
STALINISM IN CRISIS



**THE ROAD TO
WORKING CLASS
POWER**



WORKERS POWER/IRISH WORKERS GROUP

75p

STALINISM IN CRISIS

The road to working class power

Fifty years ago this August a paid agent of Joseph Stalin buried an ice-pick in the head of Leon Trotsky. Stalin heaved a sigh of relief. Trotsky had tirelessly fought the ruthless regime of the USSR.

He denounced the seizure of political power by Stalin's monstrous bureaucratic regime and defended the true legacy of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution—workers' power, exercised through democratic councils, the spreading of the revolution internationally and the transition to a classless and stateless society, genuine communism.

Today Stalinism is gripped by a mortal crisis. A revolutionary storm is sweeping all before it in Eastern Europe. The political revolution Trotsky struggled for until his death has begun.

This pamphlet contains articles analysing the key events of the struggle from **Workers Power** and the **Irish Workers Group**, the British and Irish sections of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI).

It contains polemics with the politics of other organisations on the British, Irish and international left.

It begins with the LRCI's action programme for the election period in the GDR. Translated from the German especially for this collection, the programme is more than just a guide to action in the present period. It is an illustration of how the Trotskyist method can be applied to the developing revolutionary situations in the Stalinist states as a whole.

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For workers' power in a workers' state

The workers of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) stand at the cross roads. One sign points back towards capitalism; the other points towards genuine socialism.

MOST PARTIES, most politicians, are advocating a return to capitalism via unification with the West German imperialist state, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The remnants of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), the SPD (Social Democratic Party), the New Forum, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) are all heading down this road—at different paces and with a few minor deviations. But all agree that unification on the basis of the “market economy” is the only alternative.

All these parties propose a policy which has as its objective the re-introduction of capitalism, be it in the “harder” version of the right or in the supposedly more “social” form which the SPD, SED-SPD and parts of the New Forum suggest is possible. In fact, re-capitalisation, in any form, would mean a worsening of the position of the working class in the GDR. The SPD wants to channel the proletarian hatred of the Stalinist bureaucracy and to make capitalist re-unification appear acceptable to the working class. The party of Noske and Scheidemann will not hesitate for a moment to betray the working class men and women of the GDR once again.

But there is an alternative to the market economy, its parties and its supporters! We have to rebuild a revolutionary workers' movement in the GDR, to transform its bureaucratic nationalised economy into one based on workers' democracy and a workers' plan. There is also an alternative to a German imperialist mega-state. That is a workers' Germany at the centre of a workers' Europe—a United Socialist States of Europe, from Siberia to Portugal.

The reason for the mounting tide of calls for “Germany, One Fatherland”—and a capitalist one at that—is the total bankruptcy of forty years of SED rule. As a result of the mass actions of workers, students and farmers on the streets in November and December, the Stasi dictatorship of the bureaucracy was crippled and then smashed. When Honecker, and then Krenz, were driven from office, the true nature of the bureaucracy's rule was exposed to full view. Living in luxury villas, with secret clinics, shops and restaurants, the bureaucrats plundered the state treasury and the economy, salting away their ill-gotten gains abroad. Their preparations to drown the workers' demonstrations in blood were exposed.

No wonder every honest worker has lost all confidence

★ This action programme for the elections in the GDR was issued in German by the LRCI on 13 February 1990

in these creatures and their successors—who, until yesterday, lived the same lifestyle and fawned and flattered those who today they promise to bring to trial. The working class has seen through the once all-powerful and apparently all-knowing caste of SED mandarins.

What sort of “workers' state” was it where the workers did not rule? What sort of “democratic republic” where there was no right to strike, no right of free speech or assembly, let alone the right to choose between candidates with different programmes in elections? What kind of “socialism” was it where workers had not the slightest control over the economy—neither in the factories nor in the central planning administration?

For forty years, Ulbricht and Honecker dragged the names communist and socialist in the mud. They identified their own squalid tyranny with the great fighters for freedom; Marx, Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Lenin. Today, it is small wonder that many workers hate the name communist. But they should beware of falling victim to Honecker's deceit even as they revile the man. He and his party were not communists, not Leninists. They were and are Stalinists.

Certainly, Ulbricht and company renounced and denounced Stalin after 1956, but they maintained his system. The political power that they held was used systematically to milk the planned economy. Unlike the capitalists of the west they enjoyed their privileges behind closed doors whilst in public they pretended to an austere moral uprightness.

Across Eastern Europe and, now, in the Soviet Union, the fortresses of bureaucratic rule are crumbling. “Really existing socialism” is on its last legs. But, because of Stalinism and its elder brother, social democracy, there is no powerful mass force in the existing workers' movement of the east that has an alternative to capitalism. Of course, the capitalism that they preach as inevitable is a very idealised one—not the capital-

ism of grotesque inequality between a few millionaires and millions of unemployed, of social insecurity where a worker, after years of work can be thrown onto the streets with nothing. "Actually existing capitalism" has all these features. It has slumps as well as booms. As a world system it confines prosperity to a tiny handful of countries and even within these countries millions are excluded from the feast. World-wide it is a bankrupt system, writhing in wars and famine, rushing from hyper-inflation to savage austerity measures. The dictates of a few dozen bankers and the executives of the vast multi-national corporations decide the fates of most states and nations.

There is an alternative to all this and there is a force that can achieve it! The alternative goal is a workers' council state—or, rather a federation of workers' states—as the basis for spreading socialist revolution to the capitalist countries. The alternative force is the working class.

In Poland, in the GDR, in Romania, Czechoslovakia and in the USSR, the workers have shown their strength against their bureaucratic tormentors. That is why whatever the outcome on 18 March Gorbachev, Modrow, Lafontaine and Kohl are all agreed on one thing; "nothing must be created on the streets". Gorbachev and Modrow, under pressure from the streets, have conceded the leading role of the party, they have conceded the unification of Germany. Tomorrow they will concede the introduction of the market economy. They will concede anything providing that power does not pass onto the streets. On this, Kohl and Mitterrand, Thatcher and Bush, agree with them.

Not us! We address this programme of action to all those who believe that it is precisely out on the streets—and in the factories, the housing estates and the barracks—that a new GDR can and must be created. It is addressed to all those who know that the glamour and the riches of the FRG were amassed out of the sweat of the refugees of the 1950s and the immigrant workers of the 1960s and that it has been maintained at the cost of the incalculable suffering of the shanty towns of Latin America and the Far East.

It is a Trotskyist programme for a land where the voice of Trotskyism was silenced by the Nazis and the Stalinists fifty years ago. Like the politics of the Bolsheviks in the days of Lenin, Trotskyism takes as its starting point the existing needs and struggles of the working class and argues for methods of fighting for them, for forms of organisation and for demands that take the existing struggles in the direction of working class state power, which can only be exercised by workers' councils and can only be defended by workers' militias.

Today, the most urgent task is to prevent the elections being used to take the initiative away from the masses. Apart from the SED, all the parties and their leaders are unknown to the working class, they have no record by which they could be judged. The working class itself has had no time to organise politically and it is being asked to hand over legitimate government power, the power to decide the fate of the country, the economy, indeed of much of Europe, to a completely unknown future government.

In all these respects, the elections are fraudulent. They are more like a referendum: "Hands up all those who are against the past and in favour of the future!"

Revolutionary socialists preserve the rich experience of the working class throughout Europe, and beyond, with regard to democracy. Whilst we recognise and defend democratic freedoms as the gains of over two hundred years of struggle by the popular masses and the working class, we know that bourgeois parliamentarism does not embody the "rule of the people" and, by its very nature, cannot do so. Firstly, the parliamentary state which has a capitalist economy does not, and cannot, control it. In the factory, in the market place, there is no rule of the majority, no votes, no binding decisions. A tiny minority of the super rich decide for all.

Secondly, the real state—the army, the police force, the judiciary, the bureaucracy—are staffed by the bourgeoisie and its servants. Parliament is a facade that conceals the real machinery of power. Within it, the votes of millions of workers have little power to effect change. Deputies are elected for four year terms. They cannot be recalled or held to account by their electors. The overwhelming experience of the masses is of broken promises and deceived hopes. The result is cynicism and apathy. In the USA over 50% of the population do not bother to vote.

The Trotskyists, however, preserve the lessons and the experience of another, higher, form of democracy as well, that of the workers' councils. They existed in Germany in 1918-19 before the Social Democrats neutralised and dissolved them. They held state power in Russia until the bureaucratic counter-revolution of Stalin. Workers have created them in struggle in dozens of countries. In the struggles of 1956 in Hungary, workers' councils covered the country and mobilised resistance to the Russian invasion.

The Stalinists hated, suppressed and destroyed these organs of workers' democracy and working class power. Because they are made up of delegates elected in the workplaces and the workers' districts, because these delegates can, and should be, answerable to, and recallable to, mass meetings of their constituents and because they cannot only make laws but carry them out with the minimum of bureaucracy, they are the only means yet developed by the working class itself to hold state power.

However, they start their life as developments of the fighting organisations of the working class—the workplace unions, factory committees, strike committees. All these embody the principle of choosing trusted workers to lead, organise and represent the rank and file. Every city, every town, every sizeable village could, and should, have such a council. When they exist, the possibility either of a restoration of the power of the bureaucrats or the restoration of the power of the capitalists and the landowners will be made one hundred times more difficult. They will be the basis, via a nationwide congress of councils, for a workers' government.

Yet, whilst we fight for the building of workers' councils and for them to seize state power, we cannot turn our backs on the elections to the Volkskammer. We can

warn, and we do warn, that these elections will not bring power to the people. But we also recognise that it is the power of the people, of the working class, that has brought about these elections. The calling of free elections is a victory won by the masses. They thereby forced the Stalinists to declare their forty year illegitimacy. What the workers have won by their own actions they must not allow to be turned into a weapon against them. The dangers are clear from Poland, where the Mazowiecki/Jaruzelski government is imposing savage austerity measures to open the road to the restoration of capitalism.

But there are examples of how workers can use such elections to their own advantage. Last year, in the Soviet Union, even without many of the *de facto* democratic advantages which exist today in the GDR, the masses managed to make their voices heard in rigged elections. There, they held local meetings to choose candidates to stand against the official party. In the approaching local government elections the Siberian miners' strike committees are presenting their own candidates. Such "workers' candidates" are standing on a platform of immediate economic, social and political demands which express the needs of the working class.

Here, in the GDR, where there is so little time to ensure that the elections are not turned against the workers, we Trotskyists propose that every major fac-

tory and workplace hold meetings to select their own candidates and to agree on the political platform upon which they should stand for election. Such candidates should pledge themselves to obey the future decisions of the workers they represent or to resign. They should pledge themselves to regular reporting sessions at which they will account to their voters for their actions in the parliament and they should agree to remain on a workers' wages if elected.

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI), through its sections in the FRG and Austria, proposes the following action programme as the basis upon which such workers' candidates should stand. In the coming months, all programmes and political parties will be put to the test of practice. Experience will allow working class militants to refine and to make more concrete the specific demands of the programme.

It is a programme, essentially, for a period of defence and preparation for bigger struggles. In those struggles the working class will be victorious only if it creates out of its own ranks and those of its allies, a tried and tested leadership, a new and revolutionary communist party committed to a programme of working class self-organisation, workers' democracy, the formation of a workers' militia and the establishment of state power exercised through workers' councils.

A WORKERS' ANSWER TO THE CRISIS

THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The GDR was not the product of proletarian revolution in Germany. There could have been such a revolution. With the collapse of the Nazis, the overwhelming majority of the German people wanted socialism. The Communist party of Germany and the SPD, loyal lackeys of the Allies, prevented this. When the imperialist powers sought to roll back Stalin's sphere of influence the Russians liquidated capitalism from above, by administrative measures and using their armed might. But first they crushed all independent life out of the labour movement, creating the monolithic SED on the model of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Thus, the overthrow of capitalism, the state and planned economy which replaced it, were not a result of the free, conscious self-emancipation of the working class. Nor, for forty years, have the workers had the experience of controlling their own lives and destinies. Briefly, in 1953, they started to do so but were crushed by Soviet tanks. No wonder the GDR could never elicit the "patriotism" and the identification of the workers.

The Stalinist SED, which only stayed in power through the threat of the Soviet army, has brought the GDR to the point of final collapse. Almost a million citizens have, in Lenin's vivid phrase, voted with their feet. Because the GDR was created artificially by the wartime Allies it is little wonder that many have concluded, since the overthrow of Honecker, that the natural step to take is to remove the artificial division and re-establish a united German. This tendency brings

with it the danger of strengthening Great German chauvinism, the beginnings of which can already be seen.

Any integration into the FRG could only mean subordination to its economic giants like Deutsche Bank, Mercedes, Krupp etc. The precondition for this will be the fulfilment of the conditions laid down by these bourgeois monopolies. They want the freedom to decide over how and where labour power is to be exploited. They demand the free transfer of profits, indeed, a free hand in the exploitation and oppression of the workers of the GDR.

All the main parties accept, implicitly or explicitly, the "inevitability" of unification. A vote for any of them will be translated into a mandate to seek unification. To qualify for unification a new government will "have" to take unpopular measures; withdraw subsidies, increase unemployment etc. Above all it will be expected to show that it has removed politics from the streets and has made the working class "lower its expectations".

If it were achieved on the basis of capitalist restoration, unification would mean the creation of a far greater total German capital. The lower standard of living in the GDR and the sudden increase in the size of the labour force, not to mention the effects of "rationalisation" in terms of unemployment, would lead to an increase in the rate of exploitation of German capital as a whole. It is true that, for political reasons, the transition to capitalism in the ex-GDR might be eased by subsidies from the FRG. But these would have to be

paid for by taxation on the rest of the working class in the west who would also see their pay and conditions threatened by the "settlers" from the east. Whilst German capital grew richer, the working class would find itself divided.

A bigger German capital would also outgrow its present relations with other states. To find outlets for its capital and its products it would have to seek economic dominance of at least the whole of Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals. The other bourgeoisies of Europe have already made it clear that they are fearful of such a development. They, and the minor bourgeoisies striving to develop in Eastern and Central Europe, would equally attempt to save their own skins by whipping up the poison of nationalism among their own working classes, resurrecting old fears and prejudices. The opening decade of the twenty-first century, the new millenium, would bear an awesome similarity to the opening years of the twentieth.

The headlong rush to unification glosses over the fact that the present crisis does not result principally from the division of Germany but from the political regime of a Stalinist bureaucracy which systematically plundered the economy for its own privileges. The bankrupt strategy of "socialism in one country", by which the GDR as well as the rest of Eastern Europe and the whole of the USSR was dominated, prevented the integrated and proportionate expansion of all the economies. The uneconomic duplication of industries in every country, instead of a rational international division of labour, ensured the steady decline of even the previously relatively well-developed economies such as the GDR and Czechoslovakia.

The road to a prosperous and secure future in Europe does not lie through unification under the dictatorship of FRG finance capitalism. We have to turn the momentum for unification into the FRG rulers' worst nightmare. The workers of the GDR must embrace the project of a revolutionary re-unification of Germany! The workers of the GDR should demand the extension of their social conquests to the FRG. They should offer the closest co-operation to the rank and file workers of the FRG to aid them to rediscover their own revolutionary traditions and to move forward to settle accounts with their bosses. This project is not a fantasy. The GDR workers can begin to fight for it today by establishing the practical unity of the workers of all Germany.

Factory committees in the GDR must waste no time in establishing contact with the workers of plants inside the FRG; workers involved in the same industries, those who will be linked up by ownership if the capitalists get their way. Wage rates, working conditions, productivity, safety measures, union rights, every aspect of the work, on both sides, must be accurately understood. Joint committees must publicly demand access to company plans with regard to the GDR. Every attempt by management to play one set of workers against the other must be resisted by publicising exactly what they are trying to achieve—and which unions, politicians and bureaucrats are trying to help them!

From these solid foundations the workers of both

states can go forward. The overthrow of capitalism in the FRG, together with the overthrow of the bureaucracy inside the GDR, represents a truly great vision for all German workers that would open up the road to liberation for all the peoples of Europe.

WORKERS' UNITED FRONT AGAINST THE FASCIST THREAT AND RACISM!

The possibility of a reactionary re-unification encourages the Schoenhubs and the Kuehnens to take their fascist activities into the GDR. This constitutes a serious danger for the whole German working class! The objective of the fascists is to destroy all the gains, all the organisations of the labour movement. To achieve this they are trying to carry the poison of nationalism and chauvinism into the proletariat in order to split it and to atomise it politically.

Stop them in their tracks! The desecration of Soviet war memorials and Jewish graves, and the racist attacks on immigrant workers show the urgent necessity for an anti-fascist united front, a united front which would include all labour movement organisations, especially those of the immigrant workers, and all honest anti-fascists. The anti-Nazi rally at Treptow was the first step towards this. But it is only a beginning! In the factories and localities we must build anti-fascist committees whose task is to organise a militant fight against fascism and racism. Only in such a way can this great danger for the working class be averted.

- Full citizens' rights for all foreign workers!
- Smash the fascist and racist rabble! Build anti-fascist committees!

OPEN THE BOOKS! REVISE THE PLAN!

The workers of the GDR face the immediate task of overcoming economic dislocation crisis. Every factory has already been hit by shortages of material and personnel. Every worker knows that failure to meet targets will lead to further failures and complications elsewhere.

The authors of this chaos, the incompetent and corrupt bureaucrats, want to hand over the key sectors of the economy to West German monopolies. This will not solve the workers' problems and needs for a minute. On the contrary, it would make matters worse.

Workers must fight to stop this sort of programme before it gains control of the government and industry. While planning mechanisms still exist they must be taken from the bureaucrats, thoroughly purged and made into democratic instruments of the workers. Firstly, the workers must declare, in every factory, mine, transport depot, shop, office, school and hospital: "This workplace is not for sale. The socialised production of the GDR must remain, indeed, it must become the property of the working class and, as such, inalienable."

To ensure this in every workplace a council of elected and recallable delegates must be chosen at mass meetings. The task of these councils must be to cut through the Gordian knot of bureaucratic incompetence, mismanagement and corruption. The workers' committees, representing every section of the workforce, male and

female, young and old, German and immigrant, must fight to open the books of every enterprise and to combine with other workplaces, at local and national level, to take over control of the planning mechanisms.

In Gdansk, in 1981, the original Solidarity union insisted that all negotiations be televised to the workforce. This is an example that should be taken up by all workers' organisations but especially, in the GDR, when foreign investment is being discussed. Elected workers' candidates should press, in parliament, for all such measures which help to defend the working class, or to publicise the plans of its enemies, to be legally enforceable.

The help of "experts", economists and planners, will indeed be needed to teach the workers the necessary techniques and plans. Honest bureaucrats, willing to

"This workplace is not for sale The socialised production of the GDR must remain, indeed, it must become the property of the working class and, as such, inalienable."

do this, should be kept on, on the wages of a skilled worker. The lazy, incompetent and corrupt must be sent to do an honest day's work on the production line. The workers' committees in every industry must draw up a full and honest accounting of the resources actually available.

The Stalinist bureaucrats have never concerned themselves with working conditions and safety and have either left the proletariat in the dark about the state of the factories or else lied to them. For the same reasons environmental protection and safety measures in many enterprises, up to and including nuclear power stations, are terrible. The scale of this must be established by workers' inspection and be solved in the context of an emergency plan to minimise the dangers to the environment and jobs.

At the same time, in every city and town, a campaign must be launched to draw up a prioritised emergency plan to meet the people's needs, to cut out bottlenecks and shortages, to improve quality and speed and standards of provision. Workers in the state shops and working class housewives must organise into democratic co-operatives. Inefficient and corrupt managers must be ousted. Likewise, in the countryside, the farms need to be transformed on the basis of workers' management.

However, workers' management at the level of the farm and the factory could be a utopia if the coordination of economic life were left to the market. The capitalist propagandists lie when they say their system is guided by the "invisible hand" of the consumers' wishes. It is dominated and organised by the thirst for private profit.

If a commodity cannot be produced profitably, that is by exploiting the labour of the producers, then it is not produced, no matter whether it is needed.

Finance capital demands the removal of price subsi-

dies, the convertibility of the Mark, cuts in social concessions etc. The de-centralisation of factories is meant to make possible the taking over of the best sectors of the GDR economy and their subordination to the interests of profit. The SED-PDS and the other parties support this sell-out. Working men and women must seize the initiative themselves. No to convertibility which would destroy the savings of the proletariat and lower living standards even further.

No to the housing speculation and rent-racketeers of the "free west". No to the "free transfer of profits" which means the draining away of the social surplus by the capitalists. The removal of price subsidies by the bureaucrats or under imperialist pressure must be stopped! The workers' movement must decide which subsidies are necessary and which are not!

Under capitalism, every unprofitable element of the society is minimised or dropped. The young, the old, the poor, the ill, are pushed to the back of the queue. To meet the needs of the working people with cheap abundant necessities of life, to provide leisure and recreation, it is not necessary to let the law of the market loose on society. On the contrary, to reward all workers with the fruits of their labour it is necessary to co-ordinate production and exchange democratically and consciously. It is necessary to plan.

Not only is it necessary, it is also possible. The bureaucrats did it, but for their own purposes and interests, using a huge part of the surplus product for their own consumption and to maintain a vast military and police dictatorship.

Of course, the whole planning procedure had to be kept secret from the workers who would not have tolerated the wholesale theft of social property. As a result, however, planning proceeded without the knowledge and know-how of the working class being used constantly to improve and refine it.

It was this "blind planning", plus the isolation of each "socialist" country instead of a sensible international division of labour, which was the ultimate cause of stagnation and crisis. Removing the bureaucratic dictatorship, unleashing the creative power of the workers will allow planning to demonstrate its full capacity, its superiority to the market.

It will demonstrate this in terms of increased production, better quality goods, environmental cleanliness and, above all, in realising social justice, the equality at the highest level of mental and manual labour, of men and women, young and old, town and country. We can advance towards the situation where the principle, "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need" is progressively achieved.

Such a society, based on economic and social, as well as political, democracy, is vastly superior to any known capitalism. It is the society of the future for humanity. Any country, any state, that sets out on this road will be a magnet for the assistance and common struggle of the entire world proletariat.

Without capitalists to expropriate, without a capitalist state to fight, the workers of the GDR, of Poland, of Romania and of the mighty USSR, have the opportunity, now, in 1990, to open the blocked road to socialism.

FOR A DEMOCRATIC WORKERS' MOVEMENT

As the working class of the GDR moves into action to defend itself, it will create new organisations and break up old ones. After the decades of prohibition of free political activity, the whole working class movement has to be re-organised from top to bottom on the basis of democratic decision making, disciplined implementation of decisions and loyalty to the workers' own organisations.

