were on the other end of a telephone line.

He has since wasted no time in organising new detachments of a militia committed to the new regime.

Social Overturn

In referring to the coup as a 'popular counter-revolution', it would be wrong to say, as some have that it was the workers who defeated the coup. The workers participated but as citizens, rather than as workers. The miners who were on strike for months against Gorbachev did not answer Yeltsin's call for a general strike.

To see the defeat of the coup as having purely a proletarian class content would be to completely misread the situation building up. The class character of the anti-military movement was popular, and it has unleashed forces which are hostile not only to Stalinism, but to the working class itself.

What we have seen is a social overturn, which will open the way for the restoration of capitalism. It is a sharp break in class relations, and entirely new processes have been set into motion.

At the same time, to dismiss the events of August 1991 as of small

significance because the USSR was some form of capitalist state is again to miss entirely the significance of what has just happened.

The question of a repressive regime being replaced by a more democratic one is only one side of the issue, by no means the dominant one in the long term. There is every reason to believe that the euphoria and openness of these days will be short-lived. There is a new relation of world forces now.

We should evaluate the events of the last few years culminating in this 'popular counter-revolution' unequivocally in the positive. The working class is facing a huge onslaught, but with Stalinism off its back it is in a fine condition to fight back!

The perspective for the working class can only be to lay hold of the state machine piece by piece, before it is used for the imposition of capitalist property relations.

Likewise, workers must endeavour to take control of individual enterprises and prevent their being given away to foreign or domestic capitalists. To the restorationists' cry for 'democracy' workers must demand 'real' democracy - the right to actually control their own lives.

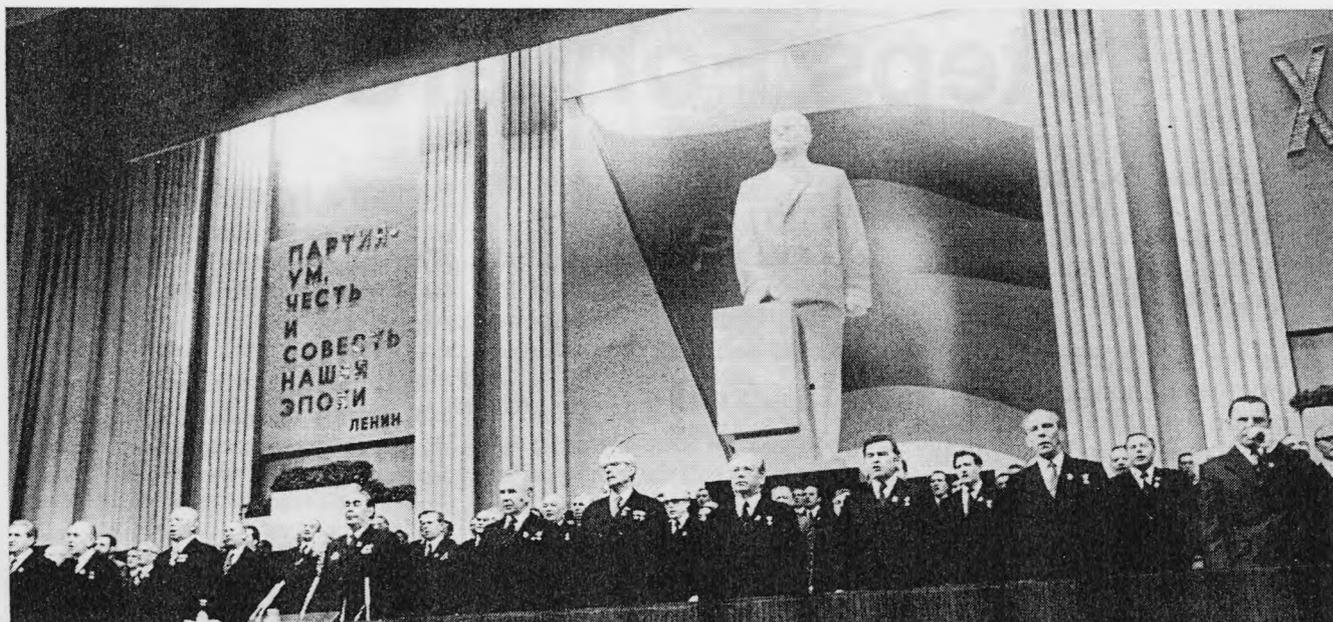
Like workers who have occupied a factory, but after months of privation are forced to give up their gains, the

Soviet workers cannot pretend that their eventual capitulation is really a victory. They must and will recognise that the end of the isolated workers state now opens up the possibility for beginning a new struggle, not in isolation, but in unity with the rest of the working class. The lessons won in a long and bitter struggle will strengthen them in the struggles ahead.

