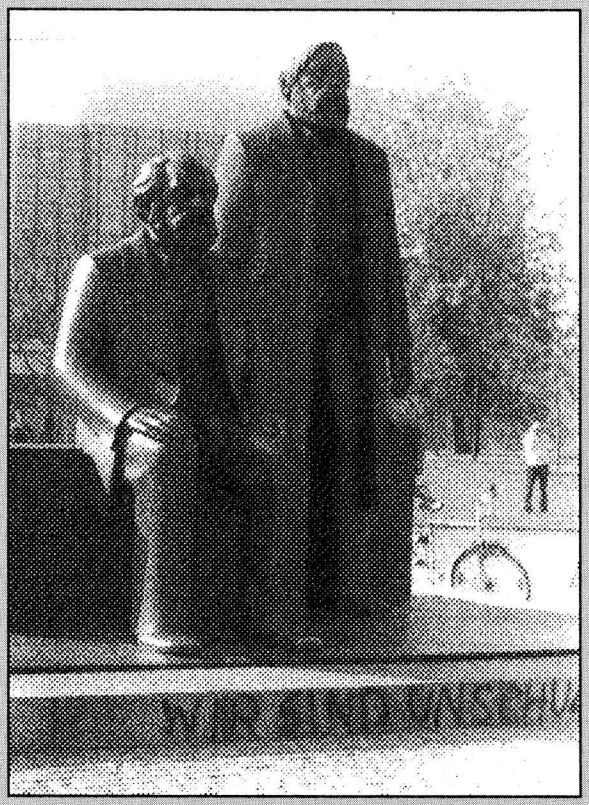
Labour Focus on EASTERN EUROPE

AFTER THE FALL: THE NEW LEFT IN EASTERN EUROPE



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No.1 in 1992

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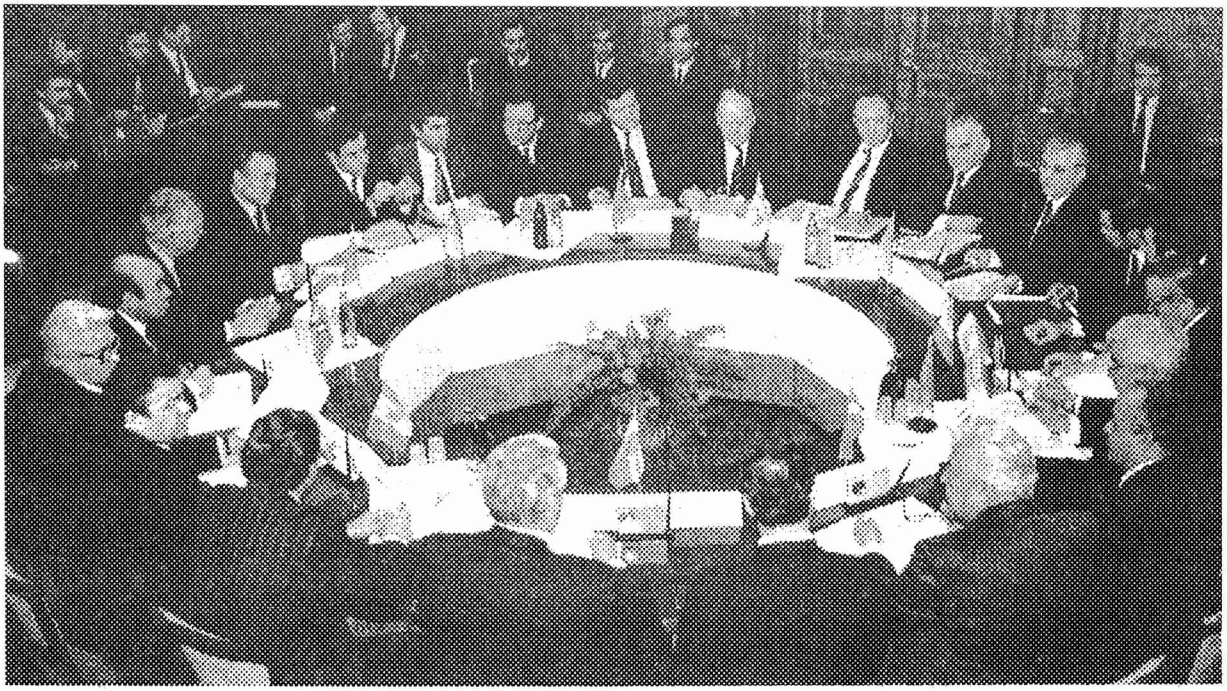


Agreement Establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States

We, the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation (RSFSR), Ukraine, being States-Founders of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, who signed the Treaty of Union in 1922, referred to hereinafter as the High Contracting Parties, note that the USSR has ceased to exist as a subject of international law and as a geopolitical reality.

Proceeding from the historic closeness of our nations, and from the relations existing between them,

taking into account bilateral treaties concluded between the High Contracting Parties,

seeking to create a democratic state of law,

wishing to develop their relations on the basis of mutual recognition and respect for state sovereignty, the inalienable right of self-determination, the principles of equality and non-interference into internal affairs, the non-use of force or of economic or any other means of coercion, the principle of settlement of disputes through instruments of conciliation, as well as other universally recognised principles and norms of international law,

considering that the further development and consolidation of relations of friendship, good neighbourliness and mutually beneficial cooperation among our states will meet the basic national interests of their peoples and will serve the cause of peace and security,

reaffirming their commitment to the goals and principles of the UN Charter, of the Helsinki Final Act and of other CSCE documents,

pledging to respect universally recognised norms concerning human rights and the rights of peoples,

have agreed on the following:

Article 1

The High Contracting Parties shall form the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Article 2

The High Contracting Parties shall guarantee to their citizens equal rights and freedoms without national or any other distinction. Each of the High Contracting Parties shall guarantee to citizens of other Parties, as well as to persons without citizenship residing on its territory, civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights and freedoms in conformity with universally recognised international norms concerning human rights, without national or any other distinction.

Article 3

The High Contracting Parties, willing to contribute to the expression, preservation and progress of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on their territories and of unique ethnocultural regions, shall place them under their protection.

Article 4

The High Contracting Parties shall promote equal and mutually beneficial cooperation between their peoples and states in the political, economic and cultural spheres, in the spheres of education, health, environmental protection, science and trade as well as in the humanitarian and other spheres. They shall encourage a wide-ranging exchange of information and shall fulfil their reciprocal obligations in good faith and unfailingly. The High Contracting Parties consider it necessary to conclude cooperation agreements covering the above mentioned spheres.

Article 5

The High Contracting Parties recognise and respect the territorial integrity of each other and the inviolability of the borders existing within the Commonwealth. They guarantee the openness of borders, the free circulation of citizens and of

information within the Commonwealth.

Article 6
The Member States shall cooperate in ensuring international peace and security, in implementing effective actions for the reduction of armaments and of military expenditure. They seek to annihilate all nuclear weapons, to achieve general and complete disarmament under strict international control. The Parties shall respect each other's will to become a non-nuclear and neutral state.

The Member States of the Commonwealth shall preserve and maintain a common military-strategic space under joint command, including unified control over nuclear weapons, the procedure for which shall be regulated by a special agreement. They shall also jointly guarantee the necessary conditions for the deployment, functioning, material and social supply and protection of strategic armed forces. The High Contracting Parties pledge to conduct a coordinated policy concerning the social safety and social security of military personnel and their families.

Article 7
The High Contracting Parties recognise that the sphere of their common activities, pursued on a basis of equality through common coordinating institutions of the Commonwealth, shall cover:

- coordination of foreign policy actions;
- cooperation in forming and developing a common economic space, pan-European and Eurasian markets, and in the sphere of customs policy;
- cooperation in promoting transportation and communication systems;
- cooperation in environmental protection, participation in establishing a comprehensive international system of ecological security;
- problems of migration policy;
- prosecution of organised crime.

Article 8
The High Contracting Parties, aware of the planetary scope of the Chernobyl catastrophe, pledge to pool and coordinate their efforts aimed at minimising and overcoming its consequences. They agree to conclude a special agreement to these ends, which shall be commensurate with the gravity of the consequences of this catastrophe.