Despite the role they played in the past, the official organisations—the SED, FDGB (the East German TUC) and including women's organisations, youth organisations etc—have working class members who are subjectively committed to their class. It would be no gain for the workers if those organisations were simply dissolved. Far better that the real class struggle be taken inside them by demanding of all their members, and leaders, that they put their resources at the disposal of the base organisations of the working class in the factories, the housing estates, the schools and colleges and in the state machine itself. The old organisations have absolutely no right to expect the trust or allegiance of the working class, far less any basis upon which to assert any right to leadership. Nonetheless, within those organisations there is a wealth of experience and knowledge which, put under the discipline of the working class, could be an invaluable asset in the struggles which lie ahead.

Within the working class movement, special emphasis must be placed on the creation of women's organisations. In some respects, for example, childcare, the GDR made better provision than many an advanced imperialist country. But the purpose was only to maximise the size of the workforce, not to accelerate the emancipation of women. Today, in the GDR, women still carry the double burden of job and family.

This weakens the working class not only in the immediate crisis but also in advance of any attempts to restore capitalism. All organisations within the working class must ensure the full involvement and representation of women and, in addition, encourage and facilitate the formation of women's organisations. No plan of action, no list of demands, no revision of the plan can be considered complete unless it makes specific provision for the needs and involvement of women.

In all revolutions, the energy and enthusiasm of youth have played a decisive role in victory. Perhaps the most damning indictment of the Stalinists' years of power is that the overwhelming majority of those who have fled the country are young workers. Only the prospect of a determined fight to secure their future can now hope to stem this exodus. The workers' movement must make the cause the cause of youth or it will run the risk of leaving them to the phoney radicalism of the fascists. As well as placing resources at the disposal of youth organisations run by the youth themselves, every opportunity must be taken to bring youth into the organisation and decision making of the workers' movement. Young workers' elected representatives should automatically have places on all factory and workplace committees. Full citizenship and full pay at 16. In the schools and colleges, control of the institution and the

curriculum should be taken into the hands of committees of students', teachers' and workers' organisations.

WHO RULES?

Since the overthrow of Honecker, the GDR has witnessed a form of "dual powerlessness". Mass mobilisations set definite limits to the use of the state machine by the Stalinists but, without any positive objectives of its own, the mass movement has not been able to impose its own power. Such a situation cannot last for long, politics will not tolerate a vacuum. If the elections lead to the formation of a government committed to unification and, therefore, restoration of capitalism, such a government will soon take steps to re-assert the power of the state against unofficial organisations. At present, the essential levers of state power are still in the hands of the Stalinists. When they judge that the time is right they will still be willing to use them.

The demand for a new internal security service must, therefore, be totally opposed! A new Stasi would be directed against workers' strikes and demonstrations by the Stalinists, together with the bourgeoisie and not, as Mođrow tried to tell us, against the fascists. No, they want to use police state methods against the existing anger at the social consequences (massive unemployment and cuts in social services etc) of their turn to the market economy.

- Smash the remnants of the Stasi!
- No to all plans for a new security force!
- For workers' militias!

Here and now, in the election campaign, in the towns will be an elementary responsibility of these units and, on 18 March, they should be the force that ensures an honest election procedure.

Although the formation of workers' defence squads is essential, they cannot hope to be a match for a disciplined army. The effectiveness of the army in the hands of the government can only be undermined from within. The overwhelming majority of soldiers are conscripts, workers in uniform.

The workers' movement must prioritise winning them to the side of their class by using the methods of their class; fraternisation, demands for soldiers' committees in every barracks and regiment, the election of officers, recognition of democratic soldiers' organisations within the organisations of the working class and full political and trade union rights for all soldiers. The first signs of soldiers' councils in the New People's Army (e.g. in the Dzherzhinsky Guards Regiment) proves the correctness and necessity of this perspective.

The Soviet troops in the GDR continue to serve the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy as they always have (as they did in 1953).

Today they are not deployed to defend the workers' states against imperialist aggression. Gorbachev and the Soviet bureaucracy have long made it clear that they would not resist a capitalist reunification. The task of the troops is far more that of a reserve army which would be used in emergencies to hold down the working class. Therefore, we demand the immediate withdrawal of the Soviet army of occupation.

Despite this or, rather, because of this, we must begin

a political agitation among the Soviet occupation troops. Our objective must be fraternisation between the East German working class and the Soviet soldiers, the better to carry the political revolution into the USSR.

- Build self-defence groups in every factory and town!
- For soldiers' councils in the New People's Army!

FOR WORKERS' COUNCILS AND A WORKERS' GOVERNMENT

The workers' movement cannot remain at the level of factory organisation. In every city and town, the organisations of the working class need to co-ordinate and centralise themselves by the creation of workers' councils.

These councils, the true heirs to the Raete of 1919, must fight for and establish their right and ability to impose working class order on their localities. In conjunction with women's organisations, factory committees and the defence organisations, they must ensure the dismantling of the old repressive state machine, the eradication of corruption and privilege and the maintenance of supplies and order.

At a national level, the workers' councils must convene a Congress of Workers' Councils as the sovereign state power. Only such a council can genuinely give expression to the demands of the masses for a democratic state that rules society in the interests of the majority. No party or government that does not recognise the sovereignty of the Congress can be considered a genuine part of the workers' movement but, rather, an enemy of the workers' state.

Only a government which subordinated itself to the decisions of the Congress of Councils could be recognised as a revolutionary workers' government. Any other would be an enemy of the proletariat.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY AND A NEW COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

Every step forward in the struggle of the working class assumes the victory of one set of ideas, one strategy, one politics over another. Democratic decision making, the lifeblood of the workers' movement, is best served by the clearest organisational expression of opposing political strategies in the form of political parties. No party has the right to assume leadership but, equally, no serious political fight can be won without leadership.

Throughout the election campaign, and what follows it, the enemies of the working class will be assembling their new leaderships, their new parties. They will test them for reliability, determination and the accuracy of their programmes. The working class must create and identify its own new leadership. Those who are genuinely dedicated to the cause of the working class must translate their commitment into a political strategy upon which to establish a new revolutionary party.

Such a party, from the very beginning, must fight to win leadership in every factory committee, every defence squad, every women's organisation and every youth group. It must determine its own strategy and tactics, its own internal leadership, by the method of demo-

cratic centralism. That is to say, the fullest discussion of its programme, and how to fight for it, and the most disciplined implementation of decisions once taken.

Only such a party, drawing in the creativity and experience of the working class in action, can find a way to withstand the crisis into which the GDR is heading. Opening up the way to a socialist future, however, will require overcoming the limitations imposed on any country by geography and resources. Internationally, a revolutionary workers' state of the GDR must forge links with the workers' movements of the rest of Europe. To the east and to the west, the future of the workers' movements is hinged on what happens in the GDR. The shattered economies of the east need products that the GDR can supply. The GDR itself will need to call on the workers of the west to force their capitalists and governments to trade with the GDR.

The working class must create and identify its own new leadership. Those who are genuinely dedicated to the cause of the working class must translate their commitment into a political strategy upon which to establish a new revolutionary party.

The international nature of the workers' strategy must be reflected in the creation of an international workers' party, committed to the international overthrow of Stalinism and capitalism.

FOR THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION

Either the working class must go on to give the elemental freedom they have conquered on the streets an organised class content, or they will be deprived of the freedoms they have just won. The nationalised means of production will be dismantled and the mass democratic revolution of 1989, will be hijacked by the West German imperialists and their lackeys in the GDR. They will turn it into a bourgeois counter-revolution.

To stop this, the working class has to extend the revolution, taking it forward to a new stage, one in which political power will be vested in a state of workers' councils. This proletarian political revolution is the only answer to, and the only means of preventing, the social counter-revolution. The proletarian political revolution in the GDR will be simultaneously the signal for the whole working class of Eastern Europe and the USSR. The working class in the GDR must consciously grasp this fact and carry the political revolution to Eastern Europe and the USSR.

A planned and socialised all-German economy, as part of a United Socialist States of Europe, has limitless possibilities to transform not only Europe but the whole world. To bring, not exploitation and plunder to Africa, Asia and Latin America, but massive planned programmes of development to the benefit of the millions in these continents. Why should there be unemployment in Europe when the factories could be work-

ing to fulfil the orders for the modernisation of the economies of two-thirds of the world?

The world bourgeoisie is rejoicing over the ending of the "spectre of communism". They look forward with scarce concealed glee to a new century of world plunder and super-exploitation. The capitalists rejoice too soon! The nightmare of Stalinist dictatorship is lifting for the working class of the USSR and Eastern Europe. It is being lifted by the working class. This working class must not, and will not, submit to renewed capitalist exploitation. As the workers dig in their heels

against the restorationists, the smile will fall from the faces of the Kohls and the Thatchers. In the FRG, in Britain, in France, in Italy and in Spain, the workers' movement will look eastwards in hope and expectation once more. The political revolution in Eastern Europe can give a mighty impetus to the socialist revolution in the whole continent and on other continents too!

- For the revolutionary re-unification of Germany!
- Spread the political revolution to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union!
- For the United Socialist States of Europe!

The death agony of Stalinism in Eastern Europe

The opening days of the 1990s were days of hope for the workers of Eastern Europe. Ceausescu fell after a bloody civil war. Stalinist tyrants quaked with fear across the whole continent. The results and prospects of the revolutionary movements which have swept the Stalinist states are assessed here.

REVOLTS AGAINST Stalinist tyranny have peppered the history of the degenerate workers' states. Isolated, they have been repeatedly crushed by the tanks of the USSR or its faithful servants in the ruling Stalinist parties. Today the situation is different.

The synchronised upheaval of 1989 has swept across the whole of Eastern Europe. Gorbachev has been unwilling to implement the "Brezhnev Doctrine" of using military might to crush the opposition. The explanation for this lies in the crisis of the USSR itself arising from years of economic stagnation.

The emergence of Gorbachev in the 1980s as a champion of economic restructuring (*perestroika*) opened up a new period in the USSR and in its relations with imperialism. The keystone of Gorbachev's programme was retreat. On a world scale he re-negotiated the terms of peaceful co-existence by conceding to the imperialists' demands. Soviet troops left Afghanistan, while their Cuban and Vietnamese counterparts withdrew from Southern Africa and Kampuchea. These moves paved the way for reductions in military spending in the USSR.

Internally Gorbachev's programme envisaged a retreat from central planning and the introduction of market mechanisms as a means of stimulating economic growth.

To overcome the resistance of the vast army of bureaucrats who stood to lose from such reforms, Gorbachev sought to enlist popular support through his policy of openness (*glasnost*). Limited democratic reforms were introduced, certain crimes of the past were admitted and a campaign against corruption was launched.

Gorbachev's programme was always a profoundly risky one for the bureaucracy. In the USSR itself the reforms have not resolved the fundamental prob-

lems. Prices are rising, the black market is expanding and this winter has seen the worst shortages in the cities of the USSR for thirty years. The miners strikes of the summer showed that the workers will not tolerate such *perestroika* at their expense.

At the same time *glasnost* has unleashed widespread protests by workers, oppressed nationalities and the intelligentsia against the rule of the bureaucracy itself.

But it is in the states of Eastern Europe that the repercussions of Gorbachev's programme have been felt most acutely. They are ruled by regimes imposed on them by Stalin's armies and suffer from varying degrees of economic crisis thanks to the bungled planning efforts of self-serving bureaucrats. The masses of these countries have seized the openings provided by Gorbachev's reforms, while their rulers have fragmented into warring factions, unable to continue in the old way.

The resulting revolutionary crises have opened the door to three possible outcomes: the restoration of capitalism, a retrenchment of bureaucratic power by the Stalinist parties or the victory of proletarian political revolution.

The danger of full scale capitalist restoration is most clearly shown in Poland and Hungary. The bureaucrats were unable to overcome their economic stagnation through limited marketisation. Even Jaruzelski's crushing of the workers' opposition in 1981 proved insufficient as a long term solution. Sections of the bureaucracy have turned ever more openly to the re-introduction of capitalism as the means of salvation.

In Poland, following the trouncing of the Stalinist party in the semi-democratic elections, a government dominated by restorationists has emerged. While the Stalinist PUPW and Jaruzelski still control the re-

pressive apparatus, Solidarnosc—no longer a real trade union but an evolving Christian Democratic party dominated by catholic intellectuals and free market economists—control the government. They and the Stalinists are agreed on the need to see through a programme of economic reform.

It is a programme that should serve to warn every worker of the threat that capitalist restoration poses. Following the dictates of the IMF the Polish government is set to introduce an austerity package that will decimate the living standards of the Polish masses. Prices will soar as subsidies are cut. Wages are to be legally stopped from matching the price rises with the aim of cutting real incomes by 25%. Closures and redundancies will be introduced across industry as a prelude to privatisation. The currency is to be devalued by two thirds and control over foreign trade is to be scrapped. If these measures are successful the Polish workers—who have a proud record of defending their living standards with their lives—will have suffered an enormous defeat.

In the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Romania the danger of capitalist restoration also exists. Mass mobilisations toppled the Stalinist governments of these countries, extending to civil war in the case of Romania. Reforming sections of the bureaucracy have secured a degree of control, but are sharing it with forces of the opposition many of whom are overtly pro-capitalist such as the economic advisers to Czechoslovakia's Civic Forum.

In each of these countries the development of a "Polish" scenario is possible after the elections in the spring. The hatred of Stalinism felt by the masses could well produce popular front governmental coalitions which would eventually also open the door to the restoration of capitalism. In the GDR the pressure for restoration also arises from without, from the imperialist German reunification drive of Helmut Kohl.

Although the pace of developments will vary it is this potential for widespread moves towards the restoration of capitalism that raises the spectre of the alternative outcome of bureaucratic retrenchment.

The Stalinist bureaucracies derive their power and privilege from their political control over the planned economies. They maintain that control by their hold on the repressive apparatus in each country. Under the current conditions of crisis they are fragmenting. And against those who favour self-reform and restoration stand elements who will fight to the death to save their own skins. Ceausescu and his Securitate were an example of this. In the face of actual restoration other sections of the bureaucracy would go along a similar path.

But their ability to carry through a retrenchment, with all the repression that it would entail, depends to a considerable extent on the USSR. For his own purposes Gorbachev has been prepared to go along with reform and large scale marketisation and even capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe. But Gorbachev's condition for tolerating "reform" is that the security of the USSR itself will not be threatened. For Gorbachev himself is not a restorationist. He is a Stalinist Bonaparte attempting to rescue the Soviet

Union's economy by striking a balance between command planning and marketisation.

When his security has come under threat he has carried out his own form of bureaucratic retrenchment. His banning of strikes, his crushing of national revolts, his defence of the "leading role of the party" all illustrate this.

If capitalist restoration is to take place in Eastern Europe it would mean not merely imperialist economic penetration of those countries, but ultimately imperialist domination of them. In turn this would necessitate the destruction of Stalinist control over the repressive apparatus in each country. It would result in the transformation of each country into a puppet of imperialism, with the probable exception of the GDR which would become part of imperialist Germany. Imperialism would then be at the very door of the USSR, threatening its security.

In the face of such a threat combined with growing restorationist and separatist nationalist movements within the USSR, Gorbachev may, as Stalin did in the 1940s, attempt to resist the interventions of imperialism through bureaucratic crack-down in Eastern Europe. The condition for such a move will be that each and every gain the masses have made in struggle, principally their independent organisations, are destroyed. The Chinese bureaucracy showed that Stalinism is capable of such a retrenchment. And Gorbachev, while regretting their actions, did not condemn it. The warning was clear. He may need to use such methods and will not rule them out.

Against capitalist restoration or bureaucratic retrenchment the masses must be won to a revolutionary alternative; to the programme of political revolution. In the struggles of 1989 the working class have demonstrated again and again their power and their capacity to make revolutions. In Czechoslovakia the general strike was pivotal in the destruction of the old regime. In the USSR the miners' strikes shook the regime to its foundations. In Romania the workers entered the fray with arms in hands, and forged in a day organisations which they had been deprived of for forty years.

It is inevitable and quite understandable that the years of Stalinist misrule have turned such workers against "communism". The communism they have endured has been a foul concoction of repression, bureaucratic privilege and the denial of political freedom. Under such circumstances the proponents of capitalist restoration and bourgeois democracy are gaining a hearing. They come in different guises—the church, the christian democratic parties, pro-capitalist social democracy. These forces are striving to win the leadership of the working class with false promises of freedom.

Against these advocates of capitalism revolutionary parties of the working class must be built in the months ahead. Trotskyism has no need to be shy in unfurling its banner before the masses of Eastern Europe and the USSR. Unlike the capitalists who tolerated the enslavement of the masses by Stalinism when it suited their purposes, we have always stood four square for the independence of the working class,

its organisations and its rights. Unlike the Stalinists who stole power from the masses of Eastern Europe and the USSR we have stood for real workers' democracy, a plan geared to the satisfaction of human need and against all national oppression.

Today we stand against capitalist restoration and bureaucratic retrenchment. We stand for a thoroughgoing political revolution that alone can open up the way to real freedom—freedom from vicious capitalist exploitation as well as from bureaucratic tyranny. In the months ahead we will fight for the building and consolidation of genuinely independent workers' organisations—factory committees, trade unions, workers' councils and a workers' militia.

Faced with elections in spring we will fight for workers' candidates committed to opposing the sell-off of the workers' states to imperialism and to any return to Stalinist rule. In Poland and Hungary we will call for organised opposition to the austerity packages which seek to starve the workers so that a

handful of parasites can reap rich profits. Everywhere we will urge working class internationalism, the spread of revolution and the destruction of all tyrants. The revolutionary Trotskyist party can and must be built in the course of the struggle around this programme.

To the extent that Trotskyism succeeds in these tasks then the victory of the political revolution will become possible. And such a victory, beginning even in only one country, will light a new beacon of hope for workers everywhere, will inspire countless millions to take the road of revolutionary struggle, will plunge our rulers—both bureaucratic and capitalist—into panic and disarray.

Such a prize is worth fighting for. Such a prize will be the only worthy reward for those who, like the Romanians, have given their lives in the cause of revolution.

- Forward to proletarian political revolution!
- Forward to the world socialist revolution!

POLAND

The imperialists “rescue” Poland

VIRTUALLY EVERY major political force has an emergency plan for Poland right now. And they all agree on one thing—that the rights and living standards of the Polish working class must be hammered.

The Stalinists of the “Communist” Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) have their own plan, or rather two, since they are riven by factions and likely to be heading for a split in the not too distant future.

On the one side are the old hardliners who backed Jaruzelski's martial law clamp down in 1981. They may seem a spent force for now, but Party Secretary Rakowski has already signalled that he will fight bitterly to keep the Party bureaucracy's hands on the key levers of power. Such elements look to a Solidarity government quickly discrediting itself and to their control of the security and police apparatus as a means of making a political come-back. And in the meantime they have no immediate alternative to the marketisation plans of Solidarity.

The “reform” wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy wants its own form of local “peaceful co-existence” with the

Catholic church and capitalism to continue under a different label. It is clear from plans already put into effect that they see no fundamental contradiction between continued defence of their own interests as a bureaucratic caste and the emergence of a new capitalist class in Poland. Indeed many clearly hope to take their place in such a class.

The political concomitant of this “capitalism” would be the splitting off of a wing of the PUWP to form a new social democratic, pro-capitalist party based on the skilled labour aristocracy and intelligentsia. As such it would be a direct rival to Solidarity in its parliamentary party form—but could make common cause with it against the hardliners.

What still unites both wings of the bureaucracy is the belief that their crisis, and the crisis of the Polish economy, can be solved on the backs of the working class and without their direct participation, except as harder workers.

In this they stand shoulder to shoulder with the Solidarity apparatus. They too have a plan for Poland, and one that, at present, sits somewhat uncomfortably with that of the Stalinists.

What will make it hard for the two plans of the reluctant partners, Solidarity and the Stalinists, to co-exist for long is the speed with which the ambitions of Solidarity increase and therefore its challenge to the bureaucratic and managerial apparatus. Inevitably the Monetarism being embraced by the Solidarity leadership will lead to sharp collisions with sections of the old apparatus who will see their power and privileges under threat. The proliferation of plans for the restoration of capitalism amongst Solidarity's top advisers will accelerate that process.

The Solidarity austerity package now being touted as the “Trzeciakowski Plan” envisages a sudden transition to market forces as the mainspring of Poland's economy. It aims at the short sharp restoration of capitalism itself. The western adviser who stands behind Trzeciakowski has commented that:

“The new government should take the shock now: it

can deal with the political realities later. It must show it has the will to act. The political will is the essential element in this." (*Financial Times* 26.8.89)

Faced with this kind of programme the resistance of the Polish working class will be crucial. Unfortunately the influence of Walesa and co. and the Catholic church are serious weaknesses, which threaten to cripple the ability of the workers to resist—to sap their political will. Walesa himself has time and again demonstrated that he can and will use his authority to "extinguish" strikes in order to negotiate with the Stalinists, and now to introduce an austerity package.

This was demonstrated amply by the first strike of the new regime, by rail workers in Lodz. It was called off after Walesa urged them to "support the prime minister" and denounced the organisers as provocateurs. Now the solidarity leadership has announced a "no-strike deal" agreed with the government the entire weight of the Catholic church and Walesa will be brought to bear in order to dampen the resistance of the Polish workers.

The attempt to impose a job and wage cutting austerity package against the workers threatens to bring the divorce between Solidarity as a trade union, still looked to by millions of workers to defend them, and Solidarity as a political apparatus, to an absolute break. Hand in hand with the catholic church a significant section of that apparatus can crystallise into an openly pro-capitalist and Christian Democratic party.

Indeed many of the leading Solidarity MPs, including Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, himself, were well known catholic intellectuals before Solidarity was born.

It is clear that now they have drunk deep from the cup of parliamentary democracy, they have little future use for Solidarity the trade union. As Lech Walesa commented earlier this year, he wasn't too bothered that Solidarity will never again reach ten million, since it is "no longer necessary".

Perhaps not for Walesa, Mazowiecki and co, but for the Polish workers facing an austerity drive orchestrated from the west, independent, militant self-organisation is a must. This is especially true since they face

enemies disguised as friends over the border in the west too.

William Waldegrave, Minister of State at the British Foreign Office responsible for Eastern Europe, has also unveiled his plan for Poland. Along with the rest of Eastern Europe he wants Poland to become part of a block of

"... Independent East and Central European countries that are not part of anybody's empire... That is the quid pro quo [for western aid—WP]. We are not trying to tempt them into our camp, but we want the break up of the Warsaw Pact." (*Independent* 26.8.89)

He claims his model is Austria, neither part of NATO nor the Warsaw Pact—but definitely capitalist. But in reality the Poland his like envisage, with closed down heavy industries and small pockets of western investment would be an impoverished semi-colony of the western capitalists.