All the problems experienced by the Russian Revolution over the past 70 years will confront the workers who make the next revolution. The problems of the exercise of state power by the working class; the problems of overcoming backwardness, of the unevenness of the revolution on a world scale; the counter-revolution waged by imperialism against the workers of any country which dares to stand against it; the problems of bureaucratism; the regeneration of bourgeois relations in the market; the problem of planning and workers' control all still confront the working class.

A realistic assessment is required of the experience of the Russian Revolution, from 1917 to 1991. This must be based on Trotskyism, the only consistently revolutionary critique of Stalinism.

The defence of the residual gains of the revolution and the building of new fighting organisations in the working class must be founded on the most thoroughgoing workers democracy.



Economic Rounds

Has the recession bottomed? They keep asking, they keep prophesying, they prevaricate, they equivocate - they clearly don't know. Any % point rise or fall in any economic indicator is grounds for analytic revelations nearly all geared to keeping us happy, telling us its all getting better one way or another.

This is empiricism gone mad. Each indicator taken as an isolated factor, each appearance contradicting the next but never whole view.

In fact there seems to be, dare I say, a conspiracy against whole views.

Well maybe there is, what is post-modernism all about anyway?

Those of us who struggle to understand the whole view are seen as mongers of simplification and pie in the sky seekers of clarity.

That's fine in the mean time economic news is that this is up and that is down and that has stayed stable - but what are the connections?

In future issues of ReD we will feature an economic round-up which will try to bring together the state of economic turns over the last two months and analyses the links between them.

Jobs Down, Wages Down.

In the meantime we will focus on just one feature of the economy. Unemployment is rising and wages are dropping. In July the jobless rose to 9.8% with a loss of a further 83,100 jobs.

But in the three months leading to May wages fell by 2.4%.

In the past, workers were always told in times of rising unemployment to stop asking for wage rises because that would only increase unemployment. The employed should sacrifice on wages to stop more jobs going. The argument sounds very logical - cut costs by cutting wages and job losses will ease.

How come the savings made on wages in the quarter leading to May couldn't save the 83,100 jobs which were 'shed' in July. Because capitalism doesn't work like that. A depression and subsequent job losses are not caused by high wages, they are caused

by over-production which arises from the scrambling by each individual capitalist for a greater share of profits.

The only way capitalism knows out of depression is to close down the means of production - each capitalist grabbing what capital they can and running. The labour in the production process is left high and dry - with jobs 'shed' and wages forced down.

Cuts in wages produce a fall in demand which will increase unemployment.

Don't be fooled again.

One more snippet

Someone who's not suffering is Ampol Exploration.

They announced earlier this month that they had more than tripled their profits in the year to June 30. This stems directly from the Gulf War. Ampol's net profit for the year leaped 314% to \$48.1 million compared with \$15.3 million the previous year.

RED BRIEFS

Justice just ain't what it used to be -

The scales of British and Australian justice have taken quite a tipping lately. When we consider that the justice system is one of the main supports of bourgeois rule it's a sign of serious crisis that the system has been so exposed for its lack of justice.

This is not going unnoticed by juries, or by civil rights campaigns - just look at their record over the last year in Britain and Australia.

Guildford Four - released after exposure of police frame-up
Birmingham Six - released after the exposure of a police frame-up

Walsh Street - not convicted when only evidence was police witness

Tim Anderson - released after exposure of unjust trial

Kerry Browning - not convicted on police evidence

IRA in Brussels - not convicted

Now we have the conviction of Terry Lewis the Queensland Police Commissioner - this was all the more striking because the Judge advised against this conviction claiming that in the circumstances it would be dangerous to convict Lewis on the evidence.

The most recent of these events is the release of Judith Ward who spent fourteen years in a British jail after making a confession under duress to bombing a bus and killing thirteen British servicemen.

Judith's release was noticeably absent from the Australian press. Remarkable in that it is so important in being one more nail in the coffin of the objectivity of the British justice system on which our system in Australia is based.

The justice system it seems just can't get away with what it used to.