Article 9
Any disputes concerning the interpretation and application of the provisions of the present Agreement shall be resolved through negotiations between the respective organs and, where necessary, between heads of governments and states.

Article 10
Each of the High Contracting Parties reserves the right to suspend the Agreement or certain articles of this agreement. Other Parties to the Agreement shall be notified about any such action one year in advance. The provisions of the Agreement may be augmented or amended with the mutual consent of the High Contracting Parties.

Article 11
The legal norms of third parties, including those of the former USSR, are declared to be null and void on the territory of the Commonwealth from the day of the signing of this Agreement.

Article 12
The High Contracting Parties guarantee the implementation of international obligations stemming from treaties and agreements made by the former USSR.

Article 13
The Agreement shall not affect the obligations of the High Contracting Parties with regard to third states. The Agreement is open for adhesion by all member-states of the former USSR, as well as by all other states sharing the goals and principles of this document.

Article 14
The city of Minsk shall be the official seat of the coordinating organs of the Commonwealth.

Activities of organs of the former USSR on the territory of the Member States of the Commonwealth are terminated.

Done in the city of Minsk on 8 December 1991, in three originals, each in the Belarussian, Russian and Ukrainian languages, all three texts being equally authentic.

For the Republic of Belarus
S. Shushkevic V. Kebich

For the RSFSR
B. Yeltsin G. Burbulis

For Ukraine
L. Kravchuk V. Fokin

PROTOCOL

To the Agreement establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States, signed by the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation (RSFSR) and Ukraine on 8 December 1991, in the city of Minsk.

The Azerbaidzhan Republic, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Khirgizstan, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation (RSFSR), the Republic of Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and Ukraine, acting as High Contracting Parties on the basis of equality of rights, hereby establish the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Agreement establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States enters into force for each of the High Contracting Parties from the moment of its signature. Documents regulating cooperation within the Commonwealth shall be worked out on the basis of the Agreement Establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States, and taking into account reservations made during its ratification.

The present Protocol is an integral part of the Agreement Establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Done in the city of Alma Ata, on 21 December 1991, in one original in each of the Azerbaidzhanian, Armenian, Belarussian, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Moldovian, Russian, Tadjik, Turkmen, Uzbek and Ukrainian languages. All texts have equal power. The original is deposited in the archives of the Government of the Republic of Belarus, which shall forward certified copies of the present protocol to all High Contracting Parties.

Alma Ata, 21 December 1991
(This is not an official translation.)

The collapse of one superpower

by Daniel Singer

The road to capitalism in eastern Europe is uncharted and it is therefore difficult to foresee where it will ultimately lead. But an era has clearly come to an end, notably in foreign policy. The age of two nuclear powers dominating the world, if it ever really existed, is now over. The system erected in Yalta has collapsed. The Soviet Union can no longer be presented as the other superpower. Not because it lacks nuclear weapons; even after START, it is still able to destroy the world. Not even because of its utter economic disarray. Simply because it has ceased to be an antagonist, an opponent, a rival. When Bush and Gorbachev talked of partnership, it was not a relationship of equals but the link between the suzerain and his more or less important vassal. The "great contest" between the "two systems" did not culminate in a compromise. It came to an end through the surrender of one of the contenders.

Nor did it happen suddenly after the putsch. The surrender was obvious earlier, for instance when Mikhail Gorbachev, at the London meeting of the rich Western nations, made a bid for the Soviet Union to be an "organic part" of the world market, begged for it to be admitted to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and promised to abide by their rules of the game. What was at stake here was not an opening of frontiers and a certain expansion of foreign trade. At stake was a radical break with the past. For all sorts of reasons, including the military burden, the un-Marxist experiment of building socialism in one backward country, then in a bloc, ended in total failure and the current Soviet leaders drew a lesson from that flop. Yet, at this stage in the development of the two systems, to dismantle controls over foreign trade and establish a full convertibility of the ruble can only lead to the invasion and destruction of the Soviet one.

Soviet foreign policy

It is more difficult to say what impact this new balance will have on progressive forces throughout the world, on those who, relying on movements from below, tried to challenge both nuclear giants. Here the judgement largely depends on the assessment one makes of the role played by Soviet foreign policy prior to perestroika, which is not simple. One thing, at least, can be stated plainly. Gorbachev and company did no more betray a revolutionary and democratic foreign policy than they did dismantle socialism in the Soviet Union and for the same reason - you cannot get rid of the nonexistent. Except, possibly, for a brief spell at the very beginning, Soviet diplomacy was never subordinated to the needs of the international movements for radical transformation of society. Quite the contrary. The illusion was preserved for a long time by the wrong assumption that socialism was being forged in Russia and, therefore, the main battlefront was there. In practice, Stalin managed to turn genuine Communist parties, with strong local roots, into obedient puppets and to impose his own pattern on authentic revolutions from below and not only on those brought about by the advance of the Red Army.

However, this is only the seamy side of the story. The Russian revolution did inspire millions of downtrodden throughout the world and encouraged them to defy their rulers. Even later, as they were potential cards in the diplomatic game, Moscow had to support and protect movements of national liberation, to aid and defend states standing up to Western imperialism Admittedly, this policy stopped short of the risk of direct confrontation with the other nuclear giant, as was shown during the Cuban missile crisis or in the Middle Eastern conflicts. Yet, limited as it was, the threat of Russian retaliation was the only brake on the American-dominated expansion in the Third World, while the current Soviet abdication in this sphere is the only novelty in President Bush's otherwise very old order. This shift in the balance already weighs on the Palestinian question or on the mood, prospects and transformations in Latin America. For the movements of national liberation, to some extent, it is a curse.

Blessing in disguise?

Could it not prove, in more historical terms, a blessing in disguise? And not only because it should put a final stop to guilt by association, to the often successful attempts to paint any radical rebellion with the Stalinist brush. Who will dare to see the "hand of Moscow", for instance, in a British strike today, when on his London journey the Soviet leader paid a visit to the then prime minister, Mrs Thatcher, out of sympathy, not out of duty, or when Edouard Shevardnadze writes, quite earnestly, that "the international community cannot accept the appearance of robber states" and then refers to James Baker as his bosom friend. Luckily, all pretenses have been dropped about running the world through the "new democracy" of the United Nations. The Russian leaders are now striving for membership of the not so magnificent but wealthy Group of Seven. For services rendered - a seat in the Holy Alliance

A blessing also in a deeper sense. Though the 'Soviet model' was shattered long ago, there was still a tendency to see the future in terms of the East-West conflict. Now each country and each movement will have to face advanced capitalism such as it is, with its global connections, its changing labour force, its old or new forms of exploitation and thought control. Each should not be read here as meaning each one on its own. It is simply to be hoped that the world movement will never again take the shape of a dominant centre and obedient battalions. The different movements in various countries will have to elaborate their own common strategies together.

Indeed the scope for common action is tremendous. In the European Community the workers

of various countries must unite or perish as a political force, since within the EEC capital can already move freely across frontiers. The labour unions of Europe, America and Japan will be defeated tomorrow, with arguments about imperatives of foreign competition, unless they can work out new forms of joint or coordinated action. For political as well as moral reasons, progressive forces in all the advanced capitalist countries must evolve strategies towards the Third World so as not to find themselves blind and bewildered when faced with something like the Gulf crisis, with mass migrations, with clever attempts to present the seething south as the threat to the western worker. As nationalism raises its ugly head again, internationalism is really thrust upon the progressive movement, if it wants to survive. On labour unions - because the economy is now linked on a world scale; on ecologists, because it is hopeless to preserve the world only through spontaneous and sporadic action; on socialists, because capitalism now extends its rule throughout the planet.

But the immense scope for action does not, unfortunately, mean that what has to be done will be accomplished. While doing what we can to prod, to explain, to disclose, we should not cherish too many illusions about our capacity to influence the foreign policy of our governments, particularly its conduct in the former Soviet empire. It is idle to expect Western powers to help Eastern Europe and allow it freely to choose its mode of development. It is hopeless to try to persuade our masters and moneybags to show, say, special favours to Russia because without the heroic resistance of the Red Army in World War II, the Nazis would not have been defeated. Only in lyrical orations does governmental policy rest on gratitude and benevolence (and it is important to reveal official hypocrisy).