The Soviet bureaucracy has evinced its satisfaction with events in Poland even though the Solidarity government has made no attempt to hide its restorationist intentions. Solidarity has promised to leave security with the PUWP and to stay in the Warsaw Pact. That seems enough to satisfy the Kremlin. It should not be forgotten that the Stalinists attempted to create pro-Soviet governments with representatives of capitalism in the years immediately after the Second World War.

It was only with the onset of the Marshall Plan and the cold war that this inherently unstable solution—unstable that is, with communists sharing government with representatives of capital—was resolved by the bureaucratic overthrow of capitalism.

With no significant force opposing a dramatic lurch towards capitalism in Poland the tasks facing the working class become ever more immediate.

They must resist every closure, every price rise and every wage cut that the capitalists and their agents are demanding. They must rise up to overthrow the ruling bureaucracy that bears historic responsibility for the crisis and take the planned economy into its own hands, and defend it against capitalist restoration from whatever source.

HUNGARY

Turning bureaucrats into bosses

Hungary has the highest official rate of suicide in Europe. Perhaps, then, it should have been no surprise to see the 1,000 plus delegates of the ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) commit collective political suicide early in October when they voted to dissolve their party.

AT FIRST sight what the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) called "the truly amazing move towards a multi-party democracy" by the Stalinist bureaucracy does seem extraordinary. A plurality of parties will freely contest elections with no reserved places in

1990, with virtually all singing hymns of praise to capitalism and the market. The hundreds of thousands for whom party membership brought privileges, plus the thousands of state and party officials whose jobs ultimately depend on state control of the

economy, seem intent on throwing it all away.

In fact, having brought Hungary to the brink of economic collapse, the bureaucrats are now trying to save something for themselves from the wreckage.

For more than ten years, Hungary has lurched from crisis to crisis. Like the other bureaucratically mismanaged economies, Hungary's growth rates steadily declined in the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1978 and 1987 they averaged only 1.8%. This year industrial production has declined by 0.7% as a whole and 5.7% in light industry.

Hungary was one of the first of the Stalinist states to try to borrow its way out of crisis. Now, despite a draconian austerity programme since the early 1980s, external debt is smothering the economy. Hard currency earnings on exports barely cover the interest charges on the \$17.8 billion outstanding to western bankers. National income was stagnant this year and last and is predicted to grow at only 0.2% p.a. for the next few years. State investment has fallen by 10% in the last decade while inflation is at 15% and rising. Meanwhile it is common for people to hold down two, or even three jobs, and yet 20% of the population lives below the official poverty line.

Within the ruling bureaucracy no one has the slightest idea how to improve the working of the existing system. Put bluntly the game is up. This is what the likes of Poszgay and Nemeth in the leadership of the newly-launched Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) have recognised. Their sole concern now is to use their remaining power to ensure that they are able to take advantage of the return of capitalism to Hungary.

Their first task is to hold on to political power for as long as possible so that sections of the bureaucracy can effect the transition to membership of a new capitalist class. For this they must be seen to be taking the initiative in preparing for restoration and not allow the non-party opposition to steal a march on them. Their objective is to see Poszgay elected President this month and to form a major part of a coalition government after the parliamentary elections next spring.

In the longer term, this section of the bureaucracy intends to oversee the restoration of capitalism and to install itself as part of a comprador bourgeoisie operating in alliance with western imperialism. They hope to act on behalf of, and increasingly to merge with, the already significant layer of managers and small capitalists which has been formed by past concessions and market reforms. Those who cannot expect direct entry to the new bourgeoisie hope to be able to find profitable roles for themselves in the commercial banks, the holding companies and on the boards of directors of the new joint-stock companies.

Poszgay and friends fully intend to use the new laws to ease their own path to prosperity. In January of this year, for example, the privatisation law allowed the League of Young Communists to "buy", for mere pennies, a range of conference centres and recreational facilities. This huge real estate was thus transformed from an object of privileged use by the ruling caste into potentially very valuable hereditary

wealth in the hands of the sons and daughters of the bureaucracy.

The social democratising Poszgay is not unopposed in the HSP. He was able to rely on only 30% of the votes at the October Congress. Ranged against him are whole sections of the party. First of all there are the less radical reformers led by General Secretary Karoly Grosz. Behind him stand the more hard-line Stalinists of Robert Ribanszki's Marxist Unity Platform.

Such opposition within the party, and its growing desperation, stems from a recognition that not all the present bureaucrats can expect to find a place in the sun in a capitalist Hungary, especially in one that is quickly reduced to being a semi-colonial client of the imperialist powers. They know that massive cuts in state spending, both civil and military, spell doom for hundreds of thousands of privileged parasites.

Their weakness comes from the obvious fact that they have no alternative to Poszgay's plans. Their only tactic is to try to subvert and delay the social-democratisation of the Stalinist party and the dismantling of the Stalinist state apparatus.

The question remains whether they could marshal more sinister forces, especially within the military, to re-assert central control. Ribanszki's group has close connections with the reactionary Ferenc Munnich Society and the Friends of the Workers' Guard (the old HSWP party militia).

Could they bring the terror of Tiananmen Square to the boulevards of Budapest? This is by no means clear. The Hungarian army, ever since 1956, has been a less reliable arm of the state than, for example, its Polish counterpart. It seems unlikely that the 65,000 Soviet troops would intervene to stop the reformers, or stand by and watch Hungarian troops do it.

In fact the reformers are already actively undermining the military and the internal security police. Horvath, Minister of the Interior, has declared his office beyond party control and subservient only to parliament, and is in the process of dissolving the Workers' Guard. He also removed leading figures from the police force last June.

With political reforms proceeding apace, and no indication of any plans by Gorbachev to intervene to halt the process, how long will it be before Hungary is a fully-fledged parliamentary democracy? What is the timetable for capitalist restoration?

The EIU reported recently that, "Hungary's image as the pioneer reformer in Eastern Europe is attracting considerable interest among western banks and businesses". This is hardly surprising when one considers that the bureaucrats have just sold these same banks a 49% share in Tungsram, probably the most successful of Hungary's companies. Moreover, if they are unable to sell the shares on the stock market within three years the Hungarian government guaranteed to reimburse them everything!

Currently Australia is lining up the brewing industry and Canada the chemical plants. Many other sectors are also on the imperialists' shopping list. However, to sustain the enthusiasm of the banks and go beyond the present couple of hundred joint-ven-

tures Hungary will have to cross the Rubicon. She will have to allow market forces to start restructuring her economy. The Bankruptcy Law will have to be rigorously implemented. Loss making companies, whose numbers climbed from 179 to 282 last year, will be obliged either to "shape up" or go to the wall.

Indeed, all this is envisaged in the three year plan due to begin in 1990. A menu of privatisation and liberalisation has been drawn up to whet the appetite of potential investors; the provisions for starting up limited liability companies and converting state assets to them has been simplified.

In 1991, the country will switch to hard currency accounting in trade in order to attract foreign capital, and there are plans to open a stock market (an essential ingredient implying the free movement of capital). Taken together this shows Hungary to be on target for full conversion back to domination by the law of value in just a few years time.

The process cannot be swifter since some of the measures that imperialism requires counteract others. To reduce the debt they must increase hard currency exports but privatisation and rationalisation will cause disruption and, therefore, a reduction in exports. However, if the reform plans are implemented on time then, by 1995 when Austria and Hungary jointly host the World Fair, the latter may already be a semi-colony of the former.

Of course, all this presupposes that neither the conservatives in the bureaucracy, nor more importantly the working class, intervene in the whole process. However, such interventions are inevitable. Nobody, least of all the capitalist roaders, is seeking to hide the coming storms. By stressing these difficulties they hope to demoralise the working class in advance. Thus, Imre Tarafas, First Deputy President of the Hungarian National Bank, argued recently of the large mining and food sectors:

"The world market is certain not to buy the products of these sectors at a price sufficiently high to provide coverage for the Hungarians' living stan-

dards... a significant part of these activities will have to be terminated... this will imply suffering and conflicts."

The social costs, in terms of unemployment, reduced living standards and disunity within the working class, will be awesome. In the approaching presidential elections, both Poszgay and the Democratic Forum candidate will be insisting that it is all inevitable, the cost of the failed "socialist" experiment. They will try to take advantage of a widespread demoralisation and passivity to be elected to lead Hungary through difficult times.

Although some elements of the HSP demagogically claim to want to defend jobs in threatened industries, Poszgay does not. There is no evidence that the working class is expecting him to act as its defender. Consequently, there are no grounds for proposing a tactic of "critical electoral support" for Poszgay on the grounds that he is the candidate of a bourgeois workers' party (like West European Social Democrats or Labour) against an open capitalist party.

The Democratic Forum, largest of the opposition groups, offers no alternative to the HSP. Theirs is simply a less "welfare statist" version of capitalist restoration.

Hungarian workers should reject both roads to the restoration of exploitation and abstain from voting in the presidential elections. There is no need to endure the scenario painted for them by the restorationists.

There is an alternative to both bureaucratic dictatorial planning and the restoration of capitalist slavery.

The working class must seize as its own the true heritage of the 1956 Rising to which the restorationists lay claim. The heart of that rising was the creation of workers' councils and a workers' militia.

To defend itself against the coming onslaught, the workers of Hungary must reconstruct them as the vanguard of the force that can put paid to restorationist and bureaucrat alike and open the way to the construction of a revolutionary workers' state. ■

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Prague's autumn

HAVING DEMOLISHED the Berlin Wall the mass tide of opposition to Stalinism in Eastern Europe broke down the protective barriers surrounding the Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPCS). The ruling regime of Milos Jakes, which began the year cracking open the heads of demonstrators, has ended it in headlong political re-

turn. The turning point came in mid-November when Prague party chief Miroslav Stepan sent the militia in, batons flying, to disperse student protesters.

Within days 500,000 people, nearly a third of Prague's total population, were out on the streets demanding an end to the dictatorship. Within twelve days the CPCS had caved in to a series of demands: the resignation of the Politburo, the promise of a new government and free elections, the lifting of censorship, the opening of borders and the end of the guaranteed leading role of the party.

But now the opposition movement, crystallised around the Civic Forum (CF), has reached the end of the first phase of the revolt. Just as in the GDR—even if they have reached this point more quickly—the opposition has secured the end of the party's guaranteed monopoly of government office, established a dialogue with that party, removed the most hated and discredited of the

bureaucrats and established a certain freedom of organisation.

But what next? As leading CF figure Jan Urban put it: "We were united because we knew what we were against but we have to decide now what we are for, exactly."

As the mass demonstrations subside and the bargaining begins the greatest danger facing the Czech workers is that a convergence takes place between the right wing of CF and the reform wing of the CPCS.

Although only officially launched during the first week of the demonstrations, the essentials of the CF's programme had been worked out long before by leading intellectuals around the Charter 77 dissident movement.

Denying that it is a party, and refusing to participate directly in any transitional government that is formed, it nonetheless has a clear basis around which to group the legal opposition. Its programme is for a thorough-going marketisation of the economy and social democratisation of political life; that is, it amounts to a restorationist platform similar to that of the "reformists" in the CPCS. The programme states:

"We want to create a developed market which is not deformed by bureaucratic intervention. Its successful functioning is conditional on the breaking up of the monopolist positions of today's large enterprises and the creation of true competition. This can only be created on the basis of a parallel, equal existence of various types of ownership and by a gradual opening up of our economy to the outside world."

It is precisely this kind of programme, being carried out in Poland and Hungary, which leads to price rises, unemployment, speed-ups and closures of "unprofitable" enterprises.

The workers would be called on to "tighten their belts" for an austerity programme whose beneficiaries would not be the working class, but the emerging class of capitalists and their imperialist backers. As one of Civic Forum's economic advisers, Vaclav Klaus, so succinctly put it, "we need Margaret Thatcher here".

The danger for the workers is that this project fits entirely with that of Dr Václav Komarek—the new darling of the mass movement and touted as the next prime minister.

Komarek is head of the Independent Institute of Economic Forecasting and has very close links with Gorbachev's economic advisers.

He remains a CPCS member and symbolises the possible convergence between the CF and the bureaucracy. Within the CPCS, a broad reforming trend is represented by the Democratic Forum of Communists. It claims over 15,000 supporters and aims to win the party to a Hungarian style transformation into a social democratic party at the special congress in January.

It is likely that many workers will look to reforming the CPCS—they have a traditional allegiance to the party from its healthy foundation in 1921 when it split the majority of class conscious workers away from social democracy. The popularity of the CPCS was shown by its 38% vote in the last "free" parliamentary elections in 1946. This traditional allegiance to the CPCS was again confirmed in the orientation of workers towards the party during 1968.

Meanwhile the Civic Forum leaders will do nothing to develop the activity and independent consciousness of the working class. Their attitude was well summed up in the general strike. The two hour strike was clearly a "protest" with Civic Forum leader Vaclav Havel repeatedly assuring the managers that it was not going to damage production.

Workers were even encouraged to make up lost production by working overtime. Now the strike is over, Havel has urged that the strike committees be transformed—not into workers' councils or independent trade unions, but into local Civic Forums.

The leadership the working class needs in the next period remains to be built. Building upon the healthy aspirations of workers and students for greater freedom and democracy, revolutionaries must argue for a thoroughgoing political revolution which places power directly into the hands of the workers.

This revolution starts on a number of fronts. In the workplaces, workers should fight to dismiss all officials and managers who have profited from corruption or persecuted workers. It is vital to establish factory councils, rather than local Civic Forums, and develop inter-factory links which are crucial to the establishment of workers' councils.

In an atmosphere heavy with the talk of "free elections", it is to this kind of body that elections should start. If the call for "free elections" produces only a parliamentary body to which deputies are elected every four to five years, the workers will have no ability to recall and replace elected representatives who try and make the workers pay for the crisis.

Instead, workers' councils must be built, where direct workers' democracy exerts control over elected representatives through a permanent political mobilisation of workers who can debate issues and recall or re-elect deputies at any time. The factory committees must also establish workers' control of the plan. All talk of marketisation of key enterprises and whole industries—even if covered up with fine phrases about "market socialism"—are a snare.

Against privatisation, against joint ventures with the West or accepting the poisoned chalice of IMF money, Czechoslovakian workers must seize control of the centralised planning mechanisms. Then the plan can be thoroughly revised in the workers' interests, not dismantled.

The student leader Monika Batorova said recently that despite the recent reforms, "Power remains with the party. Their apparatus is still intact".

This truth stands before the working class as a challenge. Only they, not the courageous students, have the power to smash the apparatus. If they do not, then the alternatives are stark. Either the convergence of the Civic Forum with the reformers in the CPCS will direct the democratic aspirations of the masses towards the unbridled "freedom" of the market.

Or the Husaks and the Jakes of the bureaucracy, presently discredited and marginalised, will plot their revenge and use the apparatus of terror to end the current celebrations in Wenceslas Square in the same bloody way that their Chinese counterparts did in Tiananmen Square. ■

Caste adrift

THE CURRENT crisis of the Stalinist regimes is a complete vindication of Trotsky's analysis that the ruling group in the USSR is a bureaucratic caste, not an exploiting class. The same label describes exactly the rulers of the degenerate workers' states that came into being after the Second World War.

Every ruling class in history has had an essential role to play in the mode of production. Under capitalism wage labour cannot exist without its opposite, capital. One is the condition of the other's existence. From this fact arises the idea that the capitalist class is a legitimate part of the system of production. Most workers, outside of revolutionary situations, consider that profits are the bosses' reward for their role in the system of production.

This is not, and has never been, the case for the bureaucracy in the USSR. This caste arose as a distinct parasitic growth on the property relations established after October 1917. Over the subsequent years not only was private property in the decisive means of production abolished, but a state monopoly of foreign trade was put in place and planning mechanisms were established to allocate resources between different sectors of production.

In short, the operation of the law of value in the USSR as the determining mechanism for the allocation of resources was broken.

The extensive development of the economy in such a state, alongside the diminution of inequality would require that the mass of producers and consumers are actively involved in the planning process.

The triumph of the bureaucracy under Stalin in the 1920s meant a decisive political defeat for the working class but it did not result in the abolition of the economic conquests of the post-1917 period. Rather, this caste fed off them. It drew its obscene privileges from plundering the produce of the planned economy. In the 1930s Trotsky argued that this caste, in the state, party and economic apparatus, consumed up to a half of the national income. But it acquired this income not as the "normal" reward of an exploiting class. Rather, as Trotsky noted: "Embezzlement and theft [is] the bureaucracy's main source of income". He argued that this does not: "constitute a system of exploitation in the scientific sense of the term." (*Collected Works 1938-39 p325*)

It flows from this that "the bureaucracy enjoys its privileges under the form of an abuse of power." In turn this leads to a situation where the bureaucratic caste "conceals its income; it pretends that as a special social group it does not even exist."

In other words, the caste, unlike a ruling class faces a constant crisis of its own legitimacy. It is no accident that the present crisis of the caste is worst at its weakest link—Eastern Europe. It is here that the crisis of legitimacy is sharpest. At least in the USSR there was a genuine proletarian revolution led by a party in whose name the Stalinist caste (mis)ruled.

But in Eastern Europe the working class did not overthrow capitalism. It was liquidated bureaucratically by a caste sponsored by the Kremlin and backed by the Soviet armed forces. The move against capital-

ism was only begun once the revolutionary challenge of the workers had been crushed. The notion that these ruling parties were therefore an alien imposition arises much more easily.

In all of these states the caste has no legal title to the means of production. The state owns the property in the name of the workers, but the caste does not own the state. As Trotsky observed:

"The bureaucracy has neither stocks nor bonds. It is recruited, supplemented and renewed in the manner of an administrative hierarchy, independently of any special property relations on its own. The individual bureaucrat cannot transmit to his heirs his rights in the exploitation of the state apparatus."

They do their best to make up for it by putting their sons and daughters in positions within the bureaucracy. But their privileges exist only so long as they are appointed. Sacked from your job and you do not retire to enjoy your independent social wealth; you are more likely to end up chopping trees for a living in the back of beyond—the fate that befell Alexander Dubcek.

These regimes were never a necessary part of the development of the productive forces but rather a drain on them. Of course, in the USSR of the 1930s major economic growth did occur as the USSR mobilised the immense natural resources of the country and hauled itself out of backwardness laying down the foundations of infrastructure and heavy industry.

But the bureaucracy, through its lavish privileges and its destructive attacks on many workers, was a brake on what was possible even in these years. Since the war, when quantitative targets have increasingly given way to qualitative ones, and when the consumer goods' industries have become ever more central, the dysfunctional nature of this caste has become ever more revealed. By deliberately excluding the working class from the process, planning has been blind, a mixture of guess-work and bluster.

For years now the consequence of bureaucratic command planning has been stagnation. Harsh discipline and exhortations to work for the "motherland" have all failed to raise productivity. This failure has been compounded by the fact that the bureaucracy itself has no real compunction to develop the economy as it has enough for its own defence and consumption needs. In the absence of the mainspring of profit or the creative drive of the toilers themselves, those in charge of the levers of the economy lapse into conservatism, inertia and corruption.

Given the lack of organic cohesion and self-confidence natural to a ruling class, the bureaucracy has relied upon discipline, even terror, imposed on its own ranks from without. Stalin's Bonapartist clique did this until his death. Freed from such discipline it more easily fragments, as it is doing now. It feels the pressure of the decisive forces upon it: capitalism or the working class.

Now in Eastern Europe the complete lack of confidence in its own rule (what ruling class in history ever abandoned its own system voluntarily?) has led key sectors to seek an embrace with capitalism. Its utter bankruptcy as a historical force is thereby displayed; its essentially transient and unstable charac-

ter, as Trotsky explained, is revealed. Under these conditions the diagnosis is as Trotsky laid it out in the *Transitional Programme*:

"Either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the

organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back into capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism."■

"DEMOCRACY" HAS BEEN THE AIM OF EVERY UPRISING IN EASTERN EUROPE, BUT . . .

Whose democracy?

As the ever-growing demonstrations in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and elsewhere show, the question of "democracy" lies at the heart of the political turmoil sweeping the Stalinist states.

THE EXPERIENCE of the USSR and Poland where, despite bureaucratic restrictions, elections have clearly weakened the grip of the Stalinists over society, has strengthened the belief that real political freedom means parliamentary democracy. The pro-capitalist media of the west delight in this apparent proof that, in the so-called "socialist states", the workers want their very own Westminster. Behind this is their belief that "communism" is dead and that "democracy" means capitalism. Hey presto! Pro-democracy equals pro-capitalism.

There is not a shadow of doubt that the masses in the Stalinist states do have illusions in the parliamentary systems of the imperialist states of the west. But is the only alternative to the unchecked rule of the Politburos, a daily dose of *Prime Minister's Question Time* on Soviet radio, and five yearly elections dominated by the images and propaganda of an East German equivalent of Saatchi and Saatchi?

The whole problem lies in the concept of "democracy" being bandied about by both the Stalinists and the propagandists for capitalism. Neither of them bother to answer the question of whose class interests democracy should serve—the workers' or the bosses'?

Parliamentary democracy serves the interests of the bosses. Take Britain as an example. Under our "democracy" a ruling government, elected by a minority of the population has been able to carry out policies—anti-union laws, the Poll Tax, the savaging of the NHS, the abolition of local government democracy—which are clearly against the interests of the majority of the population. The reality is that parliamentary democracy serves as a smoke-screen for the real—and profoundly undemocratic rule—of a tiny handful of capitalists. Through their economic power they are able to pressurise elected governments. Denis Healey's memoirs reveal this clearly. A Labour government was elected in 1974 committed to expanding public services. The bankers of the IMF decreed that the opposite was required and they used their control of the levers of the economy to force the inwardly reformists of Labour to go along with them. Nobody elected the IMF. Nobody can call the bankers in the big industrialists to account.

As important as this is the fact that while parliamentarians are at liberty to chatter on endlessly about

anything under the sun, real decision making, real power, lies outside of the debating chamber. Every set of memoirs ever published by Labour's ex-ministers reveals that even their lukewarm attempts at reform were thwarted by forces outside of Parliament's control—the top civil servants, the judges, the military chiefs of staff, the police chiefs, the Bank of England and so on.

All of this highlights the reality of parliamentary democracy. It is a facade to pacify the majority and facilitate the rule of the minority. And if parliament gets in the way of this rule, either its powers are reduced (as happened in Britain during both world wars) or it is scrapped altogether (as happened in Chile in 1973).

An extension of parliamentary democracy in the Stalinist states will prove a cruel deception for the masses. This "separation of power" between the apparent equality of parliament and the hidden but real inequality within society, is not possible within the degenerate(d) workers' states because the economy is not privately owned.

In order to achieve the same end result—the denial of the rights of the majority of society to control their society—the Stalinists had to resort to blatantly rigged elections and the bureaucratically imposed "leading role of the party". Not surprisingly, the first demands of an increasingly confident proletariat is for this fraud to be scrapped and a "real" parliament to be put in its place.

A freely elected parliament would sound the death knell of Stalinist control—but it would not herald the victory of the proletariat. This does not mean that revolutionary Marxists are against democracy. It means we are in favour of working class democracy. A five yearly election of a few hundred MPs is no vehicle for the exercise of such democracy.

In our daily lives we are faced with the need to decide what to do at work and in our communities. How can production be controlled to ensure everyone has a job? How can we ensure that elected representatives act in our interests?

Making decisions on such things for ourselves means developing a far more direct and accountable form of democracy. Originally the soviets, built by the Russian workers and peasants in 1905 and 1917 were the

best models for such democracy to date. The soviets were assemblies of delegates from the workplaces and the communities, on a city wide basis. In turn such soviets elected delegates to a central soviet for the whole town or region. And so on right up to national level. What was unique about such democracy was not only its directness but the accountability of delegates at every level. All were subject to immediate recall by the people who elected them. All were subject to regular election. None were paid any more money than the workers they represented, or received any special privileges. The soviets debated policy, decided on policy and executed policy. They removed in one stroke the intricate separation of powers so beloved of the professional politicians of capitalism. What is more they controlled their own armed force—the workers' militia.

This system of democracy enabled the working class to rule. It was a thousand times more representative and more efficient than capitalist parliamen-

tary democracy. The tragedy was that in isolated and backward Russia, such a regime could not survive. A European revolution that could have bolstered it did not materialise. The result was that the Stalinist bureaucracy, in the 1920s first usurped political power from the workers and then brutally destroyed every vestige of working class political democracy only to replace it with its own rule. The irony is that Stalinism triumphed by imposing a parliamentary constitution on the masses.

It is not surprising that in the Stalinist states today the "soviets"—a grotesque parody of the original workers' and peasants' councils—are hated by the masses.

But the alternative is not to turn the clock back to capitalist "democracy". It is to build completely new councils, as the basis for a completely new workers' democracy, a democracy that can and must triumph through a political revolution against the bureaucracy.■

USSR

The perils of *perestroika*

THE SOVIET media right now is rife with rumours and counter-rumours. Talk is of impending strikes and greater shortages, of trains crammed with goods which workers are bribed not to unload and even of imminent civil war.

But one thing is established as truth by all, from the women in the queues to the ministers at the top: Gorbachev's *perestroika* has led to a worsening of material life for the mass of the population and to a deepening crisis in the economy. As Gorbachev himself put it recently:

"The situation is such that we can, and have already started, to lose control".

Affected by this summer's miners' strikes, industrial production lags behind expectations. In September it is reported to have grown by 0.3% but economics chief, Abalkin, admits that in ten of the fifteen republics output was lower than in 1988. There are very real signs of stagnation and even decline.

The budget deficit has been revealed as standing at 15% of the GNP, putting it on a par with some of the most debt laden economies in the world. Hard currency earnings are dropping as oil and gas prices fall on the world market.

Most significantly we are witnessing the partial dismantling of the old system of centralised allocation and control without its replacement with any coherent alternative. Hence, as Abalkin put it:

"Before we speak of radical transformations and transition measures, we must stop the collapse of the economy".

Under *perestroika* enterprises, republics and regions have been formally encouraged to take their own deci-

sions, to become self-financing and profitable by 1990. Many of the prerogatives of the old ministries have been withdrawn or restricted. This is serving to increase chaos in the spheres of exchange and distribution in particular.

On the one hand it is stoking up bureaucratic resistance to change as the vast leaden rump of the bureaucracy sees its powers and privileges under threat. On the other, it is serving to fuel speculation, inflation and dramatic shortages of every day goods.

Popular consensus has it that life is harsher now than in the Brezhnev years of stagnation. Certainly the state shops are barer now than at any time in the last twenty years. Even in relatively well stocked Moscow, sugar is rationed. Six essential products are rationed in Leningrad and in a Siberian town like Irkutsk everything is rationed from meat—one kilogram per person—to vodka and soap.

This exists alongside stark shortages and long queues. Even in Moscow supplies of cheese in the state shops were intermittent this autumn. Soap was unobtainable—hence the bitter joke that Gorbachev is trying to build socialism with a "dirty face". Filter cigarettes are extremely hard to come by.

But the limited range of goods available in the state shops only serve to fuel both speculation and inflation. The state reports a 25 billion rouble increase in the value of retail trade for last year but admits at least half of that was due to a rise in prices. Economists are now openly talking of Soviet inflation as standing at around 10% and increasing.

The mass of the population would claim this to be a considerable underestimation because it is based on

state prices, Gorbachev's *perestroika* has seen more and more buying and selling outside the state sector in order to get higher prices and reach the goal of self-sufficiency and profitability.

As the economy becomes less regulated, more chaotic and less able to provide the basic necessities of life, so the chief architects of *perestroika* are looking for solutions that are likely to further increase the daily problems of the mass of Soviet workers. In order to deal with the state's budget deficit they are openly discussing the abolition of food subsidies in a move that would increase state prices by 40%. This is a basic component of the platform of the dominant economic ideologues who are becoming ever more stridently in favour of full marketisation of Soviet economic life.

What they are not agreed upon are issues of pace and tempo, symbolised by a current debate on whether the rouble can become a fully convertible currency within three years or nine.

In the meantime there have been a series of ad hoc measures of a marketising character. Over the last years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of licensed co-operatives. In reality the vast majority of the so-called co-operatives are small scale private businesses and cause considerable popular resentment.

Their prices are high and they flagrantly speculate through buying up deficit goods from the state sector and then selling them at marked up prices.

In pursuit of the market the state has taken a series of steps to devalue the rouble. Officially it changed at one rouble to the pound until November when the regime announced that the rate would be ten roubles to the pound for cash exchanges. In addition it announced that it will auction much needed hard currency for roubles to enterprises, and the bureaucracy is offering farms that overfulfil their delivery quotas the prospect of bonus payments in hard currency.

All this will mean that already expensive and scarce imported goods will become even dearer and scarcer and the imported techniques necessary to re-equip plants will be even more difficult to obtain.

OPENINGS

This is all taking place in the context of increased openings to foreign capital which are having some success in luring foreign investment. Most notable is the deal recently struck with Fiat to build a £1 billion car plant at Yelaguba. The Fiat bosses were won over by the prospect of using cheap Soviet labour and guarantees of repatriated profits. As a Fiat spokesman put it:

"Fiat believes that Eastern Europe will become the new Korea of the motor industry, except this time cheap production will be available on our doorstep."

But such measures have barely scratched the surface of the Soviet economy, even less have they turned it round. Most of the old bureaucracy is still in place and capable of obstructing or dragging out change. And the type of change that is being talked about by the most ardent *perestroika*-ites not only cannot tackle the deep rooted problems of the Soviet economy, but it will serve to exacerbate the tensions and imbalances that exist.

The truth is that the Soviet economy needs massive

infrastructural investment not the licensing of street corner co-ops. Television and the press regularly report crops destroyed by an absence of storage space and the delays caused by the hopelessly congested Soviet transport system. As Abalkin told the Supreme Soviet, "entire trains with goods stand weeks and months on stations". Marketisation is not going to solve that. It will divert funds in the search of profit and at the expense of transport, health and education.

The Soviet economy cannot be turned round by open admirers of Milton Friedman and a small band of co-operative entrepreneurs. It needs the energy of the mass of workers, taking the plan into their own hands and remoulding it to meet their own interests; it needs a workers' political revolution not bureaucratic market reform.

In the period ahead *perestroika* will mean even greater hardship for the mass of Soviet workers. It will mean continuing inflation and attacks on subsidies. As Abalkin put it candidly:

"How is it possible to demand satisfaction of market requirements and the output of high quality goods, and, at the same time, to freeze all prices? These are incompatible demands, contradicting the present day policy"

UNEMPLOYED

The progress of *perestroika* will mean an increase in unemployment. The Soviet press is now admitting to the existence of between five and six million unemployed, particularly in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Those areas will be even harder hit by decentralisation and marketisation. On top of this, Soviet economists are talking of between 15 and 17 million workers leaving the sphere of industrial production by the year 2000.

Nor is there an end in sight to the shortages. In order to sweeten the pill of higher prices Schmelev has recommended a massive purchase of commodities on the world market. But that could only be done at the expense of incurring a massive debt to the world banks. Therefore, other economists are openly advocating rationing all the bare necessities while lifting price restrictions on everything else.

The Soviet economy is set for a convulsive 1990s. The increased marketisation cannot solve its deep problems. Neither can the bureaucratic obstructors do so either.

History has shown that they cannot plan a dynamic economy that efficiently and effectively meets human need. The drive towards the market may meet their passive resistance, but they have no alternative to it.

Only the working class, seizing power from the bureaucracy and the speculators has the possibility of freeing the plan from the grip of the bureaucracy. The reawakened Soviet working class must do just that in the 1990s. Gorbachev recently commented of wholesale market price reform:

"I know only one thing. That after two weeks of such a market people would be on the street, and it will smash any government."

This pin-points the bureaucracy's dilemma . . . and the workers' opportunity.■

Lenin against Russian chauvinism

FROM THE Baltic coast to the Caucasus the past year has seen a mounting tide of mobilisation of the national minorities of the USSR. Demands have been made for the right to veto central legislation, for greater economic independence for the republics and even, in certain instances, for separation from the USSR itself.

As the bloody fighting between Armenians and Azerbaijan has shown, and as the anti-Semitic great Russian chauvinism of Pamyat reveals, nationalism has a deadly potential for dividing the Soviet workers. It has the potential for diverting them from settling accounts with the ruling bureaucracy. But given the Russification of political and cultural life in the USSR, and given that certain republics were incorporated into the USSR against the will of their peoples, it should come as no surprise that the relaxation of the police dictatorship should result in the re-emergence of demands for national democratic rights against the Stalinist legacy of Russification and bureaucratic centralisation.

In truth the national question in the USSR threatens to be one of the most immediately explosive issues confronting the architects of bureaucratic reform in the USSR. It threatens to divide the bureaucracy itself along national lines. With that in mind, and in the face of mounting nationalist pressure, Gorbachev has announced plans for an extraordinary Central Committee plenum to address the question of the relations between the nationalities of the USSR. For the revolutionary communists fighting for a programme of political revolution it is equally necessary to know how to handle national antagonisms which can easily become the mobilising ideology of social counter-revolution and capitalist restoration.

NATIONAL POLICY

In that light it is timely and necessary to look again at the nationality policy of the Soviet state in its earliest and healthy days. And it is necessary to look at the struggle waged by Lenin and Trotsky against the signs of Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration that manifested themselves initially in the sphere of national relations in the Soviet state.

In the multi-national Tsarist Russian empire, where only 43% of the population were Great Russians, the Bolsheviks had programmatically committed themselves to defending the right of nations to self-determination up to, and including, the right to form their own separate state. However, they combined this with a tireless battle for the unity of the working class internationally. They set themselves against all those

aspects of nationalism that pitted workers against each other to the benefit of the exploiting classes.

They did not in the slightest degree advocate that the working class of the Russian Empire should be dispersed into a series of separate states. As Marxists they realised that the productive forces could be most effectively developed on the basis of a centralised plan and the maximum international co-operation and division of labour. The proliferation of small states would run counter to this prerequisite of socialist advance.

However the Bolsheviks were in favour of that co-operation being secured on the basis of the complete equality of peoples and voluntary agreement. The November 1917 "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia" declared that Tsarist oppression was being replaced by the "voluntary and sincere alliance of the peoples of Russia" and included "the right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination, up to secession and the formation of an independent state".

FORMS

The "voluntary and sincere alliance" took a number of forms in the early Soviet state. In Finland and Poland, in 1917 it took the form of recognising their right to form independent states. In Estonia and Latvia it saw the creation of independent Soviet republics in 1918. In Great Russia itself it took the form of a federation (the RSFSR) within which non-Russians were to have their own autonomous regions. An autonomous workers' commune of Germans of the Volga was established. There were to be autonomous republics within the Russian federation for Kazakhs, Kalmyks, Bashkirs and Tartars.

However the early nationalities policy of the Soviet state was engulfed by German advances in late 1917 and by imperialist intervention in 1918 aimed at destroying the young workers' state. The policy was inevitably and necessarily subordinated to the struggle for the workers' state's very survival—"the safety of the revolution is the supreme law". What this could mean in practice was first demonstrated in the Ukraine and then in the Caucasus. It is a picture complicated by the fact that the proletariat in each of these regions was disproportionately Russian. The Ukraine's largest industrial town, Kharkhov, for example, was predominantly Russian. It was the peasantry who made up the bulk of the non-Russian nationalities in these regions.

In the Ukraine in 1917 petit bourgeois nationalists with their own council—the Rada—declared them-

selves to be an autonomous republic in June and in November to be the Ukrainian People's Republic. At least initially it identified itself as part of a larger federation of "equal and free peoples". It existed alongside soviets, particularly in Kharkov, which had failed to seize power in line with their Russian, Estonian and Latvian counterparts. The Russian soviet state nevertheless recognised the Ukrainian Rada.

However the Rada was prepared to court the backing of armed counter-revolution and imperialism in order to assert its independence. It allowed the White General Kaledin to assemble his troops on their territory while preventing Red Army movements against him. When asked to desist by the soviet state the Rada called for French support and, in February 1918, actually called in German military forces.

DUAL POWER

In this situation, with the Ukraine becoming a bastion for international counter-revolution and with the persistence of elements of dual power in the cities the Red Army had no alternative but to defend the Russian workers' state and the Ukraine's workers by entering the Ukraine in force. With the collapse of the German army they were able to ensure the creation of a Ukrainian Soviet Republic by March 1919. It was held intermittently until Bolshevik victory in the Civil War by late 1920.

A similar picture emerged in the Caucasus. The Turks occupied Azerbaijan and Armenia. The British also intervened to seize the oil rich Baku area. In Georgia a soviet based government led by Mensheviks also secured aid from German imperialism and, once the German war machine collapsed, looked to the Second International to prop them up as an anti-Bolshevik base. In September 1920 they invited Kautsky, Vandervelde and MacDonald to Georgia as proof of their willingness to be the launching pad for an anti-Bolshevik crusade by Anglo-French imperialism. In February 1921 the Red Army entered Georgia, overthrew the Menshevik regime and oversaw the foundation of a Georgian soviet regime. Again the right to self-determination was subordinated to the defence needs of the fledgling workers' state.

That Georgia's national rights had been violated was entirely due to the military needs of the Soviet state. It was in no way due to any programmatic commitment to using the Red Army as an alternative to international proletarian revolution as the means of spreading socialism. In fact if one looks at the major Bolshevik lexicon of the time—the ABC of Communism by Bukharin and Preobrazhensky—it actually defends the right of a nation with a bourgeois government to separate from "a nation with a proletarian regime" should its workers so wish it.

"Even in this case it would be better to allow the proletariat of the separating land to come to terms with its own bourgeoisie, for otherwise the latter would retain the power of saying 'It is not I who oppress you, but the people of such and such a country'."

While communists oppose such a severance, Bukharin and Preobrazhensky with Lenin's sanction recommend that communists:

"Act as a mother acts when she allows her child to burn its fingers once that it may dread fire ever more."

It was only as the interventionist armies were driven out that a pattern of order and stability emerged in relations between the nationalities. The British overthrew the soviet republics in Estonia and Latvia in 1919. In retreat they left behind them bourgeois governments which the Soviet state recognised by peace treaty in 1920. These bourgeois governments posed no immediate threat to the Soviet state and the working class of these countries was not ready or able to overthrow them. As Britain withdrew from Azerbaijan a popular uprising in Baku established an Azerbaijan Soviet Republic in January 1920.

The pressing problem for Lenin and the Bolsheviks was what form of relations should exist between the autonomous republics within the Russian federated state and between that state and the Soviet republics of the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia, White Russia and Armenia that had been established by 1921. It had been the case that, as much as possible, military resources had been centralised during the Civil War out of stark necessity. In 1920 and 1921 that centralisation was extended by formal treaties between the republics to move towards unifying communications, foreign trade, economic activity and finance. Those treaties were entered into voluntarily and between formally equal parties.

DEGENERATION

It is with the growing effects of the isolation and bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution that we begin to see the erosion of the principle of voluntary union and mutual respect between equals. In 1921 Lenin himself floated the idea of economically fusing the three Caucasian republics. The Georgian party objected, defending its existing independence within the Soviet system, and in particular objecting to what they termed the pro-consular way that a henchman of Stalin, the People's Commissar for Nationalities, Ordzhonikidze, had conducted himself towards them. The Georgians posted guards on their frontiers and insisted on residence permits.

It speaks for Lenin's profound sensitivity on the national question that he immediately concluded that the plan was, in all probability, premature. It needed a campaign of persuasion and argument to secure its voluntary endorsement by the Georgian communists, let alone the Georgian people as a whole. The deeply ingrained national rivalries in the Caucasus could not be overcome by bureaucratic dictat, as recent events have all too vividly demonstrated.

Disregarding Lenin's views Ordzhonikidze and Stalin pressed on with their plans to merge the three Caucasian governments with the formation of a Transcaucasian Soviet Republic in March 1922. In the summer of that year the Politburo established a commission, under Stalin, to draw up proposals for further regularising relations between the RSFSR

and the other republics. It came up with a Russian centred plan for merger in the form of the so called "autonomisation plan".

Under the proposal the non-Russian republics were to be incorporated in the Russian Soviet Republic as "autonomous republics" with the Russian government as their central government. Once again the Georgians, and a little later the Ukrainians rejected the proposal for one government for all. As the Georgian Central Committee put their case:

"We regard the unification of economic endeavour and of general policy indispensable, but with all the attributes of independence."

Lenin opposed the autonomisation plan in what was one of the last struggles of his life. Instead he proposed "a federation of republics enjoying equal rights" in a "formal union with the RSFSR, in a Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia". that union was to be presided over by a Federal Council of People's Commissars. As Lenin, now ill, summed up his own deep concern on this issue in a letter to Kamenev:

"Comrade Kamenev! I declare war to the death on dominant-nation chauvinism. I shall eat it with all my healthy teeth as soon as I get rid of this accursed bad tooth. It must be absolutely insisted that the Union Central Executive Committee should be presided over in turn by a

Russian,
Ukrainian,
Georgian.
Absolutely!
Yours, Lenin."

And it is evidence of Stalin's early degeneration that when Kamenev passed him a note in a Politburo meeting saying "Plych is going to war to defend independence", his response was "I think we should be firm with Lenin" and the circulation of a memorandum accusing Lenin of "national liberalism".

Notwithstanding Lenin's opposition Stalin and Ordzhonokidze, even despite or because of being Georgians themselves, proceeded to ride roughshod over the Georgian communists. Under the false pretext of abiding by democratic centralism the latter were not allowed to clarify their objections to the plan in public.

In August 1922 Stalin had already informed Georgian party leader Mdivani that Russian government decisions were binding on Georgia. When the entire Georgian central committee resigned over the refusal to permit them to join the union as a separate entity Stalin and Ordzhonokidze promptly appointed a new central committee. Ordzhonokidze even physically struck a supporter of Mdivani at a meeting.

Lenin's last political battle was over Georgia and was an integral component of his attempt to forge a bloc of Bolshevik leaders against the process of bureaucratisation that was giving birth to such behaviour. In his last testament he announced:

"I suppose I have been very remiss with respect to the workers of Russia for not having intervened energetically and decisively enough on the notorious question of autonomisation which, it appears, is

officially the question of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."

He denounced the persistence, in the bureaucracy and the party of:

"that really Russian man, the Great Russian Chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is."

Autonomisation, he argued was "essentially premature" and instead he proposed that it was necessary to persuade and prove the desirability of greater union rather than impose it. He continued to insist on a "Federation of Republics with equal rights" with, initially, union operating only in the sphere of defence and foreign affairs. Elsewhere he argued for the complete independence of the commissariats.

The desperately ill Lenin proposed a pact with Trotsky on this very issue:

"I earnestly ask you to undertake the defence of the Georgian affair at the CC of the Party. That affair is now under persecution at the hands of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky and I cannot rely on their impartiality. Indeed, quite the contrary! If you would agree to undertake its defence, I could be at rest. If for some reason you do not agree, send me back all the papers. I will consider that a sign of your disagreement.

With the very best comradely greetings,
Lenin."

In March 1923 he wrote to the Georgian communists themselves:

"From Lenin: Strictly secret to Mdivani, Makharadze and others. CC Trotsky and Kamenev.

Esteemed comrades, I follow your affair with all my heart. I am outraged at the rudeness of Ordzhonokidze and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky. I am preparing for you notes and a speech.

With esteem, Lenin."

But shortly after Lenin suffered a major stroke that effectively ended his political life.

INTERNATIONALISM

As the nationalities of the USSR mobilise again it is vital that the working class of these peoples do not confuse the Great Russian chauvinist, bureaucratic centralist, nationalities policy of Stalin with the policy of Lenin and revolutionary Marxism. Lenin was a bitter opponent of all that was base and divisive in nationalism. In the young Soviet state, once its borders were secured against intervention and internal counter-revolution disarmed, he turned his fire on Great Russian chauvinism as the nationalism of an oppressor, rather than oppressed, nation.

"Internationalism on the part of the oppressors of 'great nations', as they are called (although they are only great in their violence, only great as bullies), must consist not only in the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice."

With his internationalist goal set as a genuine union of liberated peoples Lenin understood that this could not be achieved by force. The workers of the once oppressed nationalities had to take their place in

a free union persuaded that their cultural rights would be fully defended and persuaded that ever closer union met their most vital economic and military needs.

Sixty five years of Russification in the guise of Soviet rule, now open, now concealed official anti-Semitism, the brutal incorporation of the Baltic states into the USSR in connivance with Nazi Germany all

mean that the national question has an explosive force in the USSR today.