Aid conditional

Our rulers could have been influenced by the argument that, considering the dazzling long-term prospects of the Soviet market and the dangerous fall-out of a political explosion following an economic collapse, it might have been better to provide immediate and substantial aid to Gorbachev. This was the line proposed by the French and the Germans before the August putsch and it was defeated by the American contention that the West should stick to minor concessions, such as technical aid to teach the Russians the proper functioning of capitalist institutions, until the Russian leaders give concrete proofs of economic good conduct.

Even today, where there can be little doubt about the direction in which this area is heading, Western powers are agreed that credits to Eastern Europe can only grow stage by stage and that any aid should be conditional. But conditional on what? On progress towards democracy? Nobody with a knowledge of client states in Latin America or Africa will take such slogans seriously. The crucial conditions, logically enough, are those ensuring the expansion and the undisputed reign of Capital. Countries of Eastern Europe, including those of the disrupted Soviet Union, must cut their controls, allow foreign capital to acquire majority holdings in their enterprises. They have to ensure the mobility of that capital throughout the country and guarantee the possibility of re-exporting it, with profits and all, first through special provisions and soon through the full convertibility of their currencies. The watchful eye of the International Monetary Fund has replaced that of Big Brother.

Such is the nature of the system. Capital climbs over frontiers, breaks barriers, destroys values in search of higher profitability. East Germany has just shown us its capacity for "creative destruction" which cares neither about smooth transitions nor about people's desire to preserve a job, and one should not forget that other countries of Eastern Europe do not have the advantage of being poor parts of a rich state. Yet, in pursuing their eastward drive, our rulers can plead that they are supported, nay, welcomed by democratically elected governments. This is both true and understandable. Faced with the material and moral bankruptcy of "really existing socialism" the people of Eastern Europe were dazzled by Western prosperity and greeted capitalism as a salvation. Whether this honeymoon will last, when they discover that it is not quite like Dynasty, that the new regime spells for the bulk of them a drop in living standards, greater inequality and the threat of unemployment, is another matter.

Progressive movements

Western progressive movements can help in this awakening by describing the true nature of our system, with its exploitation at home and abroad, by warning East Europeans that what is in store for them is not our relatively privileged position but the doubtful blessings of primitive accumulation. There is no question that the number of allies beyond the Elbe, small at the moment, will grow. But because of the heritage, because of the identification of socialism with the gulag or the Soviet tank, this process will take time and meanwhile Western movements must proceed with their own international agenda.

The obvious first item is a vast campaign for drastic disarmament, conventional as well as nuclear. The removal of tactical nuclear weapons from the heart of Europe is fine, though it is a tiny move when measured against real possibilities. The "Soviet threat" can no longer be used as justification. The resources required for health and education, for development that does not destroy our environment, for the starving populations of the Third World, are tremendous. In such circumstances, not to shift resources and preserve the huge arms budget that is still being planned can only be explained in two ways: the need to perpetuate the hegemony of the Western system throughout the world (and within it the American domination threatened by the economic rise of Western Europe and Japan); the necessity of an important, wasteful expenditure on arms for the economic mechanism devised since the last war to

function. Both of the reasons or either are sufficient to damn the system.

Lessons of Eastern Europe

One can keep on contrasting the eloquent proclamations and the less glorious reality they are supposed to conceal. Thus, we are told that the United Nations has now returned to its original democratic function, which simply means that the Soviet Union has resigned itself to the Pax Americana. The Gulf crisis and the campaign against nuclear proliferation provided plenty of examples of double standards. It may, however, be objected that debunking, though useful, remains negative, whereas people need vast projects to be drawn into action. Here, the problem seems quite complex. Vast projects are the product of great social movements, which themselves are the result of contradictions and conflicts within society; as such, they cannot be invented artificially. On the other hand, social movements find it hard to grow without the vision of an alternative and without the belief that it can be reached through political action. This is, indeed, what the current ideological battle is about.

The collapse of the ruling regimes, first in Eastern Europe, then in the Soviet Union and their at least verbal association with socialism has enabled our establishment to launch a tremendous campaign designed to convince the world at large that capitalism is forever our horizon. Poles, Hungarians and Czechs were yesterday mobilised for this exercise. Now comes the turn of the Soviet marketeers who today preach the purity of profit, quoting from Hayek and Milton Friedman with the same zeal they once showed in backing Brezhnev's platitudes with distorted extracts from Marx or Lenin. The campaign may be phoney but it is quite efficient. Paradoxically yet quite successfully, our propagandists draw from the events in Eastern Europe the conclusion that history has come to an end and that capitalism, whatever its vicissitudes, is eternal. We must drive home the opposite lesson, namely, that when regimes are obsolete they are ultimately torn apart by their own contradictions and that, by collective action, people can alter both their own lives and the course of history.

Political Parties in Russia

by Jeremy Lester

In classifying political parties in Russia today, I identify four main groups: the mainstream centre, the new right, the new left and the post-CPSU. The mainstream centre encompasses those parties and organisations that support a free market economy and liberal-democratic political structures. The new right incorporates those parties that are traditionalist, fundamentalist or reactionary in nature. They are opposed to the westward direction of the recent socio-economic and political changes and frequently support an extreme chauvinistic form of nationalism

The new left is critical of an unregulated, private property-based market economic system and emphasises the participatory, devolved aspects of a new democratic political system. Once again, this classification will cover a wide spectrum of groups and organisations, differing in the extent of their hostility to the free market and their understanding of anti-statist forms of political organisation. Finally, there is the post-CPSU, those groups and organisations that have been emerging in the aftermath of the failed August coup attempt and which claim to be the successors to the now disbanded Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Since, in the last couple of years of the CPSU's existence, internal factions openly existed, covering the whole political-ideological spectrum, this has inevitably complicated the post-CPSU succession struggle.

1. The Mainstream Centre

Democratic Union

The Democratic Union was set up in May 1988 out of the old human rights organisations, the Group to Establish Trust Between the USA and USSR and the Seminar for Democracy and Humanism. It had the reputation of being virulently anti-communist, anti-CPSU. Led initially by former prominent dissidents Valeriya Novodvorskaya, Igor Tsarkov, Yuri Skubko, Eduard Molchanov, Sergei Skripnikov and Yevgeniya Debryanskaya, the current party wants to replicate in Russia a western liberal democratic state, with parliamentary democracy, independent trade unions and judiciary, a professional army and a market-dominated, private enterprise economy. Although part of the mainstream of liberal tendencies emerging in the country, the party is isolated, not only because of its old uncompromising stance towards the CPSU as a whole, but also towards its more liberal factions, many members of which are now involved in many of the new party organisations.

Democratic Party of Russia

Another party of the liberal-centrist mainstream is the Democratic Party of Russia (DPR) led by Nikolai Travkin. Established in May 1990 with the backing of

informal organisations like the alternative writers' movement, April, the anti-Stalinist Memorial society, the independent trade union, Shield, and the industrial workers' Confederation of Labour, the "party of Travkin" claimed 33 500 supporters at its second congress in April 1991. Guided by its motto, "For a Society of Equal Opportunities", the party's platform rests on a firm commitment to free market economic principles and denationalisation of state control. It wants to restore Russian "statehood" and for a long time supported the convocation of a Russian Constituent Assembly.

There was a major split at the party's second congress in April 1991, when two prominent members of the party's presidium, world chess champion, Garry Kasparov and Arkady Murashev resigned after their alternative programme was defeated by the Travkin wing. Kasparov and Murashev were supported by over 100 delegates at the Congress (representing some 25% of those present). The two have since gone on to establish a Liberal-Conservative Union, which has 'a traditional conservative orientation in the spirit of Thatcherism'.

The party had its third congress at the beginning of December 1991, with delegates from 549 local branches in 17 regions of Russia. A new programme described the party as 'liberal-conservative'. A contentious issue at the congress concerned the party's stance on the structure of Russia and the question of a future union. Held just a few days prior to the announcement of the creation of the new Commonwealth of Independent States, the party voted overwhelmingly (90%) in favour of Gorbachev's plan for a new confederative Union of Sovereign States. As for the current ethnic disturbances within Russia, the congress documents and the report by Travkin made it absolutely clear that the DPR supported a strong and indivisible state; a matter that was to lead to the party's withdrawal from the political coalition grouping Democratic Russia (see below).