Only a new internationalist communist party that bases itself on the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky can ensure that this explosive force is directed towards blowing up bureaucratic rule whilst at the same time preserving the social conquests of the workers of all the nationalities of the USSR. ■

AZERBAIJAN

National rights and wrongs in the Caucasus

IN 1921 Stalin, then Commissar for the Nationalities in the Bolshevik government, ruled that the autonomous region of Nagorno Karabakh be transferred from the control of the Armenian Republic to that of Azerbaijan. Nearly seventy years later Gorbachev's contradictory decisions have fuelled armed conflict between the two republics. The issue that sparked off the dispute is that of control of Nagorno Karabakh.

A mountainous area in the west of Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh has a population of only 160,000. The 1979 census showed that 76% of its people were Armenian.

When the Armenian and Azerbaijani Soviet republics were created in 1920 the sovereignty of Nagorno Karabakh was already a matter of dispute. Neither republic was based on a pre-existing defined national territory. Azerbaijan had only existed as an administrative unit for a brief period during the First World War under Turkish influence. It was the British who, during the civil war between the Bolsheviks and the reactionary imperialist backed Whites, insisted that Nagorno Karabakh be part of Azerbaijan in order to prevent it being part of Armenia which was seen as more pro-Bolshevik.

However, after the defeat of the Whites and the withdrawal of the British from Baku which they had occupied and in which they had conducted an anti-communist terror campaign, Azerbaijan became a Soviet Republic before either Armenia or Georgia. It was then, whilst Armenia was not yet a Soviet republic, that Lenin insisted Nagorno Karabakh be handed back to Armenia as that was clearly the wish of its population. Once Armenia itself became a Soviet Republic in 1920, the Bolsheviks agreed that a commission should decide upon the status of the region, "guided by the ethnic composition and wishes of the population".

The Azeris then withdrew their claim to the area until 1921 when, under pressure from Turkey, the matter was

again raised. The Bolshevik Caucasian Bureau also decided that Armenia should retain control, but Stalin, in a manner anticipating his future methods, overturned that decision the next day and Nagorno Karabakh became an autonomous region within the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Gorbachev's reforms have raised the issue of sovereignty again by on the one hand opening up political discussion and allowing the expression of dissent, and on the other fostering nationalism through the *perestroika* (restructuring) which places increasing responsibilities for self-sufficiency and planning at a republic level. The weakening of the central economic dynamism of the planned economy over twenty years has pushed the republics to seek a way out of stagnation by a drive for greater and greater autonomy.

In Nagorno Karabakh during 1987 the opportunities provided by *glasnost* (openness) led to calls on the Supreme Soviets of Armenia and Azerbaijan to transfer the region to Armenian control. A petition in November 1987 calling for this transfer was signed by 90% of the total adult population of the region. However, the Armenian majority came up against a contradiction in the Soviet constitution. Article 70 states that the population of a region has the right to decide which republic shall govern it; Article 78 states that a republic's boundaries must not be contravened. Gorbachev has remained intransigent in defence of the latter—he ruled that any change of the borders was out of the question.

In early 1988 demonstrations and mass meetings in Nagorno Karabakh continued to press their justified claim. The ruling bureaucracy in both Azerbaijan and Armenia seized the opportunity to fuel national unrest as a diversion from the growing social and economic crisis facing both republics.

In Azerbaijan one third of the population live below the

official poverty line compared with 12.6% nationally, and unemployment is high at 26%. There is 73% unemployment and under-employment in Baku itself. This despite the fact that the region produces massive amounts of oil and has been a key to the wealth of the Soviet Union. Like many other republics Azerbaijan has been squeezed dry by bureaucrats from Moscow.

In Armenia the ruling party bureaucrats have failed to tackle similar social problems. The tragic earthquake of 1988 revealed astonishing incompetence and corruption when the rescue and rebuilding operations began. Thus the Armenian party had every interest in inflaming a mass campaign to "recover" Karabakh.

In response to the calls from Nagorno Karabakh for transfer in early 1988, the Azerbaijani Party bosses threatened that 100,000 Azeris would occupy the region to prevent its secession. This statement encouraged extreme nationalist groups and physical attacks on Armenians began—widely believed to be assisted by leading sections of the party bureaucracy itself. Azeris went to Nagorno Karabakh to "teach the Armenians a lesson", followed by the brutal pogrom of Armenians in the town of Sumgait in Azerbaijan during which 32 were killed. This in turn heightened Armenian nationalism and led to reprisals.

In the aftermath there was a mass exodus of the minority population from each republic. By the end of 1989 an estimated 200,000 Azeris has fled from Armenia to Baku, with more than 300,000 Armenians leaving Azerbaijan. This migration has intensified social problems. In Baku shanty towns ring the city occupied by tens of thousands of unemployed and homeless Azeri refugees from Armenia. On the other side those Armenians who fled Baku in 1988 went straight to a republic about to be devastated by the earthquake.

In August 1989 Moscow intervened to try and quell the growing rebellions in Nagorno Karabakh where mass strike action had been underway since May. Moscow imposed temporary control over the region. The Armenians had by then established their own "Congress of authorised representatives of Nagorno Karabakh" with an elected Council which declared that its decisions were "binding over the entire territory of Nagorno Karabakh".

In Baku the response to Moscow's intervention was hostile. The emerging but still illegal Azeri Popular Front organised strikes and demonstrations calling for the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh problem. A rally of 100,000 supported the Popular Front and the Azeris blockaded Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia through disruption of rail and road transport.

By September the Baku Communist Party and Soviet leadership was forced to recognise the Popular Front, ending local strikes but not the blockade. "Some 87% of the freight earmarked for Armenia comes into the republic on the Azerbaijan railroad", reported an Armenian minister.

"As of 10 Sept, about 250 trains had been abandoned. An extremely grave situation has developed in the republic. There is no automobile or diesel fuel, transport vehicles are standing idle, and even first aid vehicles can't get fuel."

The next month the Supreme Soviet in Baku adopted

a law which reasserted its control over Nagorno Karabakh, stipulating that only a referendum of the whole republic could change the territory. This again appeased the Popular Front, but ultimately only increased their support as it was clear that the ruling bureaucracy had no alternative course of action to recommend.

The control of Nagorno Karabakh had come to symbolise the struggle of each nationality for its own "independence". Calls for total independence from the USSR had not been the rallying point for the national movements up to this point, whatever Gorbachev may say in his justification for sending in the troops. Nor has the call for an Islamic republic of Azerbaijan been a central demand of any but a minority of the Popular Front.

The danger exists, however, that calls for secession will now grow in both republics as Gorbachev and the military increase the stakes by their inept and brutal vacillation between repression and offers of negotiation. Dangerous as the nationalist hysteria is for them, controlling it with tanks is easier than trying to tackle unemployment, declining social provision, the land hunger of the Azeris in Nakhichevan or to grasp the nettle as to whether to grant Armenia and Azerbaijan the right to secede.

The pogroms of Armenians in Sumgait and more recently in Baku are widely believed to have been incited by members of the local bureaucracy, even if gangs of extreme nationalists carried out much of the violence.

Nationalism thrives where social and economic conditions deny people a basic decent standard of living. It is fueled by bureaucratic incompetence which offers no way out of the current crisis. People who feel their national rights, culture or autonomy have been trampled on can be led, whether by Stalinists or reactionary religious nationalists, into attacking another nationality rather than turn on their own rulers.

In the Caucasus this is precisely what has occurred. 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 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 calling for total independence from the USSR. In addition, Gorbachev's botched attempt to calm the situation, by imposing Moscow's direct rule over Nagorno Karabakh for nearly a year, has simply stimulated indignation in Azerbaijan, where people felt that he was not defending what he himself recognised as their territory.

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 Azerbaijanis are clearly nationalities but with disputed territorial claims. Nagorno Karabakh is, by the majority of its people, Armenian and should be part of that republic or an independent nation if the Armenians choose to secede.

The Azerbaijani struggle has not hitherto been a genuine democratic struggle against Moscow but an

attempt to use force to retain within their republic, and to assert physical control of, a region whose population is not Azeri. It is a reactionary struggle for national privileges, not a progressive one against national oppression (despite the many real grievances against Moscow that the Azeri's undoubtedly have).

The Azeri speaking people of the whole region doubtless 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 Azerbaijani 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 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, in opposition to national oppression whilst respecting national tradition, is necessary.

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, 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 secession, the nationalities should seek to unite in a struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy for the USSR to become a free federation of republics. There should be a Transcaucasian Federation of Soviet Republics which itself would be part of a free federation of the whole of the Soviet Union.

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

BIRTH OF THE EASTERN BLOC

Workers' states without workers' revolutions?

"THE OCCUPYING forces had the power in the areas where their arms were present and each knew that the others could not force things to an issue. The Russians had the power in Eastern Europe."

These were the words of US President F D Roosevelt to a group of senators at the end of the Second World War. At that time Roosevelt and Stalin could agree what to use the Russian power for, namely, to crush a common enemy. Yet that enemy was no longer German imperialism, but a tide of often revolutionary mobilisations of the urban and rural workers and peasants throughout Europe.

Ironically, the advance of the Red Army had aroused the expectations and activities of the masses. Everywhere the possibility of replacing the collapsed power of the bourgeoisie with genuine proletarian power existed. Yet such an outcome could have delivered a death blow to the Kremlin Stalinists and ruined their strategy of "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism.

Since the triumph of the Stalinist bureaucracy

after 1924 the Kremlin had sacrificed all revolutionary challenges to capitalism on the altar of this strategy. This itself flowed from a reactionary idea of trying to build "socialism in one country". In order to obtain the peace to embark on this utopian endeavour the Kremlin aimed to reassure the so-called democratic imperialists of the world that no threats to bourgeois rule would be tolerated.

So from 1944 onwards, the defeat of German imperialism by the Red Army was accompanied by the deliberate destruction of the anti-fascist and anti-capitalist movements of the East European masses. Everywhere the Stalinists protected, and in some cases re-introduced, the rule of the bourgeoisie in the economy and prevented the seizure of private property by the workers and peasants. As the worthy Swiss publication, the *Geneva Journal*, crowed with regard to Hungary:

"Wherever they can do so, the Russians block and oppose the taking over of large industrial enterprises

under a new statist system."

Where the workers had already seized factories then the Stalinists used nationalisation as a means of taking direct control away from. In the occupied countries of Eastern Europe such as Czechoslovakia, nationalisation was the only way, short of terrible blood letting, of defusing the revolutionary situation. Nationalisation did not represent the expropriation of capitalist private property in factories. On the contrary, as the Czechoslovakian Communist Party (CPCS) put it in 1945:

"By nationalisation we understand the transfer of the property of Germans, Hungarians, traitors and collaborators to the hands of the Czech and Slovak nation."

In short, putting it at the disposal of the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie. Drafting one nationalisation decree the government was very explicit, stating that the enterprises were to be administered in line with the principles of commercial business, independence, profit making and free competition.

STABILISE

In the process of destroying the working class threat in Eastern Europe the Red Army served to stabilise and in some cases reconstruct the forms of administrative and repressive state apparatus associated with bourgeois rule. The government, for example, was centralised into the hands of a distant and unaccountable executive. The internal and external security services were concentrated in the hands of a standing army unaccountable and opposed to the working class.

Yet it was not enough to have a bourgeois state apparatus without representatives of the capitalists. Their representatives were not numerous and the economy was highly statified. So it was essential that the Stalinists integrated, on their own terms, the capitalists into the state apparatus. Accordingly, the Stalinists formed coalition governments with the representatives of the bourgeoisie in high, if not crucial, places.

In Rumania the first government after the German defeat was made up by the National Peasants and National Liberals in September 1944, the only Stalinist representative being the Minister of Justice Patrascanu. The machinations and brutal force of the Red Army over the next months in Rumania were designed to remove the two major bourgeois parties (The National Democratic Bloc) and replace them with a government of the National Democratic Front, consisting of Stalinists, Social Democrats, the Union of Patriots and the Ploughman's Front. Such a government was an extremely malleable one for the Kremlin.

A similar struggle took place in Poland. The USA and Britain backed a group of Polish nationalists based in London, headed by Peasant Party leader Mikolajczyk. The Kremlin supported the Lublin Committee and this side won out. The purges, intimidation and liquidation of prominent bourgeois figures did not signal the complete elimination of bourgeois

rule, but they were measures designed to crush bourgeois parties with strong roots in the national population and replace them with other bourgeois figures who would have little base from which to resist the designs of the Kremlin.

At the same time they could be relied upon to administer the economy in a way that would also serve the interests of the national bourgeoisie and even solicit aid from imperialism.

While the capitalist figures were kept in important economic ministries there was one decisive lever of the reconstructed state apparatus that the Stalinists kept firmly in the grip of the Red Army and its local allies and agents. The leading Hungarian Stalinist Rakosi spoke for all his ilk in Eastern Europe in this period when he remarked:

"There was one position, control of which was claimed by our party from the first minute. One position where the party was not inclined to consider any distribution of the posts according to the strengths of the parties in the coalition. This was the State Security Authority. We kept this organisation in our hands from the first day of its establishment."

The result was a dual power situation that reflected the balance of forces between the world bourgeoisie and the USSR as it manifested itself in the East European area. Political power was split, or rather shared, between the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie. Dual power does not necessarily mean that both sides are equal and balanced. The Soviet army and police apparatuses meant that repressive power lay exclusively in the hands of the Stalinists. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie were re-integrated into the political superstructure via their control of the highly statified economy.

This pact was necessary for the bourgeoisie because they were weak and depended on the Stalinists to maintain private property. It was necessary for the Stalinists because during the period 1945-47 they wanted to maintain private property to fulfil their deal with imperialism and in return secure economic aid. Dual power was also necessary for the Stalinists because it was a means of crushing any independent activity of the working class.

PROFIT REGULATING

It is clear then that during this period of dual power, the states in Eastern Europe can be described as still, essentially, capitalist. Profit regulated the economies, even if industry was in the hands of the state. Because it was in the hands of the state, it was essential to insert capitalists into governmental office. Nevertheless, this was a highly unstable situation.

Relative to any of the East European countries, imperialism remained stronger than the USSR. The Stalinists could not hope to rule this way indefinitely. The national economic power of the bourgeoisie, itself drawing on the power of imperialism through its thousands of ties, would be marshaled to unseat the "alien body" of Stalinism in the bourgeoisie's state. A bourgeois political counter-revolution would sooner or later have destroyed the political rule of Stalinism.

For this reason the Stalinist project of consolidating capitalist states was necessarily utopian.

The only reason that the Stalinists could even attempt to maintain this joint power for any length of time was due to the economic and political dislocation arising from the war and its aftermath. Most of the East European countries occupied by the Red Army had been weak capitalist nations throughout the 1930s. Their economic and political ties with imperialism were severely disrupted during the war. The contraction of world trade continued right through the 1944-47 period. Relations between Anglo-American imperialism and the national bourgeoisies of Eastern Europe were virtually non-existent during this time.

This reduced the power of the national bourgeoisies to resist the enforced direction of the Stalinists. This fracturing of the relations between imperialism and its national agents was a highly conjunctural factor which temporarily offset the contradiction between Stalinism and the bourgeoisie. But this strategic contradiction reasserted itself during 1947-48 when the long expected "united front" of the successful

"There was one position, control of which was claimed by our party from the first minute. One position where the party was not inclined to consider any distribution of the posts according to the strengths of the parties in the coalition. This was the State Security Authority. We kept this organisation in our hands from the first day of its establishment."

imperialisms was directed at the Kremlin's role in Eastern Europe. The tactical united front between imperialism and the bureaucracy, put together to deny the possibility of a European revolution, now subsided along with the threat of a revolution itself. Relations between the USSR and the western Allies had deteriorated with increased rapidity during the course of 1946.

The reasons which underpin the gradual change in ideological stance in 1946 are not hard to find. The Yalta and Potsdam conferences had come to an agreement over "spheres of influence" which basically covered Europe and the Balkans. But the Kremlin's refusal to take its troops out of Northern Iran in February 1946, Molotov's claim to the "trusteeship" of Libya in North Africa and the USSR's fiery insistence on having the right of access to a warm water port in the Dardanelles in August, convinced the imperialists of the urgent need to contain the USSR.

The imperialist offensive was led by the USA; the western nations, such as France and Great Britain, were in the midst of economic crises and were thus unable to relaunch a vigorous round of accumulation on their own.

Stalin's hold in Eastern Europe and the spectre of

revolution in the west, called forth the "Truman Doctrine"—the doctrine of containment. This ruled out an immediate war against the USSR, but it did involve a new political offensive backed up by massive economic aid for anti-communist governments.

This aid package, called the Marshall Plan, was announced in June 1947. It was not a programme of relief but of reconstruction, entailing some \$17 billion to Europe in return for massive US influence in domestic and foreign policy. Sixteen countries had applied and accepted its terms within three months.

With this twin attack the USA codified its Cold War stance: to draw the line on USSR influence in Europe, to burden the Kremlin with sole responsibility for reconstruction in its own "spheres" and to eradicate its influence in the imperialist spheres.

In Eastern Europe, where the levers of political power were in their hands, the Stalinists were compelled to choose whether to confront the imperialist offensive or retreat and concede to it. Consistent with their attempt to construct a strategic alliance with capitalism several of the national communist parties were prepared to accept Marshall Aid. The Czech and Polish Cabinets showed a positive response to the Plan, including the Stalinists. But they were soon forced to decline by USSR pressure.

If the road of the Marshall Plan had been accepted then sooner or later Stalinism would have lost complete control in Eastern Europe and imperialism would have stood knocking on the door of the USSR itself. The Kremlin and Stalin were not prepared to risk this fate and so risk their own necks. Stalin tightened the reins of power and ordered the elimination, from above, of the economic roots of the bourgeoisie and their political representatives in the state who could have been a potential point of departure for rebuilding their power in the future.

A preparatory and necessary step to the bureaucratic liquidation of bourgeois power in Eastern Europe was the complete bureaucratic control of the national communist parties over the working class. Primarily this meant the destruction of the influence of the Social Democratic parties over the working class which rivalled, and in most cases outstripped, that of the Stalinists. This was especially so in Poland, Hungary and in what was to become the German Democratic Republic. The method was usually the same; intimidations, purges and forced fusions.

In September 1944 a new pro-Stalinist leadership was foisted on the Polish socialists (PPS) with a view to securing unification. The rank and file continuously refused to endorse this so in December 1947 it was done anyway, with a further twelve leaders being removed and 82,000 members expelled. Persistent resistance from the Hungarian socialists (SDP) was finally overcome in February 1948 when the pro-Moscow minority in the SDP convened a Congress without the centre and right under the protection of the secret police, and in June the merger was announced.

Despite the risks this policy held for the future of *détente*, the Kremlin feared its own destruction if it did not take this road. Not only would the USSR have

had to give up its continuing economic plunder of Eastern Europe, but it would have seriously threatened the continued existence of the bureaucracy itself. Faced with this extremely disadvantageous turn in the relationship of "peaceful co-existence" the Kremlin decided to destroy the bourgeoisie in these countries.

Everywhere the pattern was the same. Leading bourgeois figures were arrested or executed and opposition gradually banned. In Poland, the opposition leader, Mikolajczyk, fled from the tightening hold of the Stalinists in 1947. In Rumania King Michael was deposed in December and in early 1948 the now Stalinist dominated United Workers' Party took control.

The leader of the Agrarian Party in Bulgaria, Petkov, was arrested in June 1947 and executed in September. Twenty thousand were arrested and opposition papers closed for good. In Hungary, Kovacs, the former Smallholders leader, was arrested in May by the Soviet army. The Prime Minister fled to the USA in May. Only in Czechoslovakia did the Stalinists mobilise forces outside their own security apparatus to overthrow the bourgeoisie. The period of dual power came to a decisive end after 20 February 1948. A dispute then over cabinet control of the police resulted in twelve non-CPCS ministers offering the bourgeois head, Benes, their resignations.

It was understood that they would be refused, and was designed as an offensive against the CPCS. But the CPCS staged mass demonstrations culminating in marches of armed trade union militia on 23 February. No independent organisations were thrown up; the demonstration was kept within strict limits designed to put pressure on Benes to accept the resignation, which he did.

The CPCS was asked to form a government which it did, comprising only the CPCS and its allies. The May elections went ahead under great repression, with one slate of candidates and a decree that a blank ballot paper was "tantamount to treason". The results gave a juridical seal to the "coup".

In other countries demonstrations and rallies were used merely to legitimise the bureaucratic overturn in the eyes of the Stalinists' base. Nowhere was the government one of struggle based on independent workers' organisations, militias and soviets. Instead the overturn was the work of a Stalinist bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government.

It ensured that the masses were so disorganised, and that the state force at its own disposal was so considerable that it prevented the working class carrying out the expropriation of the bourgeoisie itself and replacing it with the forms of revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat based on workers' councils and a workers' militia.

The transformation of these states into a bureaucratically degenerate form of the dictatorship of the proletariat finally took place at that point when the regimes, having expropriated the bourgeoisie economically, established a monopoly of foreign trade and began to organise their nationalised economies on the basis of command planning.

With the introduction of five year plans in the Buffer Zones (Bulgaria 1948, Czechoslovakia 1949, Hungary 1950, Poland 1950, Rumania and the GDR 1951), the process of the creation of bureaucratically degenerate workers' states was complete.

Under these exceptional circumstances the strategy of *détente* with capitalism on a world scale led to its overthrow in certain countries. This was not because the Kremlin wanted to abandon the strategy of "peaceful co-existence". Rather, it was done in order to achieve it on a more stable basis on a world scale when the balance of *détente* had become very unfavourable to the Stalinists. It did not indicate that Stalinism had in any way become a revolutionary factor in events.

Wherever it occurred and whatever form it took, Stalinist bureaucratic social revolutions were counter-revolutionary. As Trotsky noted:

"The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution."

Thus "really existing socialism" in Eastern Europe was a forcible implant. It involved a bureaucratic-repressive limitation of the independent action of the working class. It devalued the very notion of "revolution", "socialism", "workers' state" and the planned economy in the eyes of the oppressed masses. ■

Trotskyism versus state capitalism

The collapse of Stalinism has sharply posed questions about the nature of the East European states. It is almost universally agreed that in these states major steps are being taken towards the restoration of capitalism.

The Socialist Workers Movement, however, are almost alone in claiming that this is not so. They argue that these countries are already capitalist—state capitalist—with a ruling class no different in essence from those in the west. Indifferent to the events which daily contradict their position, ignorant of elementary Marxist political economy, the SWM continue to challenge the line established by Trotsky that the USSR remained a degenerated workers' state—that Stalinism had not restored capitalism.

This article addresses the rash of half-truths and distortions of Trotsky's position which masquerades as Marxist theory within the SWM.

THE USSR: PART OF WORLD CAPITALISM?

● *The economic and military pressure of world capitalism and the world market forces the Stalinist bureaucracy to engage in competitive capital accumulation through the exploitation of their working class. (Socialist Worker 63, p5)*

These states are key components of international capitalism. (D Carroll (SWM), Irish Times, 22.11.89)

The state monopoly of foreign trade has been crucial in all the degenerate workers' states in protecting home enterprises from competition with external capital. That is why it has been possible for them to survive despite disastrously inefficient techniques and organisation relative to capitalism. The most developed of all the post-capitalist states, the German Democratic Republic, has little if any industry which can compete favourably with the average level of efficiency and technology in the west! It is absurd to claim that these economies have been driven by capitalist competition. Far from being a "key component", the Stalinist states have been the most autarkic countries in the whole epoch of world capitalism.

In Marx's explanation of capitalist competition the capitalists confront each other through the exchange of commodities. They are driven to maximise the profit in the exchange values of their commodities. What they produce, whether it has any social use or not, is irrelevant. The hallmark of capitalist competition is the relentless drive to increase efficiency, productivity, and capital accumulation as the key to higher profit rates. Any enterprise not driven on such principles is not in any meaningful sense part of the

system of capitalist competition.

The Comecon countries, by contrast, trade by bartering goods in terms of their usefulness for each national economy—oil for machinery for beef etc. Trade with the capitalist market of the west has been marginal. Much of it has also been by barter. The non-convertibility of their currencies is a powerful expression of this non-integration into world capitalism!

Every workers' state must compete with the capitalist powers, as long as capitalism dominates the globe. This competition is overwhelmingly political and military, also using economic blockades. It will be even more ruthless against a healthy workers' state determined to internationalise the revolution! It is illogical to claim that this form of "competition" obliges the workers' state to become capitalist. Factories and infrastructures etc, are not developed as accumulations of exchange value allocated to different sectors so as to create the highest rate of profit irrespective of what they produce. The opposite is the case, even under the bureaucracy.

The state-capitalist theory caricatures the "USSR Ltd" as a "single capitalist" in the world market. Unlike a "capitalist", however, the USSR has never, could never, invest its surplus in the stock markets or profitable corporations of world capitalism with a view to maximising its profits. Neither in trade, investment nor enterprise linkages can one find evidence of meaningful capitalist "competition" or integration into capitalism!

STALINIST STATES MORE PROGRESSIVE?

● *The tradition of Trotsky's followers has been to*

Despite the reactionary nature of those states, there exist within them the forms of property which are preconditions for building socialism—not the only preconditions, but crucial, objective, material preconditions for developing a socialist mode of production. On a historical scale, these property forms are *progressive* relative to capitalism—even though, under the control of the Stalinist bureaucracy they are less productive than capitalism.

In any conflict with imperialism we take the side of the degenerate workers' states in order to protect the gains which remain from the overthrow of capitalism there.

PROPERTY FORM NOT FUNDAMENTAL TO SOCIALISM?

● *What is fundamental to Marxism and socialism is not the form of property as such (state ownership existed as far back as ancient Egypt) but the self-emancipation of the working class.*" (SW no63, p5)

Throughout history, what has been fundamental to the advance of human society has been precisely the mode of production, and how it defines the relationship of the social classes in production. This is precisely what "the form of property" means.

The property forms of the degenerate workers' states cannot be reduced to the abstraction of "state ownership". The property forms of a workers' state are characterised by the combination of: (a) expropriation of the capitalist class, (b) the integration of the economy by a plan rather than determination by the market, (c) the state monopoly of foreign trade.

The self-emancipation of the working class is crucial in two respects, neither of which lessens the importance of the form of property. Firstly, as a general principle of history, the new form of property can only be created by victorious workers' revolution over the bourgeoisie (1917 being the only example yet in history). Secondly, and unique to socialism, the new mode of production can only be developed under the conscious, democratic control of the working class—the control which Stalinism usurps.

WORKERS' STATES WITHOUT WORKERS' CONTROL

● *It is obscene to suggest that such anti-working class states could ever be described as workers' states of any kind. Whether Trotskyists call them "degenerate" or not, calling them "workers' states" is outrageous.*

This argument starts out from a one-sided insistence only on the subjective or political conditions for socialism—active control by the workers. There are also objective preconditions for socialism. In the USSR etc, they still exist despite the political counter-revolution of Stalinism. For Marx it was such objective features of the mode of production which determined the fundamental class character of a state.

Whether we call it workers' or bourgeois state is not

a moral question of whether the state upholds the standards of proletarian socialism or is brutally oppressive of workers. It is not even a political question of which class directly exercises daily political power. The class character of a state is decided by which forms of property dominate the economy; the capitalist private property of the bourgeoisie, or the nationalised and planned property expropriated from the bourgeoisie which can only realise its potential as socialism.

Even in a bourgeois capitalist state the bourgeoisie may be denied all political control, its parties and press banned, its parliament suppressed etc, as by fascist dictatorship, without undermining the capitalist mode of production. It remains a distorted bourgeois state.

The experience of Stalinism has tragically taught us the lesson that workers' control may also be suppressed in a state based on the working class mode of production, while remaining, in its objective features, a workers' state, but a profoundly degenerated one. The new mode of production is arrested in its development by the suppression of workers' control. The transition to socialism is decisively blocked. Along with Trotsky we say that the USSR:

"... can be called a workers' state in approximately the same sense—despite the vast difference of scale—in which the trade union, led and betrayed by opportunists, that is, by agents of capital, can be called a workers' organisation. Just as the trade unions under capitalism are workers' organisations run by class collaborationist bureaucratic castes in the working class, so the USSR remains a state where the working class is the ruling class but where power is in the hands of a reactionary bureaucratic caste." (*Writings 1935-36*, p360)

WORKERS' STATES WITHOUT WORKERS' REVOLUTION?

● *Marxists hold that only workers' revolution can overthrow capitalism. There was no such revolution in Eastern Europe, so, whatever about the USSR being a degenerated workers' state, the East European countries could in no sense be workers' states as Trotskyists believe.*

Trotsky lived to see Stalinism militarily liquidate the rule of the bourgeoisie in East Poland and the Baltic States. He equated the resulting societies with that of the USSR in their essential class character. Capitalism in these local areas was replaced by the bureaucratised post-capitalist system as a by-product of a reactionary strategy of collusion with fascist imperialism. Stalin's aim was not to "extend socialism". These new workers' states had not "degenerated" from a revolutionary origin—they were degenerate from birth, or "deformed"

This does not invalidate the principle that workers' revolution is necessary to abolish capitalism? The overturn of capitalism in East Europe was carried out by a state whose class character was determined by the 1917 revolution. The bureaucracy rests on prop-

erty forms fundamentally antagonistic to capitalism. Despite its striving to escape from this dependence, Stalinism cannot not co-exist with capitalism within its own borders. In 1939 it could not co-exist with it within its newly extended western borders. Capitalism could thus be overturned locally by the bureaucracy of a workers' state only when they had no choice for their own strategic survival.

The USSR bureaucracy could certainly never create a healthy workers' state anywhere—that would be suicide for the general interests of the bureaucracy! Their first concern in abolishing capitalism in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary etc, was to take away all independent initiative from the workers' organisations.

The Marxist principle of workers' revolution against capitalism is a general principle for the working class which, in this century, exists in world-wide interdependence. Locally, however, the general principle may be partially contradicted by forces acting on a global level.

Stalin's reactionary global struggle for peaceful co-existence with imperialism 1944-48 required him to crush or betray workers' revolution everywhere. But in return he demanded imperialist agreement to neutralise the countries of his European buffer zone. While pushing for western agreement to this utopian plan, he kept capitalism intact in those countries, under the rule of puppet popular front governments which deliberately included bourgeois parties.

Imperialism replied with an ideological war and economic inducements to break Stalin's control of the zone. Marshall Plan aid began to undermine his control of the puppet governments and re-enthusiasm amongst the bourgeoisie within the buffer countries. To prevent imperialist penetration of the region became a matter of survival for Stalinism. It necessitated the cold liquidation from above of the East European capitalists and the replacement of the bourgeois governments with bureaucratic Stalinist governments.

Out of such counter-revolutionary global strategy there were created, as a by-product, post-capitalist societies which Trotskyists defend against imperialism in the same way as they would defend the USSR against imperialism.

The originators of the SWM's theory about the USSR refused to believe any longer after 1947 that Stalin's regime was a contradictory one, balancing on the antagonism between world capitalism and a post-capitalist property system. In fact they exaggerated the historic stability of Stalinism by saying it was just another form of the established capitalist mode of production. By contrast Trotsky's analysis correctly understood the unstable nature of this historically illegitimate caste.

NO REASON TO FEAR CAPITALIST RESTORATION?

● *The SWM do not advocate the introduction of the market but "neither do we fear a restoration of capital-*

ism since capitalism already exists". (SW no.63)

To label as "capitalism" an economic system where production is not normally regulated by the market contradicts Marx directly. A return to dominance by the market in East Europe is a return to capitalism. Dominance by the market stands in total contradiction to the whole economic basis of the Stalinist states, just as it would in a healthy workers' state.

Limited market measures caused gigantic contradictions in China, bringing savage reaction from the bureaucracy. With the USSR's attempt to re-create a neutral zone in Eastern Europe, Chinese-style resistance from the isolated bureaucracy of Hungary, Poland or Czechoslovakia etc., becomes less and less possible. The actual restoration of capitalism looms as a real possibility unless the working class is won not only to overthrow Stalinism but, while doing so, to preserve the post-capitalist property forms.

Far from being indifferent to this outcome, socialists must fear it as a potential tragedy on a historic scale. In terms of markets, cheap educated workforces, and the absolutely knock-down prices at which existing enterprises would be bought up, a huge boost to capital accumulation and a vast extension of the capitalist system would be the outcome. Not only would it reduce most of these states to quite backward semi-colonies of the EC, the USA and Japanese capitalism, it would also give a vast new lease of life to international capitalism as a whole.

The SWM's theory of "state-capitalism" disarms socialists in the face of this historic danger.

THE "ORTHODOX" TROTSKYIST VIEW?

● *The orthodox" Trotskyist analysis "is held by only a small minority" (Socialist Worker 63, p5)*

Those who believe the USSR to be "state capitalist" are in fact the "minority" among the tens of thousands of organised militants world-wide claiming to stand in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky.

In the same paper the SWM spotlights the Marxist left groups in Eastern Europe and the USSR who are active in the revolution against Stalinism. It dishonestly hides the fact that none of them share the SWM's belief that these are "state capitalist" societies!■

SOCIALIST WORKER ON POLAND

Solidarity with Solidarnosc

THE NON-STALINIST far left in Britain has been, in its majority, uncritical in its support for Solidarnosc from the outset. This has included blind support for its leadership.

The installation of the new Polish government dominated by Solidarnosc ministers, has been fol-

lowed by a stream of pro-capitalist statements from these catholic nationalist leaders and their advisers. The "sudden" realisation by many on the left of the slavishly pro-western imperialist nature of this very leadership has caused considerable turmoil amongst Solidarnosc's fans.

Socialist Worker, the paper of the SWP, a "state capitalist" tendency, hardly knows which way to turn. It declares that the entry of Solidarnosc into government "can only encourage those fighting for change the world over" but then add darkly that "there is another side to the picture".

The bad side is that Solidarnosc does not have enough power or rather it does not have any real power at all, only governmental office. Their enthusiasm for the entry of Solidarnosc into the government is because they see it as a victory for the millions of workers who were part of the Solidarnosc movement in 1980. But the leaders who have been elected to office nine years later are not in any shape or form representative of that revolutionary struggle of the working class. Although the Polish proletariat and peasantry overwhelmingly awarded its franchise to the Solidarnosc candidates, the government is not a workers' government.

Firstly, the Walesa leadership can in no way be described as the democratic representatives of the union's two million members. Unelected since 1981, Walesa has refused to reconvene a Solidarnosc congress since then. Secondly, the candidates were selected by committees of intellectual experts, clerical and lay functionaries of the church.

POPULARITY

They stood on no political platform beyond the name "Solidarnosc". Their popularity in the election, an expression of opposition to the ruling Stalinist dictator Jaruzelski, was not an endorsement of the policies these leaders now advocate. Rather than a party of the working class, the Solidarnosc leadership is divorced from any direct accountable link to the union members, relying instead on the historic popularity of the movement to win them votes.

Since the election, however, the viciously pro-capitalist austerity programme of Walesa and Mazowiecki, which they share with Jaruzelski and the dominant faction of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP), has been openly displayed.

On 22 August Walesa told the Italian daily *Il Messaggero*:

"Until now nobody has adopted the road that leads from socialism towards capitalism. And that is what we will try to do: return to the pre-war situation, after having gone through a long period of socialism... Our economic and political models are those of western countries that have obtained good results." (22.8.89)

In addition to this loyalty pledge to capitalism, the government has demonstrated its determination to make the working class pay the price of stabilising the economy in preparation for the great auction of state property to the capitalists of the world. As the SWP themselves report, "The enthusiasm of Solidar-

ity supporters has been tempered by price increases of up to 500% for basic foods and consumer goods at the start of August."

This austerity programme is completely in line with the project of the Solidarnosc leaders, but for the SWP it appears as some kind of accidental betrayal of the working class.

"Tragically, the leaders of Solidarity look to be set on playing this role, attacking workers' living standards while using their popular support to head off any social upheaval which threatens the rulers' power."

To avoid this "tragedy" the SWP call on the Solidarnosc rulers to remain true to their working class supporters and pursue policies which would defeat the real power of the "bosses", i.e. break with the Stalinists. Their advice to Walesa is that: "Solidarity should be trying to strengthen factory organisation in order to build a real power base." Nowhere do they challenge or even discuss the goals of the leaders of Solidarnosc, thereby evading the issue of what such a "power base" in the factories would be used for.

ESSENTIAL

They see as the essential problem the Solidarnosc leaders becoming dupes of the crafty Stalinist bureaucrats. Their demands relate to how to make them break from the bureaucracy and pursue an independent road. But they dodge the issue of which class interests such independence would represent. Only in passing does *Socialist Worker* implicitly criticise Solidarnosc for looking "to the market as the solution to the problems of the economy".

The Walesa leadership is no more a representative of the working class in Poland than the Stalinist butchers he is doing deals with. Both want to take Poland along the road of marketisation, opening up the enterprises to imperialist exploitation and profiteering. It is as wrong and as stupid to see Walesa as an instrument of working class power as it would be to see Jaruzelski in that role. Only the blind Stalinophobia of the SWP could make them call on the feted and cosseted agent of the Vatican, the White House and Downing Street to "break the power of the bureaucrats". Even if he were able to do so it would be only to replace it with the power of the multinationals.

Despite the clear anti-working class programme of the Solidarnosc leadership the SWP still have illusions that they can be won to a different road. They say there is a different strategy which the new government could pursue. "If the Solidarity leaders looked to that power (of workers' struggles—WP) and led, instead of holding workers' struggles back, a very different road is possible."

The question the SWP constantly dodge is what the class character of a Solidarnosc government with real power would be. Walesa's goal is capitalist restoration. The policies of the government, supported by Jaruzelski and sanctioned by the Kremlin, are leading towards the maximum marketisation of the economy. Pursued to its logical conclusion this would mean the restoration of a bourgeoisie in Poland, a

social counter-revolution. Just as the road of political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy requires the armed action of the working class in Poland, so too the total restoration of capitalism in Poland will require the violent smashing of the workers' state. However degenerated it may be, this will be defended by the working class who will never peacefully accept the re-introduction of unbridled imperialist exploitation.

A clear class analysis of the events in Poland is not possible for the SWP. They are thrown completely by their wrong class characterisation of Poland and therefore of all the contending forces. Their state capitalism leads them to ignore the pro-imperialist character of the Solidarnosc government because, for them, Poland is already capitalist. They therefore maintain a total silence on the issue of property relations.

In their position there is not a word about the need to *defend* the state property against privatisation by the local and international capitalist vultures. Not a word about the only alternative to "market methods"—planning.

Their non-Marxist theory holds that the features of a workers' state, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, total state ownership of the means of production, centralised planning and the monopoly of foreign trade can be and indeed are for them, features of "state capitalism". The working class has no reason to regard these as its conquests or its instruments, nor has it any particular reason to defend them.

Revolutionary Marxists (Trotskyists) on the contrary assert that there exist no other economic instruments than these to defeat and subordinate the law of value. That is, to transform society from one based on the anarchy and crises of capitalism into one based on the rational allocation of abundant resources to meet human need. The state capitalists blithely junk all this without offering any alternative economic instruments they may have discovered. They cover up their unilateral programmatic disarmament in front of capitalism with confused cries about the existing degenerate workers' states which boil down to the jibe; "call this socialism?". No we do not!

Revolutionary Marxists have always argued that workers' states that suffered a qualitative degeneration, or were created as degenerate workers' states, were not only *not socialist* but not even advancing *towards socialism*. On the contrary, if the working class is deprived of political power over its own state (its own because it still defends the social expropriation of the bourgeoisie) by a usurping caste of bureaucratic parasites then a process of increasing chaos and collapse could lead to a restoration of capitalism, a social counter-revolution.

Because the bureaucrats direct the plan to magnify their own privileges; because they stifle all freedom of criticism and terrorise all opposition and because they claim this chaos and repression is socialism, then they increasingly alienate the working class from its own state. But this caste is not to be identified with the planned property relations. It exists in contradiction to them.

The bureaucracy's parasitism and mismanagement will bring the planned property relations, to the brink of collapse. This is what is happening now in Poland. The bureaucracy is not a class which historically embodies a specific mode of production but a parasite—ultimately a deadly parasite.

It is—as the Polish workers themselves have shown—quite possible to "break the power of the bureaucracy in every factory" as the SWP suggest, and to drive out the bosses (since there are few private owners we can only assume they mean the state appointed managers). And then?

The factories have to produce or people starve. What shall they produce? It clearly cannot be left up to each workplace to decide in isolation. But our state capitalists dare not even mention the plan or what the workers should do about it. At this point they remark that seizing the factories would be a revolution.

But they are wrong. What they call for would be at best half a revolution like the one the Polish workers made in 1980-81. And, as Lenin said, those who make half a revolution are doomed.

If workers know only what they do not want to be done—if they merely obstruct the plans of the bureaucracy (and Solidarnosc)—then all that will happen is that there will be further chaos, economic deprivation and demoralisation until they bitterly and reluctantly give in. A real revolution would destroy the power of the bureaucracy by force and institute a regime of genuine workers' power committed to the transition to socialism. To achieve this the Polish workers must know what they wish to preserve and what they wish to destroy.

They must employ means sufficient to achieve this—the general strike and an insurrection that smashes and wins over the armed forces of the state.

To mobilise and deploy this force requires the creation of workers' councils, a workers' militia and a party. None of these can be built except in remorseless struggle against Walesa and Jaruzelski.

The SWP is incapable of recognising, let alone defending, the Polish workers' past gains. Nor is it capable of outlining a strategy for the seizure of working class political power in Poland.

Instead the SWP can only muse on the "tragic" dilemma of Solidarnosc.

Glasnost or political revolution?

GORBACHEV'S *perestroika* poses a sharp test for revolutionary Marxists. It provides ample evidence of the profound crisis that is gripping the system of bureaucratic rule in the USSR. It demonstrates daily the inability of the ruling bureaucracy to solve that crisis. Most importantly, it demands that revolutionary Marxists advance a strategy that can resolve the crisis in the interests of the working class.

That strategy is the introduction of democratic planning to unlock the potential of the post capitalist property relations and unblock the path to socialism in the degenerated workers' state. For Trotskyists the only way to achieve this is through *political revolution*.

The workers must forge their own organisations of struggle; from independent trade unions, factory committees and defence guards to a workers' militia and new soviets (councils of workers' delegates).

The soviets and workers' militia must seize power from the bureaucracy. They must recreate workers' democracy in the USSR and oversee the participation of the mass of workers in planning and control of production.

This was Trotsky's strategy, summed up in *The Revolution Betrayed* and countless other writings on Stalinist rule. But it is totally absent from the resolutions and writings of the "Trotskyist" United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI).

In December 1988 the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the USFI passed a resolution on Gorbachev's reforms. The IEC resolution contains only one reference to political revolution. After discussing the divisions in the bureaucracy the resolution warns that this

"does not in any way mean fostering illusions in the reformability of the system—the establishment of a socialist democracy would mean a revolution." (*International Viewpoint* (IV) No 159 March 1989)

In all the remaining thousands of words in the IEC resolution there is not a single attempt to explain how that revolution can be brought about; what immediate or strategic demands the workers should fight for to transform their day to day struggles into a struggle for power.

This is hardly surprising once we find out that the leaders of the USFI struggled tooth and nail to keep any mention of political revolution out of the resolution. They explained to the IEC that they were "searching for a better term" to sum up the Trotskyist programme. Those within the USFI who think the term's final inclusion is a victory should look at what their leaders means by "socialist democracy" and "political revolution".

Many of the resolution's basic arguments are taken from Ernest Mandel's book *Beyond Perestroika*. Mandel is the ideological leader of the USFI. His book holds out an optimum scenario of mass discontent and the

formation of a new political leadership leading to a situation in which

"the political revolution, in the classic Marxist sense of the term, will triumph".

But for Mandel political revolution turns out to be something very different from the "classic Marxist" strategy advocated by Leon Trotsky.

In *Beyond Perestroika* Mandel counterposes to the existing *perestroika* an "alternative model of development" which is

"unachievable without workers' management, workers' power and an institutionalised pluralistic socialist democracy".

What does this institutionalised socialist democracy mean? It means, for Mandel, the democratisation of the institutions of the Soviet state. For Mandel the key is the development of a plurality of political parties in the existing so-called soviets of the USSR. As Mandel puts it quite plainly:

"Real socialist democracy, real exercise of political power by the working masses; genuine soviet power are incompatible with the single party regime. The soviets will become sovereign and real organs of 'popular power' only when they are freely elected, only when they are free to decide on political strategy and political alternatives." (p82)

Mandel chooses to ignore the fact that the existing soviets have nothing in common with the soviets required to make a political revolution in the "classic Marxist sense of the term". They are mock parliamentary bodies not organs directly responsible to the workers in the factories, offices and collective farms.

Such organs will have to be built anew out of struggle against the bureaucracy, not through the democratisation of the existing institutions of the bureaucratic state.

Mandel makes a clear attempt to dress up "political revolution" as a deeper and more thoroughgoing form of *glasnost*. He notes that Gorbachev has seen the need for a revolution of a special type. For Mandel Gorbachev's claims are:

"precisely the reference point for Trotsky in distinguishing the political revolution necessary in the Soviet Union."