Republican Party of Russia

In his days as a member of the Moscow Party Higher School, Travkin had played a prominent role in setting up the Democratic Platform - the liberal reformist wing of the CPSU. However, when the major section of the Platform's membership broke away from the CPSU after the 28th Party Congress, it wasn't Travkin's Democratic Party that they headed for, but an entirely new organisation, which eventually became established as the Republican Party of Russia (RPR).

Officially inaugurated in November 1990, the founding congress (attended by a delegation from the Italian Communist Party) brought together 230 delegates from 50 different republics, territories and regions of the Russian Federation. A loose Coordinating Council was set up with three former prominent members of the Democratic Platform, Vladimir Lysenko, Vyacheslav Shostakovsky and Stepan Sulakshin. A looser organisational structure was adopted, giving local and regional organisations a considerable amount of autonomy.

Composed as it is of mainly former communists, the RPR's uncertainty as to what kind of attitude it should adopt towards the CPSU has plagued it from the very start. According to Shostakovsky, speaking at the November inaugural congress, the party's main task was to be a recognised champion of human rights. It should be a "post-communist" rather than an "anti-communist" force, he went on, supporting a gradual road of constitutional reform. The Social Democratic Party of Russia called on the new party to immediately merge with their own organisation. Although endorsed by 51% of the attending delegates, the proposal was nevertheless passed to a negotiating commission, headed by Chubais. In January 1991, a joint conference of the parties agreed, in principal, to work towards a unified structure. It was not, however, a decision that found much favour in some of the larger local RPR organisations and, at the party's second congress in June 1991, the Coordinating Council considered unification to be 'inexpedient in the immediate future.'

According to recent estimates, the party currently possesses some 5,000-7,000 active members and supporters in 50 regions of the Russian Federation, the majority of whom are members of the intelligentsia or skilled workers.

Social Democratic Party of Russia

Of all the parties to emerge in this liberal-social democratic mainstream of thought, perhaps the organisation that was awaited with most anticipation was the Social Democratic Party of Russia (SDPR). Speaking at its inaugural congress in May 1990, Aleksandr Obolensky captured this mood when he remarked: 'We are here to revive Russia's Social Democratic movement. We accept the legacy of the best traditions of the Narodniks and the Russian Social Democrats from the end of the last century and the beginning of this one. We also aspire to adopt the experience of the century-old international social democratic movement.'[1] The SDPR attracted the biggest number of foreign representatives to any of the independent party congresses, with delegates coming from as far afield as the USA, Germany, Czechoslovakia and even Mongolia. 237 delegates , representing some 94 towns of the Russian Federation, elected a 40 member party council and a smaller presidium of the council under the co-chairmanship of Obolensky, Oleg Rumyantsev and the Moscow historian, Pavel Kudyukin.

At its second congress in Sverdlovsk at the end of October 1990 the party adopted a programme. Entitled "The Path to Progress and Social Democracy", the 68 page document owed much to the theoretical influence of Eduard Bernstein ('the father of social reformism', as Rumyantsev has called him) and to the practical influence of Scandinavian-type social democracy. In essence, the programme tried to combine what the party leadership regarded as the best in socialism and liberalism. According to Rumyantsev, speaking at a press conference after the second congress, contemporary Russian social democracy had to follow a somewhat inverted path of development. Whereas western social democracy, he argued, had engaged itself in a struggle to socialise capitaism, Russian social democracy would have to set itself the task of capitalising socialism. Radical privatisation and marketisation were therefore to be the key planks of this "capitalisation" process, and to carry this out in what Rumyantsev termed, 'a civilised manner', the SDPR would be fully committed to the creation of a 'new middle class'. Only if and when a fully functioning western market economy had established itself in the country could the party take up the cudgels of defending workers interests and promoing greater state regulation.

That this was no "off the cuff" remark made in the heat of a press conference has since been indicated in a number of Rumyantsev's more considered contributions to the Russian press, where the twin

themes of 'creating' and 'representing' the new middle class in Russia have been the central plank of social democratic ambitions.[2] The SDPR did not involve itself in the strike movement at the beginning of last year. According to a report of May 1991, the party has only 5 600 working-class members. The growing influence of the party in the Russian political system, however, should not be ignored. With eight of the sixteen members of the parliament's Constitutional Commission belonging to, or sympathetic to, the SDPR and with Rumyantsev himself as Chairman of the Commission, the party clearly carries a lot of weight at the moment.

If the Democratic Union, the DPR, the Free Democratic Party, the RPR and the SDPR represent the most important component parties and organisations within the centrist mainstream, they are not short of other new parties aspiring to join them. Chief amongst this sub-strata of organisations, mention should be given to the Constitutional Democratic Party (Party of Popular Freedom) led by Georgi Deryagin. As the self-appointed successor of the pre-revolutionary Cadets, the party at least has a longer heritage than most from which it can draw support. Founded (or re-founded, as they would say) in May 1990, the party has adopted the programme of the old Cadets originally drawn up in March 1918.

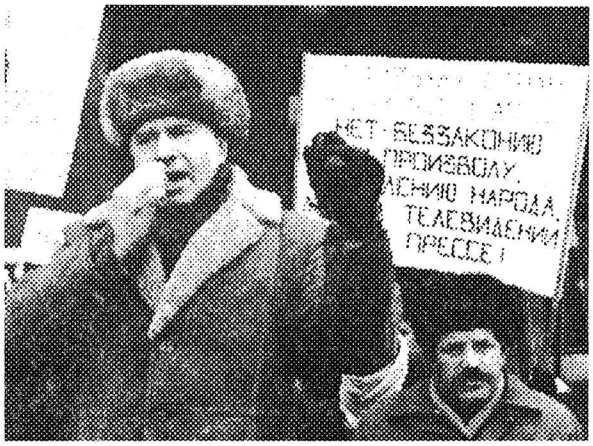
Four other groups worthy of mention are firstly the Party of Free Labour, established in December 1990 and led by Vladimir Tikhonov, Artyom Tarasov and Igor Korovikov. According to the well known political commentator, Igor Klyamkin, this is a party which will be a significant force because of its ever-increasing links with the country's new entrepreneurs. Secondly, there is the Peasant Party of Russia (established in March 1991), led by Yuri Chernichenko, which as its name implies, is primarily geared towards the denationalisation of land and the return to small private peasant plots. Thirdly, there is the People's Party of Russia, led by the popular investigator Tel'man Gdlyan and Oleg Borodin, which was established in May 1991. And fourthly, there is the newly established (November 1991) Bourgeois Democratic Party led by Yevgeny Butov, which as its name suggests, is primarily devoted to articulating and defending the new needs and rights of businessmen engaged in small and medium-sized operations.

Finally, there is the Russian Christian Democratic Movement, established in April 1990 and led by three deputies of the Russian parliament, Gleb Anishchenko, Viktor Aksyuchits and Vyacheslav Polosin. The RCDM prides itself on being the first ever Christian Democratic Party in Russia's history. Having brought together a whole range of samizdat organisations, formerly illegal Christian clubs, Orthodox communes and unofficial charity centres, the party claims a membership and support base of some 15-20 000.

2. The New Right

Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

One organisation not in the centrist mainstream, despite its name, is the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky. It identified itself initially with the the pre-revolutionary traditions of the Cadets, the Octobrists and the Trudoviks and shared the traditional liberal beliefs in a law-governed state, a multi-party system, a market



Vladimir Zhirinovsky

economy regulated only by taxation and a complete de-ideologisation of Soviet society. Zhirinovsky's election platform, when he stood in the Russian presidential elections in June 1991, was very controversial.

Firstly, he proposed that the USSR, in its present borders (including the Baltic states etc.) should revert to the old name of Russia. In foreign policy, he argued that Russia should move away from its traditional relations with the Third World and concentrate entirely on the rich nations. Zhirinovsky was adamant that Soviet troops should have remained in Eastern Europe 'at least until proper conditions had been created' to cater for their return; and in a further piece of advice to the military, he put forward a plan of using the Soviet armed forces under the United Nations flag in different parts of the world in return 'for large payments in foreign currency.' In the election, he came third place behind Yeltsin and Ryzhkov with a poll of 7.8% (representing some 6 million Russian voters).