Mandel's book includes the demand for key democratic rights. It includes "generalised workers' control over all economic activities" (p191), more creches, more holiday homes and the rapid transition to the 35 hour week. But nowhere do we see the call for a workers' militia and for genuine soviet power.

In an article in the USFI's French publication *Inprecor* (No 23 March 1989) Mandel attacked the various opposition platforms appearing in the Soviet Union for not including the right to strike, the right to form elected workers' organisations at every level, the sliding scale of wages and for workers' control of

production. But exactly the same could be said of the IEC resolution. The concrete demands of the Trotskyist programme for political revolution are entirely absent.

Whilst Mandel is prepared to include such demands in his book as a way of forcing the bureaucracy to "deepen *glasnost*" they find no place in the actual programmatic statements of the USFI. From the resolution it appears as if the USFI were the passive observer of events developing in the USSR, not an organisation committed to intervening in those events. As we shall see this is very close to the truth.

At one point Mandel's book talks of encouraging the development:

"... of all forms of self-organisation of the masses—from the most embryonic forms such as strike committees to the most developed forms such as workers' councils organised on a national basis." (p185)

But they are posed as vehicles for propelling radical reform from below, not as embryonic organs of political revolution against the bureaucracy itself.

In truth the term Mandel much prefers—"socialist democracy"—has nothing to do with political revolution in the Trotskyist sense. In a passing and uncharacteristic use of the term Mandel shows that all he means by political revolution is mass mobilisation to democratise the USSR:

"There can be no socialist democracy without mass mobilisation, without political revolution." (p193)

In other words the political revolution is simply a name given to mass involvement in reform, not to the seizure of power by the workers. It's a name that Mandel studiously avoids wherever he can.

It is a term which makes its way into the IEC resolution only in this ambiguous context; "socialist democracy would mean a revolution". To read this sentence to mean that democratic reform is political revolution may not have been the intention of those who fought for its inclusion. But it is a reading entirely justified by the whole of Mandel's book.

Both Mandel's book and the IEC resolution fail to grapple with the economic implications of perestroika. Mandel may think that Zaslavskaya and Aganbegyan are: "very prudent—and very vague—about practical proposals, which stands in contrast to the clarity of the diagnosis." (Mandel p22)

And he may argue that it is "unlikely" that the USSR will become an economy "where market regulation is dominant". (p56)

But in his infatuation with political democratisation he chooses to ignore that his "prudent" Gorbachevites are precisely committed to an economy "where market relations are dominant". Hence the even greater need to struggle for a political revolution

The demand for "political pluralism" contained in both Mandel's book and the IEC resolution contains two major departures from Trotskyism. For the USFI democratisation of the existing structures "necessarily poses the question of plurality of choice" (IV No 159). The Leninist norm on party legality was for freedom to form parties committed to the defence of

the Russian Revolution and the suppression of parties committed to its overthrow.

Mandel and the USFI abandon this, placing no conditions on the freedom to form new parties. But Mandel and the USFI never explain what unique contribution to the political revolutionary process open restorationist and neo-fascist parties could make. Of course it is not the bureaucracy but workers' tribunals which should decide on the legality of opposition parties.

This departure from Lenin and Trotsky is bad enough. But what illustrates the utter bankruptcy of the USFI's strategy is the absence of any call for a new revolutionary Trotskyist party.

This is no accident. The USFI has been debating whether or not it needs a section in the USSR ever since the Gorbachev reforms began. Why the opening of potentially revolutionary possibilities in the USSR should lead "Trotskyists" to abandon the project of a revolutionary party in the USSR is understandable once we look at the history of the USFI.

When Tito broke with Stalin in 1948 the Fourth International declared that the Yugoslav CP was no longer Stalinist. It could "project a revolutionary orientation" and no independent Trotskyist party was needed. The same is true for Cuba.

The USFI rejects building an independent party in Nicaragua. There is even a Vietnamese organisation loyal to the USFI which is prevented from declaring itself because the USFI leaders continue to claim that the Vietnamese CP is an adequate vehicle for revolution.

The whole political method of the USFI is based on finding unconscious revolutionaries. Stalinist or petit bourgeois nationalist parties which become the instruments of an historic process, alleviating the need for the conscious intervention of a revolutionary Trotskyist party.

Despite its warnings about siding with any wing of the bureaucracy at present, the USFI's failure to call for a new revolutionary party signals its willingness to exclude itself from the "political plurality" when the time is right. Every one of Mandel's attempts to conflate political revolution with bureaucratic reform prepares the USFI for this moment.

The USFI has already failed the test of applying Trotsky's strategy to the new situation in the USSR. There are undoubtedly elements within the USFI fighting against Mandel's strategy and for what they perceive as political revolution.

But the USFI is an organisation which has proved to be able to contain such vital disagreements as "reform or revolution in the USSR?" in endless factional debate. To the militants of the USFI who really want to fight for political revolution we say; join an organisation which is committed to building a Trotskyist party in the USSR and in every country.

Join an organisation which, despite its small size, has already proved capable of outlining a programme for political revolution in the Soviet Union. Join the MRCL.■

“Exciting but not revolutionary”

NO REVOLUTIONS have taken place in Eastern Europe according to the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). The left and the right, they tell us, are hopelessly muddled in describing 1989 as a year of revolution.

How then should the upheavals in the Stalinist states be understood? The RCP explains in its paper *The Next Step* (TNS):

“The events of the past year have certainly been exciting, but it is a gross exaggeration to say that they have been revolutionary.” (26.1.90)

Even in Romania “the change that has taken place resembles a palace coup or a purge not a social revolution.” (TNS 12.1.90) The faces may have changed, but the system is the same, argues the RCP.

What is any sane socialist to make of this? In place of an analysis of the events the RCP gives us its emotional response to them. They were “exciting” events. The Romanian masses will no doubt be delighted that their gun battles with the Securitate “excited” a small group of British leftists!

Frankly, we couldn't care less about the RCP's feelings. We are more interested in understanding the nature and dynamics of the East European events from a Marxist standpoint. Leon Trotsky said that a “revolution is an excess of history”. Contradictions stored up for years, and the accumulated antagonisms that have simmered for decades, suddenly explode. The masses storm onto the political stage.

There can be no doubt that 1989 was the year when the history of Stalinism's excesses finally caught up with it. On the one side the ruling bureaucratic castes of Eastern Europe could no longer sustain themselves in the old way. On the other the working class in these countries, sensing their opportunity, decided they were no longer prepared to live in the old way. Lenin defined such circumstances as a revolutionary situation.

In Eastern Europe the political revolution began as the masses took to the streets. Dictators fell or were pushed and major political changes occurred. But the RCP will have none of this—beyond allowing themselves a little excitement. Their mistake flows from the abandonment of revolutionary Marxism. Instead of taking the real world as their point of departure, they set up an idealised version of “the revolution” measured against which most actual revolutions are found wanting. They are only prepared to rubber stamp victorious social revolutions such as those in France in 1789 or Russia in October 1917.

Under capitalism and in the post-capitalist degenerate workers' states of Eastern Europe, there have been

numerous political revolutions. These have not destroyed the existing social relations or set up the institutions of a new ruling class. Yet every Marxist has, rightly, described them as revolutions.

The revolutions of 1848 in Europe were democratic revolutions against monarchical institutions and the “aristocracy of finance”. The February Revolution of 1917 was no less of a revolution for having only installed the capitalist Provisional Government. This left untouched as much of the Tsarist state and Russian economy as it possibly could.

The RCP is correct to say in their monthly review that in Eastern Europe: “. . . a revolution must involve more than pulling down a wall or shooting a tyrant.” (*Living Marxism* February 1990) Does the RCP genuinely believe that this was all that happened? Are its members blind to the fact that it was the action of millions that led to the wall being brought down; that a civil war led to the tyrant being shot?

In Eastern Europe the political revolution against Stalinism began in 1989. It has been stalled at its opening, democratic phase. Still it has achieved much. Key pillars of the bureaucratic order have been knocked down: the leading role of the party has been ended; a multiplicity of candidates in free elections has been won; the party militias and secret police forces have been demolished.

These are more than “the shooting of a tyrant” even if they are less than a full *proletarian* political revolution. Such a revolution will destroy completely the apparatus of Stalinist rule and erect the dictatorship of democratic workers' councils in its place.

To argue that in Romania a coup, not a revolution took place is utter foolishness. In a sense both took place. First came the revolution of the masses. It smashed the Ceausescu dynasty. This was followed immediately by a peaceful—even welcomed—coup by the army against the revolution. The disarming of the revolutionary committees was done peacefully.

The naïve and generous Romanian masses failed to articulate their own proletarian class demands independently of the army and all factions of the bureaucracy. Hence the unelected National Salvation Front was able to install itself in government and set about containing the masses. This was a living process, one that *Living Marxism* cannot understand or explain.

The RCP's scholastic method is to be seen across the whole range of their politics: a labour movement is only really a labour movement if it is a revolutionary one; planning is only planning if everything gets everywhere on

time; revolutions are only revolutions if the workers succeed in smashing the state and instituting a new social order. In reality, the RCP want to belittle 1989 for having the audacity to have happened without them at the head of the struggle. Marx's attitude to revolutions was somewhat different:

"Proletarian revolutions . . . criticise themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin afresh, deride with unmerciful thorough-

ness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paltriness of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again more gigantic."

The proletarian political revolution lies ahead to be sure. But the freedom to organise, to print, and many other gains that have been won so far in the first phase, will allow that revolution to be brought nearer. To bring a revolution to a successful conclusion it is first necessary to know that it has begun. ■

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Ditching Trotskyism – in theory and practice

In November 1988 Socialist Organiser decided that Trotsky's analysis of the Stalinist states was no longer valid. It was "utterly nonsensical", they declared, to go on describing such societies as degenerate workers' states.

THE REJECTION of Trotsky's formula was a continuation of his method according to *Socialist Organiser* (SO). Stalinism's failure to disintegrate after World War Two, its economic decline relative to imperialism, would have led Trotsky himself to change his ideas, they argued. Those who still adhere to Trotsky's analysis inevitably end up abandoning Trotsky's programme for the revolutionary overthrow of Stalinism.

Little more than twelve months later SO is confronted with the actual disintegration of Stalinism. Not only has it failed to put in place any theoretical explanation for Stalinism's death agony; it has itself inevitably ditched the key elements of Trotsky's programme as well.

When SO first abandoned Trotsky's definition of Stalinism it decided to label the USSR, Eastern Europe etc, as "bureaucratic state monopoly" societies. This label conveniently avoided giving a class characterisation to the Stalinist states. Since its adoption, competing tendencies within SO have struggled over the theoretical content of the label.

On one side there are those who argue a version of Tony Cliff's "state capitalist" analysis. On the other there are those, apparently a majority, who have opted for a version of Max Shachtman's theory of "bureaucratic collectivism". This article deals with the "bureaucratic collectivist" analysis. Not only does it predominate within SO's ranks; its conclusions are clearly embodied in the programme SO has advanced to meet the current crisis.

Max Shachtman developed his theory of bureaucratic collectivism in the course of a bitter faction fight against Trotsky and the majority of the American Socialist Workers Party in 1940. Initially his theory retained the idea that the USSR was an advance on capitalism. Post war developments, in particular the anti communist Cold War

in the USA, invested Shachtman's programmatic conclusions— "Neither Washington nor Moscow"—with a distinctly pro-imperialist content. By 1961 he was lining up with Washington during its ill-fated invasion of Castro's Cuba.

His justification for this new line was that the totalitarian nature of the new Soviet ruling class was regressive as compared to the "democracy" of advanced capitalism. SO is keen to use this aspect of Shachtman's theory while avoiding his pro-capitalist conclusions. In an introduction to two articles by Shachtman in SO's theoretical magazine, *Workers Liberty*, SO explained

"Some of us think, with Shachtman, that these societies are a new form of class society, different from capitalism and in many respects, notably in what they do to the working class and to its possibilities of organising itself, regressive. With Shachtman's later politics—which flowed from his basic incoherence on the place of the state monopoly systems in history—we have of course no sympathy." (*Workers' Liberty* 11 p18)

SO's programme for Eastern Europe today explains the impossibility of embracing the theory of bureaucratic collectivism without its reactionary conclusions.

Trotsky argued that the bureaucracy was an illegitimate caste which survived by plundering the planned property relations. It stood in contradiction to those property relations. Because it has no essential relationship to those property relations it is constantly tormented by the prospect of an explosion of this contradiction. It is a regime of permanent crisis.

The first disadvantage of the theory of bureaucratic collectivism is that it contains no analysis of the crisis of bureaucratic planning. How could it, since in both its forms Shachtman's theory was developed to explain the permanence and longevity of Stalinist rule?

Whilst he rejected Trotsky's analysis of the bureaucracy as a caste Shachtman retained the idea that Stalinism is a "regime of permanent crisis" which could only rule through a Bonapartist dictatorship. But Trotsky designated Stalinism as a regime of crisis because of the fundamental illegitimacy of the bureaucracy to property relations within which it existed. It acted as the agent of another set of social relations—capitalism.

Despite its ability to storm the initial stages of industrialisation ("at triple the normal cost") bureaucratic planning could not go beyond "the rough work of borrowing imitating, transplanting and grafting" basic capitalist techniques of production. It could not tolerate the "democracy of producers and consumers" needed to take economic development beyond this stage.

Bureaucratic collectivism, however, never attempted to analyse the roots of Stalinism's economic crisis. The apparent stability of Stalinist regimes led the "bureaucratic collectivists" to ignore the inner laws of motion of this "new form of class society".

Trotsky's analysis enables us to understand why the Stalinist regimes are dying from their internal contradictions. SO, on the other hand, admits that it has no idea of the laws of motion governing the Stalinist economies. It stresses the "unknowability" of these laws:

"The existing USSR system is in many key respects an unknown economy." (*Towards Capitalism or Workers Liberty* p4)

This is an enormous gap in the theory of bureaucratic collectivism. But it is solved for SO by the simple assertion that Stalinism is regressive. The Stalinist economies have been "overtaken" by capitalism and are therefore in crisis. Except that the problem will not go away. If "bureaucratic state monopoly" was a new form of class society why is it collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions? If the bureaucracy is a new ruling class why is it voluntarily committing suicide?

IF STALINISM IS REGRESSIVE, WHAT IS CAPITALISM?

Instead of a theoretical answer SO can advance only a description of the situation: the bureaucratic plan doesn't work, it cannot meet consumer needs, it leads to a fall in economic growth and eventually to stagnation. Therefore the bureaucracy has embraced the market. But why? Capitalism has a theoretical explanation for the current crisis, albeit of an "off the peg" variety: capitalism is better than Stalinism. It is better for the workers because, although they are exploited they have access to a variety of consumer goods and to bourgeois democracy. And capitalism has a lot of life left in it. It has the ability to bury Stalinism.

The problem for SO is that Shachtman too came to share this belief, long before Stalinism entered its final crisis. Indeed it is the only logical conclusion. If capitalism was able to catch up with and devour Stalinism, then despite its own shortcomings, surely it was the more progressive system. Far from entering its "moribund" stage as Lenin had described the imperialist epoch, capitalism remained a progressive system.

How does SO avoid this conclusion? In the end only by juggling with contradictory assertions.

At the same time as we find Stalinism designated a regressive system we also find the idea that it was a historical "parallel" to capitalism.

The *Introduction to Shachtman* explains that, in the context of the long post war boom "the state monopoly systems clearly appear as no more than a historical parallel to capitalism (and in many ways a backward one) in a number of relatively underdeveloped countries" (*Workers Liberty* 11, p18)

In Shachtman's theory the new ruling class was crystallised out of the "vast social *melange* we know as the middle classes". In countries like Tsarist Russia or pre-revolutionary China that vast social *melange* is the majority of society. Led by a healthy workers' movement, Shachtman argued, the middle classes could become allies of the workers' movement. Led by Stalinism they inevitably formed a new ruling class and created a new form of class society.

The one healthy conclusion genuine Trotskyists could share with those who hold this view is; don't let Stalinism lead the revolution! But what if the Stalinist leadership is stronger than the revolutionary Marxist party? This is the case in virtually every anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle today. The conclusion Shachtman drew was: in that case don't make a revolution at all in such countries, it can only lead to bureaucratic collectivism!

What conclusions does SO draw?

In *Towards Capitalism or Workers' Liberty* they argue that the Stalinist economies cannot be "post-capitalist" or "transitional" because:

"Socialism grows out of the most advanced capitalism. All the Stalinist states were and are comparatively backward and underdeveloped." (p10)

"Stalinism was not an attempt to go beyond advanced capitalism on the basis of the achievements of advanced capitalism which has proved by its failure the hopelessness of all such attempts. It was an experience on the fringes of world capitalism..." (p11 emphasis in original)

The only conclusion we can draw from this is that the workers of a backward country cannot begin the transition to socialism. It is not a new conclusion. Plekhanov drew it from the experience of the Russian Revolution itself. Eric Hobsbawm, *Marxism Today's* historian for all seasons, is one of its newest converts. Its usual programmatic adjunct is to urge the working class of a backward country to limit its struggles to the achievement of a "democratic" stage. Within this stage the economic and political benefits of "advanced capitalism" can prepare the workers for a future attempt to start the socialist transition.

SO says nothing to dispel such conclusions. On the one hand it clearly recoils from the logic of the argument. It poses the question "Is capitalism vindicated by the disintegration of state socialism?" and answers it with a list of capitalism's faults: crises, wage slavery, hunger and massive inequality. It also points out that Marx and Engels described nineteenth century capitalism as a progressive and revolutionary system: "the necessary forerunner of socialism".

But is it progressive now, compared to Stalinism? That is the real question millions of workers are asking now in Eastern Europe. Simply to list capitalism's shortcomings doesn't answer the question. The East European work-

ers watch TV and read the Stalinist papers and are well aware that capitalism has all these faults. Has it not occurred to SO that it had all these faults at the same time as Marx described it as a progressive system?

Everything SO has written about "the place of state monopoly systems in history" points to the same reactionary conclusion as Shachtman's: that capitalism is more progressive than the Stalinist state and that the workers there must undergo a period of "advanced capitalism" before they can begin the transition to socialism. Despite the fact that this argument is never clearly stated the logic of it exerts a magnetic force over SO's analysis of the class dynamics of the present upsurge and its programme of action.

DYNAMICS OF THE ANTI-STALINIST REVOLUTION

For us the present crisis of Stalinism contains three possible outcomes: a bureaucratic crackdown, the return of capitalism or the workers' revolution which unblocks the transition to socialism.

Having dispensed with Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism SO can see only two possible outcomes: bureaucratic crackdown or the victory of the mass movements. Because they see the East European mass movements as aimed at a ruling class the only problem is that the movements might not go far enough in removing that ruling class from power.

Instead of Trotsky's model of political revolution SO has turned to the experience of 1848 for a guide to the dynamics of the present situation.

The revolutions which swept Europe in 1848 were bourgeois revolutions against the remnants of feudalism. In these revolutions Marx and Engels sought to advance the independent interests of the working class all the better to begin the struggle for socialism immediately after the feudalists were defeated. They summed up their strategy with the slogan "permanent revolution".

In their most radical formulation of this programme of permanent revolution Marx and Engels urged the working class to form "revolutionary workers' governments" so that immediately the bourgeoisie was victorious it was confronted with an armed and organised working class movement. They advocated a programme which made radical inroads into the property rights of the capitalists.

But 1848 was not the only example of bourgeois democratic revolution in history. In the Russian Revolution of 1917 Lenin argued that the "workers' governments", the revolutionary soviets, could and should go further than simply confronting the victorious bourgeoisie through a regime of "dual power". They should seize power and, in Lenin's words, "proceed to construct the socialist order".

Lenin and Trotsky's difference with the Marx and Engels of 1848 was not one of method. It arose from the differing strength of the working class within the class alliance that made the bourgeois revolution. In 1917 the working class was stronger than in 1848.

Which is the better parallel with today? Whilst it has yet to find its independent class voice the proletariat of the Stalinist states is the predominant class. The peasantry has shrunk compared to the rural working class. The

intelligentsia, though it shouts loudly, has no social strength. The future bourgeoisie of a restored capitalism remains a tiny embryo composed of rich bureaucrats and street-corner spivs. The social weight of the working class today means that it can and should be hegemonic within the anti-Stalinist revolution; that its programme—for the socialist transition—should be implemented.

For genuine Trotskyists there is every possibility for the working class to impose its own social programme on the revolutions. There is no need for a prolonged period of dual power and certainly not for a stage in which capitalism is restored. If the East European revolutions really were only "democratic" revolutions against a backward ruling class then the 1917 model would still be far superior to the parallel with 1848.

But they are not simply democratic revolutions. They contain the possibility of capitalist restoration. Because of this the fight for soviets and a transitional programme of socialist demands is even more vital. It is the only way to stop capitalist restoration.

This programme is not on the immediate order of the day for SO. Its fatalistic Plekhanovite view of Stalinism's "place in history" leads it straight into advocating a democratic stage in the anti-Stalinist revolution—a strategy just as likely to strangle the working class as when used in the context of the anti-imperialist struggle.

SOVIETS OR PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY?

SO points out that "Everywhere the rallying cry of the revolution has been democracy—undifferentiated classless democracy" (*Socialist Organiser*, 18.1.90) For revolutionary Marxists democracy is never classless. It can be, like bourgeois democracy, the disguised dictatorship of the capitalist class. Or it can be, like soviet power, the undisguised dictatorship of the working class. It is always the means for one class to rule over another.

Parliamentary democracy holds two dangers for the working class of Eastern Europe. It can be the means of mobilising mass action. Where workers' councils come into existence both the Stalinists and the pro-capitalist reformers will try to incorporate them constitutionally into the parliamentary system. In 1980 for example faced with the potential for the Polish Inter-Factory Strike Committees to develop in a soviet direction the Stalinists toyed with the possibility of creating a second "workers'" chamber in the Polish parliament to offset the revolutionary threat.

Secondly parliamentary democracy can become the vehicle through which the Stalinists carry out and legitimise the sell-off of state property and attacks on workers' living standards that are the pre-condition for restoration. "Don't endanger our fragile parliamentary democracy with strikes and demonstrations" is the theme of Mazowiecki and Walesa in Poland today.

For SO neither danger is relevant. There are no soviets at present, it argues, so any parliamentary system is a step forward. And the restoration of capitalism is not a problem either since Stalinism is only a "backward parallel" to capitalism. Consequently SO's immediate programme limits itself to the most radical form of parliamentary democracy.