In the aftermath of the failed August coup, which the LDPR openly supported, the "Zhirinovsky phenomenon" (as it is now openly referred to in the Russian press) has seemingly gone from strength to strength. In an admission that his party's original adherence to classical liberal democratic values was a 'gamble' that was misplaced, Zhirinovsky now makes no bones about the fact that he supports a rigid authoritarian approach to the problems besetting Russia and the once 'glorious Empire'. His main intention now, he says, is to appeal to the alienated youth of the country, the 'new poor', as well as to a large section of the new business community which have long recognised the need for order and stability.

Other groups

In a somewhat similar vein, the Russian Party, (formerly the Russian National Democratic Party), set up in May 1991, promotes the rebirth of a powerful, unitary Russian state. Led by Viktor Korchagin, the party wants a state where 'Russians could live without fear and not be subject to humiliation, insults and encroachments on their civil and political rights.' Even more entrenched in the nationalist mire are the various offshoots of the infamous and antisemitic Pamyat association, Three groups in particular originated in Pamyat: Dimitri Vasil'ev's National Patriotic Front, Igor Sychev's Russian Popular Front and the Popular Orthodox Movement.

Other groups are trying to pave the way for a monarchist revival in Russia. Leading the field here is the so-called Orthodox Monarchist Union Order

left: Boris Kagarlitsky

(Pramos). Established in May 1990 (on the 122nd anniversary of the birth of Nicholas II), the group, which claims to have led an underground existence since 1924, is led by Sergei Engelhardt-Yurkov and is composed entirely of orthodox believers.

3. The New Left

The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party was founded in June 1990 by informal groups such as the Club of Social Initiatives, the Federation of Socialist Clubs, the Moscow Committee of New Socialists and the Moscow Popular Front. The party is most clearly associated with the Moscow City deputy, Boris Kagarlitsky.

For Kagarlitsky, the years of state-dominated Perestroika have resulted in the emergence of a peculiar hybrid he describes as 'market Stalinism'. This is a mixture of traditional strong state, free market economic principles and social rhetoric. The only ideological force able to oppose this market Stalinism would be a democratic socialism that argued for decentralised power structures, workers' self-management and a stronger emphasis on universal welfare rights.

The original 9 member executive committee, elected at the party's first congress, also included two other Moscow Council deputies, Vladimir Kondratov and Aleksandr Popov, as well as Viktor Komarov from Leningrad and Oleg Voronin from Irkutsk. At the party's second congress in March 1991 (held in Leningrad) the committee was reduced to 7 members; with Popov being omitted and his place taken by Vladmir Lepekhin, Though small in number, with a membership of around 2,000, the party nevertheless has been quite successful in attracting the support of the newly radicalised members of the younger generation, and seems to have particularly attracted the allegiance of intellectuals untainted with past "collaboration" with the old style regime and a growing number of skilled workers, not to mention the more progressive looking enterprise managers.

With its emphasis on the municipal level of power organisation, the party has sought greater links not only with established independent trade union organisations like the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, but also with a number of established anarchist organisations, most notably the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists. Led by amongst others, Andrei Isayev, Aleksandr Shershukov, Aleksei Koralev and Aleksandr Shubin, the Confederation was established at a founding congress in May 1989 and was the product of a successful amalgamation of a whole range of anarcho-syndicalist, anarcho-communist, anarcho-democratic and anarcho-pacifist groupings, all of whom shared a basic common allegiance to the ideological teachings of Mikhail Bakunin and to such principles as collective, social property rights, devolved, self-governing political institutions and a democratically planned and administered economy.

The Socialist Party has also linked up with a whole range of ecological and environmental organisations, as well as with the Green Party of Russia. Established in Leningrad in February 1990 , this party, which is led by Ivan Blokov, Vladimir Gushchin and Valentin Panov, has defined its main task as being to secure 'a radical transformation of society on the basis of the primary importance of ecology, civil self rule and direct democracy.' As with nearly all the other new party organisations, however, internal schisms have plagued the Socialist party. During its second congress in March 1991, a new faction was created, the Labour and Republic Club, which would take the party in a more social democratic direction and into a possible alliance with some of the organisations cited earlier. At the party's third congress in October 1991, meanwhile, there was also opposition, largely from Mikhail Malyutin, Vladimir Lepekhin and Aleksandr Kolpakidi, to a proposal from the executive committee to establish a much broader-based organisation in the form of a new Party of Labour.

Finally, there is the Marxist Workers Party, established in March 1990 and associated with the Trotskyist Fourth International. Led by Yuri Leonov, Vladimir Zerkin and Nizami Lezgin, it has been fighting for the full political rehabilitation of Trotsky and for the creation of a society based on 'working class principles and traditions'. Divisions within the party, meanwhile, have also given rise to a number of smaller Marxist-oriented parties, most notably the Democratic Workers Party (Marxist) led by Aleksandr Khotseem.

4. Post-CPSU

According to Boris Yeltsin's version of recent history, the sole responsibility for the August coup d'etat lies with the old CPSU. The attempted takeover of constitutional power from the President of the USSR was committed by CPSU members in the name of the restoration of the leading role of the CPSU. The strict accuracy or otherwise of this assessment cannot concern us here. Yeltsin then disbanded the CPSU and the Russian Communist Party (RCP).The search is now on for a successor organisation. However, this is no simple process. At the time of the CPSU's demise, numerous political and ideological factions were competing for the right to steer the CPSU ship and not surprisingly all these different factions are prominent in organising official or unofficial post-CPSU organisations and parties.

People's Party of Free Russia

Without doubt, the most prominent party claiming to be the legal and "moral" successor, though certainly not the ideological successor, to the CPSU is the People's Party of Free Russia led by Russian Vice President, Aleksandr Rutskoi. The roots of this particular party can be traced to the establishment of

the internal CPSU/RCP faction known as Communists for Democracy at the beginning of 1991. At that particular time the grouping saw itself as the successor to the liberal-inclined Democratic Platform, the majority of whose members left the CPSU after the 28th party congress to set up the Republican Party of Russia.

From the very outset, the Communists for Democracy leadership never entertained the possibility of renewing the CPSU. At an inaugural conference at the beginning of August 1991, the group officially declared itself to be the Democratic Party of Communists of Russia, though there was no question at this time of it formally breaking away from the CPSU itself. Barely a week after the collapse of the coup, however, at a time when the CPSU had already been banned, the party finally declared itself independent and was registered as such with the Russian Ministry of Justice. To avoid any possible association with the Communist Party, in late October a conference of the party voted overwhelmingly to rename itself the People's Party of Free Russia and reconfirmed the existing leadership of Rutskoi. With a claimed membership of some 2.5 million, the party would be the largest of the post-CPSU organisations. On the question of its relationship to the CPSU, Vasily Lipitsky, a leading figure, said at the conference that the PPFR was 'the only legitimate successor to the CPSU on the territory of the RSFSR' and would therefore seek to assume the rights of ownership of the Russian share of CPSU property and assets in foreign banks. The party's ultimate identity, whether on the right or the left, is unclear, as is its relation to Yeltsin.

All-Russian Communist Party

Whatever the doubts about Rutskoi's political or ideological credentials, there can be no such doubts about Nina Andreyeva and her attempts to establish a post-CPSU organisation in the guise of an All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), a name, of course, that dates back to the formal name adopted by the revolutionaries in 1918. Formally established in November 1991 in Leningrad, the party is a successor to two previous organisations, the Unity Group for the Promotion of Leninist and Communist Ideals, and the Bolshevik Platform, set up in July 1991. 150 delegates attended its inaugural conference, representing 15 000 members. According to the manifesto, the party regards itself as the heir to the 1917 Revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat, and wants a centrally planned economy, internationalism abroad and patriotism at home based on the watchwords of 'Motherland or death! Socialism or death!' Viewing the current Yeltsin-proposed reforms as a means of instigating 'bourgeois political bacchanalia', Andreyeva fears that this will lead to a form of fascism. She opposed the August events because it was nothing more than an 'operetta coup', produced and stage-managed by Gorbachev and Yeltsin.

Russian Communist Party of Workers

In a somewhat similar vein to Andreyeva's new organisation, the Russian Communist Party of Workers held its inaugural congress in November in Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg). Attended by 500 delegates (mostly white collar employees, pensioners and unemployed), representing a wider party membership claimed to be approximately 10,000, the two most prominent members of the new Central

Vice-president Rutskoi

Committee are Aleksei Sergeyev and General Albert Makashov. These two figures, both of whom professed support for the August coup, were previously prominent in the CPSU faction "The Movement for Communist Initiative", which formally supported General Makashov's candidature in the Russian presidential elections in June 1991.

Socialist Party of Workers

One left-democratic party that might, given time, attract a considerable proportion of the CPSU's former members is the new Socialist Party of Workers (SPW), led by the former political dissident, Roy Medvedev. Formally set up at the end of October, the party's constituent conference was adamant that while the old CPSU has to bear great responsibility before millions of people for all the hopes that have been betrayed over the past 70 years, nevertheless the ideological and philosophical foundations of socialism and communism would still have a future attraction for the people of Russia. The primary aim of the new party, it was stated, was to find a peaceful and constitutional way of extricating Russian society from its existing deep economic, political and cultural crisis.

In its economic policy, the party continues to recognise the priority of collective property and shareholding, but does not reject the free choice of working people to establish alternative forms of property and economic management. It is fundamentally opposed to the 'socially unjust' and 'economically ineffective' measures of reform inaugurated by Yeltsin's presidency in the aftermath of the August coup, arguing that the kind of measures so far implemented will not create a basis for modernisation and structural change in the Russian economy. It sees itself as a defender of the interests of 'those who produce material and spiritual values, the hired personnel, and the collective and individual owners who live by their own labour, as well as groups such as students and pensioners.' Above all, the new party argues that the construction of socialism must mean a mixed economy and political and cultural diversity in society.

315 delegates from 68 regions of Russia took part in its founding conference. Many delegates and members, it was reported, were former middle level apparatchiks in the old CPSU, and the new party had also drawn heavily on the work of the former Young

Communist faction in the CPSU. In addition to Medvedev, other prominent members of the party leadership include Anatoly Denisov (a deputy to the former USSR Peoples Congress), as well as Russian Congress deputies Ivan Rybkin and Vitaly Sevastyanov.

League of Communists

One organisation of a similar democratic-left orientation, which the SPW regarded as a possible future ally, was the new League of Communists. Established in November with delegates from 5 former Soviet republics, the League is led by Aleksei Prigarin, a former prominent member of the Marxist Platform set up within the CPSU in early 1990. With a new Programme very much based on the old Marxist Platform itself, the League is strongly anti-capitalist, anti-CPSU in its old nomenklatura-based structure and very much in favour of workers' controlled enterprises, socially owned property and a rejuvenated political system based around the old revolutionary slogan of "All Power to the Soviets".

Apart from programmatic issues, the other dominant theme of its inaugural conference was the need for a speedy form of communist unification. We are faced with a situation in which the country may have six or seven communist parties', it was emphasised, and because "the working class will not come to know the particulars" of such a vast quantity of programmes, followers must "work to build a single party of communists"; "even Rutskoi's reptilian party", it was stated, "should not be pushed aside [from this process of unification].'[3] More than a dozen post-CPSU organisations have been established since August 1991.

5. Movements and Coalitions

As the CPSU's hold on power has waxed and waned in recent years a political vacuum has inevitably been created, which up until now has only been partially filled by a number of dominant individual personalities. The new political parties have so far not been able to fill this vacuum by themselves. For well over a year, various efforts have been made by all sides of the ideological/political divide to create a cohesive bloc of political forces which might attract greater support from society and which might eventually emerge as a single, fairly homogenous political entity able to articulate a well defined set of social interests.

Centrist Bloc

One of the first such attempts to unite a set of parties and groups around a set of perceived common values and aims came from the new Right in the guise of the so-called Centrist Bloc, established in June 1990 under the overall chairmanship of Vladimir Voronin. Uniting some 17 specific groups and parties of a conservative, nationalist and Orthodox nature, the new bloc, however, survived for less than a year, before once again breaking up into its component parts. Somewhat surprisingly, recent reports have indicated that the Centrist bloc is about to re-establish itself and shift its allegiance to the Yeltsin camp.

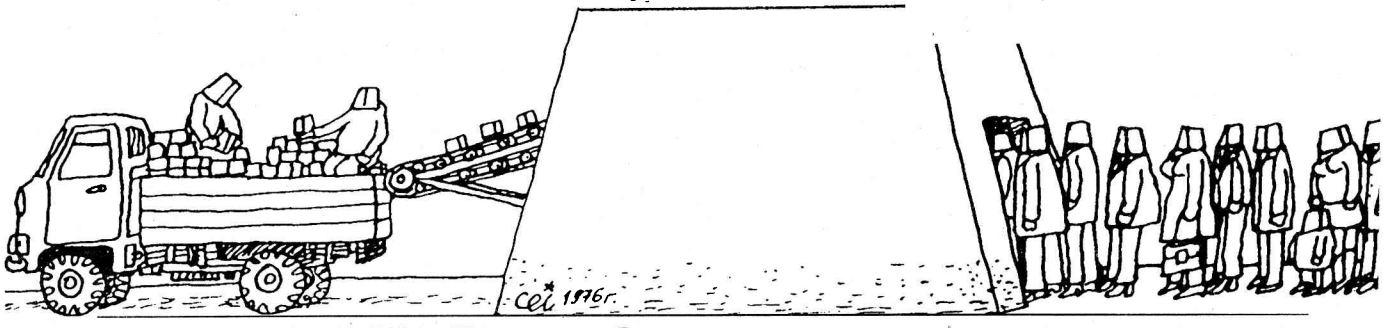
Soyuz

By far the most serious attempt to unite the political forces on the Russian Right, however, has come from the Soyuz (Union) organisation. Originally established in February 1990 as an all-Union parliamentary force, at its second congress in April 1991 the Soyuz leadership took a decision to transform itself into a fully fledged mass movement with branches throughout the USSR. With an ever-expanding leadership structure which began to bring together key members of the army elite, key members of the non-Russian republican Slav movements,, prominent intellectuals, and leaders of conservative-oriented workers organisations as well as active support from many "independent" parties like Zhirinovsky's LDPR, it certainly looked at this time as though Soyuz was well on the way to becoming an extremely powerful and effective political force. Indeed, with considerable links as well to the existing CPSU structure (most notably Yegor Ligachev), the movement was clearly well placed to absorb many of the internal party tendencies as the process of Communist Party disintegration began to quicken.

At the April congress it declared itself to be a 'non-partisan third force' in 'constructive opposition' to both the CPSU and the emerging neo-liberal, centrist organisations. Rejecting capitalism and communism on equal terms, Soyuz now placed itself in the forefront of uniting "all the healthy forces in society" who retained their trust and belief in an all-encompassing Russian patriotism. A state of emergency should be imposed which would immediately ban all political parties (including the CPSU), all industrial strike activities and all kinds of public demonstrations. Censorship should be introduced to stop the degrading spread of liberal permissiveness; while any proposals or actions already undertaken to privatise the country's resources should be immediately rescinded.

This sounded like a very coherent blue-print for a possible coup d"etat. Indeed, the similarities between the April programme of Soyuz and the programme of the August conspirators, as outlined in their first (and only) programmatic statement on the first day of the coup, is remarkably striking. Some Soyuz leaders rejected the coup because of its weakness. Others, however, for instance, Nikolai Petrushenko, supported the "entirely constitutional" measures announced by the State Emergency Committee.

Whether Soyuz will be able to retain a niche in Yeltsin"s new Russia is too soon to say. Prominent members of the organisation continue to call for for a strong centralised, authoritarian Union. They want political parties banned and oppose current economic policies. If Soyuz does disappear, then, there are already signs that a new right wing bloc of forces is



being forged anew under the influence of Alksnis, Aleksandr Nevzorov (the Leningrad TV presenter) and the highly prominent conservative intellectual, Sergei Kurginyan; that movement being the Nashi (Our People) Liberation Movement.