The action programme printed in *Towards Capitalism*

or *Workers' Liberty* begins with a ritual genuflection to soviets as the ultimate goal of struggle: "History shows that the specifically working class form of democracy is the workers' council—what in 1917 were known as soviets." (p7) But it continues:

"The experience of history does not, for the workers now challenging the bureaucratic system, recommend this form of democracy. The model they take is that of West European parliamentary democracy"

This is true. But how can Marxists remedy the situation? If it were the case that the masses had been defeated, the struggle had ebbed and soviets were not on the agenda we might, as Trotsky did in China in 1928, concentrate our slogans on the achievement of the fullest parliamentary democracy.

Or if it were the case that the masses were faced with the task of defending bourgeois democracy against fascism we might concentrate our immediate slogans on the defence and extension of parliamentary democracy, as Trotsky did in the 1934 *Action Programme for France*.

Even so, in both cases, the aim of bringing to the fore demands for parliamentary democracy would be to lead the masses to the conclusion that soviets were needed. The point of utilising the existing illusions of the masses in bourgeois democracy would be to break them from those illusions.

These conditions do not prevail in Eastern Europe and the USSR. They are in the grip of mass uprisings. In certain places and at certain times the possibility of bringing soviets into existence has existed and will exist as long as the revolutionary situation continues.

That is why the immediate programme of democratic and transitional demands can and must include the demand to form soviets. It is not inevitable that the emerging workers' committees and trade unions in, for example, Vorkuta have to become a "Soviet Solidarnosc"—a free trade union. They also contain the potential, as did Solidarnosc, to become soviet-type bodies.

Neither is it inevitable that the East European revolutions have to go through a parliamentary stage before soviets can come into existence. On the contrary, as with "democratic revolutions" in the third world there is little chance of achieving anything like a democratic parliament without soviets to convene and defend it.

But for SO the illusions of the masses and the current non-existence of soviets means we must rule out the demand for soviets. SO's immediate programme makes no mention of soviets. Its one governmental slogan is:

"Demand that the various parliaments and national assemblies immediately declare themselves fully sovereign bodies."

In addition it explains how the workers should make radical democratic demands on the existing parliaments:

"... completely free elections, annual parliaments, some system of detailed regular supervision of the deputies."

Of course, we should not rule out demands like this. They can be powerful mobilising demands in the present situation. But they must be a means to, not a substitute for, the struggle for soviets and for soviet power to supersede parliament.

Even by the standards of 1848 SO's programme falls far short of that advocated by Marx and Engels:

"Alongside the new official governments the workers must establish simultaneously their own revolutionary workers' governments . . . so that the bourgeois democratic governments not only immediately lose the support of the workers but from the outset see themselves supervised and threatened by authorities which are backed by the whole mass of workers." (*Address to the Communist League March 1850*)

Long before the first workers' soviets appeared in history Marx and Engels anticipated the need for them. But even with the hindsight of the decades since the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution SO excludes them from "their 1848".

SOVIETS AND TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS

SO has no need for soviets because its programme for the anti-Stalinist revolutions is essentially a maximum-minimum programme, not a transitional one.

When SO still adhered to Trotsky's analysis of the USSR it published what it then called "a clear programme for workers' liberty" (*Workers Liberty*, 8.10.87). This is plainly the prototype for the list of demands published in *Towards Capitalism or Workers' Liberty* and it is instructive to note the differences.

In 1987 SO called for: "Breaking up of the bureaucratic hierarchy of administration and its replacement with a democratic regime of councils of elected and recallable workers' delegates with freedom to form many workers' parties." In 1989 it called for: "Break up the bureaucratic hierarchies which still run the East European states."

In 1987 SO called for: "Abolition of bureaucratic privileges; reorganisation of the economy according to a democratically decided plan". In 1989 it said: "Fight against existing bureaucratic privileges! Fight against the growth of market generated inequality."

We make no apologies for picking over the details of SO's programmes, past and present. The revisions outlined above tell us more than all the ruminations from John O'Mahoney, Clive Bradley etc, about the exact political consequences of junking Trotsky's analysis. It means junking the demand for soviets and junking the demand for democratic planning!

Democratic planning, "the democracy of producers and consumers" as Trotsky called it, can only exist on the basis of direct democracy; the democracy of workers' councils. The most democratic parliament in the world cannot substitute for this. In fact SO's programme embodies neither of these intrinsically linked aims.

Of course, at present, both the words *soviet* and *planning* are tainted by their association with Stalinism. Revolutionary Marxists have to rescue them by careful and patient explanation of their true meaning in front of the workers of Eastern Europe. But it is not just reticence at the words themselves which leads SO to exclude them from its programme. It has methodologically uncoupled the idea of working class self-emancipation, of "workers' liberty", from the transition to socialism. It wants one without the other. This is what underpins its stageist programme and perspective. According to SO:

"The cardinal value for socialists must be the free activity of the working class—even when, in the opinion of those who take the long historical view, the workers

are muddled and mistaken." (*Towards Capitalism or Workers' Liberty*)

But what is the purpose of that free activity? It is to enable workers to overcome their muddles, and to take the first steps to real "workers' liberty". What do Marxists mean by the self-emancipation of the working class? We mean the working class freeing itself and the whole of society from the oppression of want. There is one road to that liberation and it lies through abolishing the causes of political oppression and economic hardship—capitalism.

There is no other way of abolishing capitalism irrevocably other than for a workers' state based on democratic soviets to seize the property of the bosses and begin to plan production according to human need.

Any transitional programme for the present crisis of Stalinism would have, at its heart, demands focused around re-starting the transition to socialism. These would include resistance to selling off the plants to private enterprise, maintenance of the state monopoly of foreign trade and the replacement of the bureaucratic plan with a democratic plan drawn up and discussed by the workers.

"Fight against the growth of market generated inequality" is a worthy aim. But the best way to fight it is to stop the reintroduction of the market now.

Absolutely nothing of this appears in SO's present programme. Instead of a strategy of resistance to capitalist restoration SO's programme starts from the accomplished fact of restoration.

"The consequences of market economics and foreign capital will inevitably be social differentiation and the fomenting of class struggle" (SO 430, Jan 1990). As if social differentiation and class struggle did not already exist in the state owned coalfields of the Kusbass!

The same perspective informs SO's treatment of the demand for workers' control:

"Fight for workers' control in industry. Under marketism the working class should not allow its collective life to be controlled by the blind fluctuations of the market and its daily life in industry to be lived under the whip of profit chasing managers—whether those managers are Stalinist state type bureaucrats or Western-type capitalists" (*Towards Capitalism or Workers' Liberty*)

Of course workers' control is a vital demand for the present period. But it is not limited to resisting the effects of marketisation. It can be the starting point for resisting and reversing privatisation and for drawing up a workers' plan of production.

Essentially, however, workers' control is a defensive demand. The workers must supervise the production plans of the managers in order to protect themselves. This is not the same as workers' management in which the regime of the workplace reflects the established power of the working class in society as a whole. Workers' control is necessary against both capitalists and bureaucratic planners. But on its own it does not answer the crisis of either the capitalist or Stalinist economies.

Only a programme that centres on workers' management within the framework of a democratic plan, the rule of workers' councils and the maintenance of state ownership of the principal means of production can begin

to provide an answer to the crisis of bureaucratic planning.

The clearest outline of SO's stageist perspective appears in the conclusion to the article "In Defence of Socialism" (*Towards Capitalism or Workers' Liberty*). After asserting that its programme remains, like Lenin's, to "construct the socialist order" it continues:

"Circumstances and events defeated Lenin. The working class will yet start to 'construct the socialist order' in better and more favourable circumstances. We do not know when, but for certain the disintegration of Stalinism will bring that day closer." (p14)

We might add: "but it certainly isn't on the cards at present".

Despite the parallels with 1848 this has nothing in common with Marx and Engels' perspective in the revolutions of that year. The founders of Marxism were convinced, wrongly, that capitalism could no longer develop, that it had reached its terminal crisis. They advanced a programme to meet that crisis.

Later, after they discovered their mistake, Marx and Engels devised a different kind of programme; one which would allow the working class to defend itself and slowly build its organisations during the three or four decades of relatively peaceful capitalist development which followed the defeat of the 1848 revolutions. This was the minimum-maximum programme and SO's current offering has much more in common with it than with Lenin and Trotsky's subsequent transitional programmes.

What a barren perspective. Of course no one can guarantee that capitalist restoration will not triumph. But even if it gorges itself on the corpse of bureaucratic planning can capitalism open up a new lease of life; of peaceful social development? This is far from certain; the splits within the imperialist camp opened up by the possibility of successful restoration in Germany testify to this. The transition to socialism remains at the heart of our immediate programme for the workers of the entire world and in particular for the workers of the Stalinist states.

THE CRISIS OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENTS

Today much of Eastern Europe is ruled by coalition governments of Stalinists and oppositionists. The function of these governments is to divert the mass struggle into the cul-de-sac of negotiations, rigged and unprepared elections leading to parliaments which will rubber stamp the process of capitalist restoration.

The Trotskyist attitude to such regimes is clear: no support for the coalition governments; build soviets and workers' militias as an alternative power; fight for a transitional action programme within such mass organisations in preparation for the overthrow of such governments.

These are not new tactics. They are derived from the experience of the 1917 Russian Revolution between the overthrow of the Tsar in February and the overthrow of the provisional government by the soviets in October.

Between February and October the provisional government was a coalition between bourgeois, peasant and working class parties. It was a bourgeois government. The Bolsheviks did not enter the coalition but placed the

demand on the workers' party (the Mensheviks): "Out with the capitalist ministers". This was a call on the reformists to break the coalition and base the government on the soviets. Clearly a variant of this "workers' government" tactic may be applicable today in Eastern Europe. But without a clear class analysis of the state itself, without an understanding of the danger of capitalist restoration such tactics can lead to disaster, as SO's slogans and tactics towards Solidarnosc in the Polish coalition government show.

In the first place SO draws a direct parallel between Solidarnosc and the Mensheviks of 1917. Despite all evidence that Solidarnosc has transformed itself from a ten million strong trade union into a two million strong Christian Democrat style party committed to private capitalism SO insist on treating it as if it were a reformist workers' party.

They advised workers not to split from Solidarnosc:

"Walesa's call for a no-strike agreement to accompany the new government's economic programme must raise the prospect of workers' splits from Solidarnosc. Such splits would gladden the PUWP [the Polish Stalinist party]. They would weaken Solidarnosc and free the Solidarnosc deputies in parliament from working class pressure. They would isolate the militants from the millions who feel intense loyalty to Solidarnosc." (SO 414 September 1989)

Every supposition in this passage is false. How is working class pressure to be exerted on the Solidarnosc deputies? They utilised parliamentary democracy to legitimise their claim to rule on behalf of the electorate, not the withered base organisations of Solidarnosc. They have virtually dismantled the apparatus of accountability within Solidarnosc.

The millions who feel intense loyalty to Solidarnosc? Surely the winter of bitter privations enforced by the coalition government's IMF package would provide the basis for revolutionaries to undermine this loyalty. What about the seven million workers who belong to the Stalinist-led OPZZ unions which have, in some situations, taken the lead in fighting the austerity package?

The splits would weaken Solidarnosc? Good. The weaker the better. It is committed to the privatisation of the major industries and slashing workers' living standards.

But SO, having tied its flag to Solidarnosc's mast, only compound its errors:

"It must be doubtful whether just advocating that Solidarnosc go into opposition and defend wages and conditions is adequate. Socialists should consider some such slogan as 'Break the coalition! All power to Solidarnosc!'"

If Solidarnosc were a real workers organisation, and if it were committed to the defence of workers' living standards, the defence of state ownership, such a tactic might be necessary. But Solidarnosc can no longer be regarded even as simply a free trade union, let alone the proto-Soviet organisation of strike committees it grew out of.

And its programme is clearly restorationist. When SO calls for Solidarnosc to "convene the *Self-management Parliament* demanded by Solidarnosc in 1981 and call for the workers to take over the factories, offices, mines

and shipyards", it flies in the face of reality. Solidarnosc wants the western imperialists to take over the big enterprises. It is happy enough with its Stalinist backed and imperialist funded coalition cabinet and has no use for the "self-management parliament".

If it were simply the case that Solidarnosc is a reformist workers' organisation whose programme was a step in the right direction but did not go far enough it might be necessary utilise these tactics. But this is not the case. Its programme is a step in the wrong direction, towards capitalism. To call for Solidarnosc to break with the Stalinists and take full power is not a creative application of Lenin's slogan of 1917. It is the direct opposite. "All power to Solidarnosc" today means "In with the capitalist ministers" and can mean nothing else.

SO is not blind to these facts. But its stageist conception of the revolutionary dynamic leads it to ignore them as unimportant. If the object is to remove the "bureaucratic collectivist" ruling class at all costs then putting in a pro-capitalist government is a secondary problem which workers will have to deal with through a defensive struggle. Nationalised property relations are only a means to an end. In the hands of the bureaucracy they are an obstacle to "workers liberty". Better to risk the return of the market and parliamentary democracy than cling to the economic foundations needed to start the transition to socialism. This is the logic behind SO's slogan.

Of course this does not mean we call for the repression of Solidarnosc by the bureaucracy. The constant fear which stalks SO and no doubt propelled it to abandon Trotsky's analysis in the first place, is that it might find itself in a bloc with a bureaucratic crackdown:

"Suppose a section of the bureaucracy fights to defend the state monopoly system, while workers, for example in Solidarnosc, press for the extension of market forces. The view that the preservation of the nationalised economy is of overriding importance would logically lead socialists—even Trotskyists! to support the hard line Stalinists against the workers." (*Towards Capitalism or Workers' Liberty*)

In the first place the bureaucracy itself is in the vanguard of restoration, from East Germany to Hungary. There is no need or possibility to entrust the defence of post-capitalist property relations to them.

Secondly, the workers *themselves* have an interest in defending the nationalised property relations, the price subsidies, the state monopoly of foreign trade etc. Where they adopt mistaken strategies to defend themselves, such as workers' co-operatives, free trade zones, we will oppose them and fight for our own strategy from within the workers movement, as we do with reformist workers in capitalist societies.

Thirdly, real life revolutions do not turn out quite as simply as SO suggests. Today the most advanced sections of the Polish working class are locked in a battle to defend themselves against Solidarnosc's austerity plan. The majority of the bureaucracy support that plan. Others may rally to the side of the workers. All this is perfectly explicable if the bureaucracy is understood as an unstable caste within a degenerate workers' state, but inexplicable from the point of view of "bureaucratic collectivism".

And if a really counter-revolutionary mass force ap-

peared: a mass movement embracing sections of the working class prepared to use strikes and armed actions to force through the restoration of capitalism? Here we would not simply "side with the bureaucracy". We would attempt to rally other sections of workers against it, to crush it where necessary. Such situations would open up the possibility of a united front with sections of the bureaucracy. But the experience of Pamyat, of the Azerbaijani Popular Front and the Nazi invasion of the Ukraine shows that the bureaucracy does not remain monolithic in such circumstances; it shatters, with a section going over to the reactionaries.

SO's abandonment of Trotsky's analysis has not helped them understand the generalised revolutionary crisis of Stalinism. Designed to explain Stalinism's

permanence, it has proved useless for the period of Stalinism's destruction. It has led directly to a stageist understanding of the dynamics of the situation and a programme which is at best inadequate, at worst a disastrous guide to action.

It has led them to abandon soviets and democratic planning as the cornerstones of the socialist action programme. It leads them to ignore the threat of capitalist restoration at the very moment when millions of workers are confronting that threat as a reality. And, through the creative use of "Leninist" tactics, it has led them to call for "all power" to the restorationist forces.

Such theory, programme and tactics deserve to be abandoned, along with the organisation that has embraced them. ■

POLISH SOCIALIST PARTY (DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION)

Self-management or self-deception?

The Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) (PSP(DR)) held its conference in Wroclaw on 9–10 December 1989. Its programme for workers' self-management, together with the internal debates surrounding its adoption, are examined below.

THE PSP(DR) had 168 paid up members at the beginning of the Congress, though 500 people have applied to join it. It adopted a constitution that allows for the rights of fractions and tendencies within the party and it adopted a formal party programme entitled *The Self-Management Alternative*.

An observer who attended the conference described the different tendencies present thus:

"At the conference itself there were three positions apparent. There was a very small right wing—mainly represented by Andrzej Dörminijczak, who declared his intention of leaving the party after the congress—which was militantly anti-Trotskyist and more or less on a left social democratic line. In the centre was the majority, which supported the original draft of the programme which came from Piotr Ikonowicz and Cezary Mizejewski. On the left, mainly based in Wroclaw but also a couple of delegates from Warsaw, was a more openly revolutionary Marxist position."

It is difficult to tell the extent to which the Wroclaw minority and their best known representative, Josef Pinior, influenced the programme. One thing is certain. The adopted programme of the PSP(DR) is not a revolutionary programme. Of course allowances must be made for organisations which are emerging from illegality in conditions of isolation, of acute material shortages and where the traditions of Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism have been discredited or suppressed. Revolutionaries in western Europe should seek to open a dialogue with the comrades of

these organisations. But frankness—on both sides—should be welcomed.

The PSP(DR) programme starts by locating itself in the tradition of the historic PPS—excluding the Marxist tradition of Rosa Luxemburg, Julian Marchlewski, Leo Jogisches and Adolf Warski. Instead it identifies with social patriotic figures like Ignacy Daszynski. In short the PSP(DR) identifies itself with the nationalist and reformist tradition of Polish socialism, not with the internationalist and revolutionary one. The greatest weakness of the programme is also embedded in the party's name which appears in parentheses—Democratic Revolution. The programme proclaims:

"The PSP(DR) is a party of the Democratic Revolution. This is a process of social emancipation from below, which will lead to a fusion of parliamentary democratic forms with self-managing ones."

The PSP(DR) has inherited the confused conception of the early 1980s Solidarnosc that a social (if not a socialist) economy can be maintained by workers' self-management in the enterprises and a parliamentary democratic system at the level of the state. The PSP(DR) explicitly rejects the idea of the state as a working class instrument for building socialism. Its programme talks about:

"... the Self-Managing Republic—a state which does not express the interests of any social group, but is rather a framework providing law and services to all".

The conception of the "democratic revolution" is that once the *nomenklatura*, as it calls the bureaucratic caste, has fallen and due to the absence of a "domestic finance oligarchy" it will be possible to create "a dynamic state of equilibrium between the conflicting interest groups" of which society is composed. Thus the PSP(DR) sees the only way to preserve political and economic freedom is by a series of countervailing powers. Here the discrediting of Marxism by Stalinism and the inrush of various bourgeois sociological notions produce a completely non-class—even an anti-class—analysis.

Thus whilst the programme is vigorous and effective in denouncing the pro-capitalist privatisation intentions of the Mazowiecki government it has only a utopian model to pose against it. Against the present government it pointedly predicts:

"... either there will be Stalinist reaction, reversing the reform process, or the *nomenklatura* will, together with the Solidarity elite, create a new ruling oligarchy on the basis of representing the interests of foreign capital. The logic of opening the economy and joining the international capitalist market means a place for Poland amongst the countries of the Third World."

But what is the real concrete alternative to this strategy? The PSP(DR) correctly wants to see the "separation of Solidarity [the trade union] from the state administration" and the "rebirth of internal union democracy" as a means of launching a fight to defend workers' rights and interests. It wants to see workers' councils take over the factories and run production.

But when it comes to the state level, the PSP(DR) has no answer beyond what it calls the enriching of parliamentary democracy. The parliament should have a "political chamber", the Sejm, elected by universal suffrage but alongside it to deal with economic matters there should be a Chamber of Self-Management.

With regard to the law the programme calls for an independent and "self-organising" judiciary. Whilst one can understand the superficial attraction of judges not under the control of the party of the Stalinist bureaucracy, a self-appointing caste of judges—such as exists in Britain—is not independent at all but follows the strategic wishes of the ruling class.

As long as the state exists as an instrument of coercion with any police force and judges (i.e. the PSP(DR) envisages all of these as necessary) it will be a class state. The only question is—which class rules in this state. The PSP(DR) wants a classless state. This is simply a contradiction in terms—a vegetarian carnivore. It has never existed and can never exist.

Likewise at the economic base of society, the level of the relations of production, all is confusion. Firstly the programme praises the market as "the least arbitrary instrument in relation to the real functioning of the social mechanism of the division of labour" but immediately adds:

"Unfortunately this mechanism leads to uneven accumulation of capital and the appearance of monopolies which negate the virtues of this mechanism.

From an instrument of equivalence of exchange between different groups of producers it becomes the instrument to impose conditions of exchange by the strongest partner—the monopolist."

The planned economy on the other hand treats the economy like one huge enterprise and so decisions on the social division of labour are taken either by an arbitrary decision or vote—thus subordinating the needs of one set of producers to another. The answer is a mixed system which "confers sovereignty on the producers by endowing them with ownership rights", the "break up of the state sector into many sectors including a private one" and to co-ordinate it all "a market controlled from below by institutionalised mechanisms of social control [which] will make possible equivalent exchange in the framework of a social division of labour."

These ideas are not new. They owe an enormous debt to Pierre Joseph Proudhon. The spirit of the father of anarchism hovers over this programme which praises the market for its spontaneous organising of exchange of equivalents between equal and sovereign producers and devising means to prevent the "bad side" of the free market from leading to monopoly.

The notion of workers' self-management without democratically centralised planning is a nonsense—especially if it exists alongside parliament. In the latter the bourgeois parties like the christian democratised Solidarity can gain the authority to favour the monopolists and bankrupt the workers' self-managed enterprises. After all the Sejm represents the "whole people" or "universal democracy" whereas the Self-Management Chamber will represent only the professional interests of the producers.

Without an open recognition that the state is a workers' state, without founding its armed power and its justice on the workers' class organs (workers' councils, like the inter-factory councils of 1980), without subordinating the market to a democratically drawn up and implemented central plan, any hope of the emancipation of the working class is sheer fantasy.

There are many glaring omissions from the programme. In a catholic country where the church is seeking to outlaw abortion, nothing is said about women's rights and the struggle for liberation. Indeed no mention is made of the reactionary role of the church. No demand is raised for the separation of church and state.

In conclusion, whilst the PSP(DR) clearly sets itself against the present austerity drive of Mazowiecki and condemns the restorationist goal, it has no clear tactics for resistance and it has no goal for working class power. Like all utopian programmes its combination of syndicalism at factory level with an idealised (purified) market and parliamentarianism will turn out in the light of common day to be social democracy—reformism.

The alternative is to break with the syndicalism, idealised bourgeois democracy and Proudhonism, overcome Polish nationalism and turn to the programme of unfalsified Bolshevism. ■

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