Democratic Russia

Within the mainstream centre, two separate attempts, though not entirely unconnected, have been made to forge a cohesive bloc of forces. The first attempt came with the official foundation of the Democratic Russia movement in October 1990. Originally uniting 18 socio-political organisations and 9 political parties (the most important of which were the SDPR, RPR, DPR, Free Democratic Party, the Russian Christian Democratic Movement, the Party of Constitutional Democrats, the Constitutional Democratic Party and the Party of Free Labour, the movement achieved widespread acclaim following its official backing for Yeltsin"s candidacy in the presidential election.

As for the leadership of the movement, it is going to be very hard to reconcile the differences among the main personalities. These include Yuri Afanasiev,and Gavril Popov.

Movement for Democratic Reform

The second political bloc which has emerged within the mainstream centre is the Movement for Democratic Reforms, set up in July 1991. One of the remarkable features of this grouping is the list of famous names among its leaders: Eduard Shevardnadze, Alexander Yakovlev, Stanislav Shatalin, to name but a few. What their reaction will be to they way thay have been deprived of their high posts, only time will tell. Add to this list the names of Anatoly Sobchak and Aleksandr Rutskoi, and one has a Who"s Who of heavyweight ex-CP reformers.

Judging by some of the press reports which described the inaugural congress of the Movement in December 1991, it seems quite possible that the MDR may eventually become an official "democratic opposition coalition bloc" to most of the incumbent republican governments, including that of Yeltsin"s Russia.

Party of Labour

The new Russian left has been slow in establishing broader political unity. Certainly, the position of the Left in Russia today is an extremely difficult one. Many of the groups look to western socialist traditions such as self management schemes and modern democratic forms of planning and devolved power structures that are themselves poorly supported in the West. They use a language of socialism that is popularly, even if wrongly, discredited in their own environment. The popular concept of a "third way" and a "third force" has already been monopolised by their right wing opponents.

In September 1990, there was a demonstration of the potential power of unity amongst the Left when a Moscow conference held to discuss the inadequacies of the official reform programme brought together for the first time leading representatives from the Socialist Party, the Green Party, the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists, the Marxist Platform within the CPSU, the newly established "Committee to Aid the Labour and Self Management Movements", as well as representatives of the left wing tendencies inside the Russian Social Democratic Party and the Moscow Memorial organisation.

More recently, and more importantly, the two

Boris Yeltsin

leaders of the Socialist Party and the former Marxist Platform, Boris Kagarlitsky and Aleksandr Buzgalin, have established an initiative group which will have as its main aim the establishment of a Party of Labour, geared towards a broad articulation of workers" rights, needs and aspirations in a developing market economy. The announcement of their intention came shortly before the holding of a two day conference in Leningrad in September, organised by the Socialist Party, on "The Left Against Totalitarianism"; a conference which similarly brought together a range of participants from democratic socialist groups, representatives from the Constitutional Democratic Party, Anarcho-Syndicalists and Social Democrats and a number of independent historians and sociologists. At the conclusion of the conference the Political Council of the Socialist Party also adopted a decision to effectively work for the creation of a much broader Movement of Left Wing Forces.

Notes

1. *The Guardian*, May 5, 1990
2. See, for example, "Nash put" k sotsial"noi demokratii", *Narodnyi Deputat*, No.2, 1991 pp.83-90
3. *Moscow News*, No.47, 1991 p.10

Yeltsin a social-democrat?

What does Russia need in order to be able to carry out your reform package within the year?

Yeltsin: Food. Then the technology for storing and processing agricultural products, for road building, for transport. If you could give all this to us on credit; also your know-how, your experience in the privatisation of state-owned enterprises and, in addition, the whole theory of Ludwig Erhard [conservative German chancellor 1963-1966. Ed.], for whom we have a great deal of respect.

But we thought you had become a social-democrat?

Yeltsin: What"s the difference nowadays?

Interview in the German weekly, *Der Spiegel*, 25 November 1991.

RUSSIA

The Party of Labour

The following document, an ***Appeal of the Initiative Group for the Formation of a Party of Labour****, was published in 'Obozrevatel', special issue, January 1992. Translation is by* ***Rick Simon****,*

A new political situation has developed in our country. During the events of 19-20 August the people demonstrated their desire not to live in the old way and their preparedness to defend democratically elected organs of power. Nevertheless, the crisis has not been overcome. It is essential that the economy finds a rapid way out of the crisis, that normal economic links between regions and enterprises are reestablished and that the consumer market is supplied with goods.

The forces ruling our country today, irrespective of their different hues, agree that resolving these tasks requires a gamble on the widest privatisation and the mass attraction of foreign capital into the economy while defending the rights of entrepreneurs and new owners who, as a rule, have emerged from among the ranks of the old nomenklatura. In this effort to build the 'bright capitalist future' more quickly, everything in any way connected with socialism is being rejected, including even elementary social guarantees, the right to work, free education and healthcare.

We believe that the new unanimity of the victors is especially dangerous, for if opposition or dissent is not represented in the organs of power, democracy will not be democracy. If the parties of the presently ruling majority see their aim in the defence of the interests of entrepreneurs, then we declare our intention to defend primarily the interests of wage-workers.

Decades of the totalitarian communist regime have discredited socialist values and the very idea of the emancipation of labour. But these values and ideas are engendered not by theoretical discussions but by the real need to defend workers' interests politically. The bankruptcy of the CPSU at last provides the opportunity to create a full-blooded democratic left-wing movement expressing this need.

Society needs a broad party which is:
- for the maintenance of the right to work;
- for reform of the system of social guarantees;
- for economic democracy and the participation of workers in taking economic decisions which affect their material situation and working conditions;
- for independence and guarantees of the rights of trade unions in all enterprises, under any forms of property, and the ratification of the Convention of the International Labour Organisation;
- for the development of collective and municipal forms of property, the conversion of the state sector of the economy into an efficient and modern decentralised public sector, capable of leading the country out of the economic crisis;
- for the prevention of uncontrolled and bureaucratic 'wild' privatisation of former national property, and against turning state monopolies into private ones;
- for the rights of consumers and independent domestic entrepreneurs;
- for democratic regulation of the economy as a necessary condition for establishing civilised forms of the market;
- for inclusion in the world economy, ensuring the development of the national economy but not the interests of transnational corporations; - for self-management and strong representative power as a counterweight to centralised executive power;
- for honest power, guaranteed by the separation of state and commercial activity and the precise delimitation of the public and private sectors within the framework of a mixed economy;
- for real equal rights for women, for the opportunity for women to participate fully in the life of society while not giving up their rights and obligations as mothers;
- for the rights of national, cultural and religious minorities;

We declare our intention to organise a broad Party of Labour, a party-movement, built on initiative from below. We reject the idea of a vanguard party. The Party of Labour must become the party of support for the trade unions and workers' movement. Only such a party can become an organic part of the international left movement. We call upon all social forces and trade unions, who recognise the necessity of political defence of the interests of wage-workers, and all citizens who understand the danger of a 'one-party system in reverse' and share these views, to join in our initiative.

The Initiative Group for the Formation of a Party of Labour

The initiative group was formed on 28 August 1991 at a meeting organised by the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions (MFTU). The group consists of:
Nikolai Gonchar, President of the Moscow Soviet;
Andrei Isaev, chief editor of the information centre of the trade union and workers' movement KAS-KOR (Confederation of Anarcho- Syndicalists);
Boris Kagarlitsky, member of the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party and deputy to the Moscow Soviet;
Vladimir Kondratov, member of the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party and deputy to the Moscow Soviet;
Mikhail Nagaitsev, Deputy President of the MFTU;
Tatyana Frolova, Head of the MFTU department for relations with public organisations.

The activity of the initiative group is based on the appeal which it has signed. Representatives of KAS-KOR, MFTU and Socialist Party agreed their actions with their respective organisations. The initiative group is open to new members. In the near future it will be turned into the Organising Committee of the Party of Labour.

Vladimir Kondratov is a member of the Organising Committee of the ***Party of Labour.*** *He was interviewed in London on 22 February 1992 by* ***Rick Simon.***

The left organises in Yeltsin's Russia

Interview with Vladimir Kondratov

What are the origins of the Party of Labour?

There was an initial meeting between representatives of the Socialist Party, Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (CAS) and Moscow Trade Union Federation (MFTU) at which we checked our positions and then we began to work together. Our first action was a rally on Red Square on 1 May 1991. This was followed by some local actions during the summer. The next big rally against rising prices took place in October and attracted more than 50,000 people. I was in Leningrad at that time at a rally organised by the Leningrad Trade Union Federation which was much smaller but still important. These were the first practical actions and we understood that we had a real need for each other.

A bit earlier, after the coup, we wrote an open letter calling for the establishment of a Party of Labour which was signed by me, Mikhail Nagaitsev, Deputy President of the MFTU, Boris Kagarlitsky, Andrei Isaev, leader of CAS, Nikolai Gonchar, President of Moscow City Council, and journalists Anatoly Baranov and Aleksandr Popov.

Following the letter's publication we were approached by Aleksandr Buzgalin and Andrei Kolganov, leaders of the Marxist Platform. They have now joined the leadership of the Party of Labour.

Did other members of Marxist Platform join the Party of Labour?

Marxist Platform split over this question. Those members of Marxist Platform who said that they needed to organise a communist party expelled Buzgalin and Kolganov but a lot of members of Marxist Platform followed them and formed an organisation called Communists for the Party of Labour.

Where has the other part of Marxist Platform gone? Has it gone into one of the other Communist organisations or is it on its own?

There are a lot of communist organisations now. At first the other part of Marxist Platform organised on its own and then it joined with Antipov's Communist Workers' Party.

What about Roy Medvedev's Socialist Party of Workers?

Everyone on the Left says the SPW is the most boring party in Russia. However, the leaders of the SPW have been very interested in us and in working together. For example, the SPW's two co- presidents met with us and we discussed our positions and then one of them took part in two meetings of the PL's Organising Committee. So we shall have common actions but we don't have any faith in them because they took all the bureaucrats from the Communist Party who were rejected by the liberals and because they have no concept of what to do.

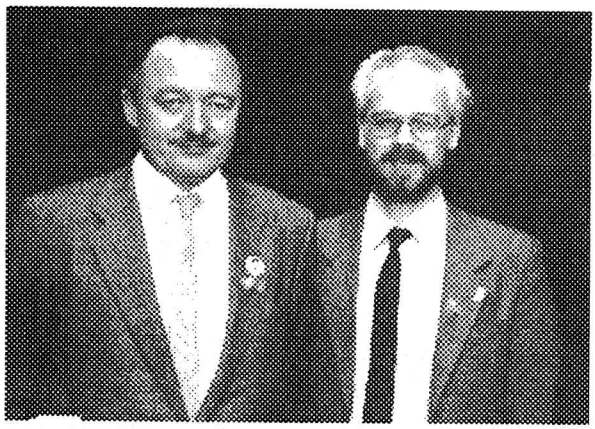
How does the Party of Labour organise? Is it like a federation?

Yes, it's like a federation. The first part of the process has been to develop the Moscow region organising committee. There was a small conference which elected the committee and now we have a Moscow organisation which is growing. The same process is going on in Irkutsk although not as fast as in Moscow. Oleg Voronin and his comrades organised a committee with the Irkutsk Trade Union Federation. This process later went on in Leningrad where there were initially some difficulties but they now have an organising committee in which the local union federation is also taking part. So we have different levels of development in different regions but we intend to hold a congress in which all of these regional organisations can be gathered into one large party.

In January 1992 we held the first conference of the Movement for a Party of Labour. This conference established a republican organising committee to co-ordinate regional activities. This consisted of twelve people, including myself, Kagarlitsky, Buzgalin and Isaev. A number of places were reserved for trade union representatives. Two weeks ago, the vice-president of the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) [formerly the 'official' union confederation the All-Union Central Committee of Trade Unions - RS], Vladimir Kuzminok, became a member of the organising committee. This is very important for us.

How does the GCTU now organise? Is it still on a 'Soviet' basis?

The unions are now in a difficult situation. The Soviet Union no longer exists, which I think is abnormal, unnatural, but it happened. The GCTU has been working to become an international centre, first of all to solve the problem of workers moving from one republic to another. For example, if you were born



Ken Livingstone, MP with Kondratov

and lived in Ukraine, then you moved to the north to work in an oil refinery, you worked there for twenty years, and then you move back to Ukraine, the Ukraine government is saying that it will not pay the benefits you are due because you did not work in Ukraine. This sort of problem will be the main work of GCTU. There are also difficulties in the republican confederations. For example, in Russia, I don't think the leaders of the Federation of Independent Russian Trade Unions (FIRTU) understand what the problems facing the unions are. There was a crisis in FIRTU and 14 federations in industrial regions organised their own association in opposition to the whole republican federation. But now the process has begun of changing FIRTU's leadership and officials. Kuzminok may stand in the elections for the new leadership.

What is the situation in the Independent Miners' Union?

There is a deep crisis inside the independent union. There was a scandal over finances and as a result they have lost many members, who rejoined the 'traditional' miners' union. The old unions have changed very profoundly both in terms of their functions and their officials. For example, Mikhail Shmakov was elected eighteen months ago to the leadership of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, one of the conditions being that none of the old officials could stand.

Has that happened in the old miners' union?

Utkin is the new leader but his position is like that of the 'yellow' unions. He tried to take money from Yeltsin's government in return for not organising strikes. In Sotsprof there is a new scandal emerging. Initially during the coup, Sotsprof's leader Sergei Khramov said that the union was non-political and didn't therefore want to take a position. But on 22 or 23 August he called a meeting of the union's Co-ordinating Council and at that meeting they voted against the coup. When he informed the press he gave the date of the decision as 19 August.

Can you give me some more information regarding the Party of Labour's programme?

There are two main themes. Firstly, what do we think about Yeltsin's government. In general, we think it is a fascist regime. If you look at the social base of Yeltsin's movement you find it is composed of people who want to get rich quick through privatisation. This is a fairy tale, it is impossible. But Yeltsin says this and they believe him or at least used to believe him. Then he began his changes, prices went up, and most of these people became very poor. Now he is beginning to lose his support but many people still believe him. New entrepreneurs supported him unconditionally because his regime gave them the chance of making more than 200 per cent profits. People not interested in politics also support him because in the past he was against the bureaucracy. So people aren't differentiated by real economic interests, they are kept together through mystification. If you look at Mussolini's base you will see it was the same. If you look at Yeltsin's policies you will see the same thing. For example, using the police against the war veterans last Sunday (23 February) when there were not many people and it was a spontaneous demonstration which happens every year when people go to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This time this demonstration was blocked by the police and we think this was a provocation to force people into a struggle with the police in the streets as a pretext for implementing a special regime in Moscow to curtail some laws and human rights. It was unsuccessful this time but it may be successful next time. So this is a fascist regime, not national socialist, but like the Italian fascists.

What's the source of Rutskoi's disagreements with Yeltsin?

Rutskoi understands that Yeltsin's time may be up this autumn or winter and he wants to be in power. So he is manoeuvring and starting to criticise Yeltsin in order to gain support. He is exploiting the national idea but the nationalist movement is not so strong in Russia. Many nationalities live in Russia, perhaps one hundred, and if you say 'Russia for the Russians' you will be opposed by almost half the population.

Yeltsin is losing support and so he has created two 'devils' to frighten people into supporting him: first, extreme communists; second, extreme nationalists. All newspapers depending on Yeltsin's government have published masses of material on this theme.

So what are we trying to do about all this. We don't just have an ideological but also a very practical position. If you compare the country's economy with another country it can only be compared with the United States' economy or the economy of Europe as a whole. Such an economy cannot be geared to export - perhaps only ten per cent of goods can go to export. The majority needs to be sold internally. Workers are not just producers but consumers and they need money to buy these goods. So you need to fight for higher wages and only the Left can do this.

You've won the right to have wages indexed.

This is one way to protect people but ultimately you need to find another solution. This solution lies through supporting state enterprises. We are against privatisation of any kind. We are against privatisation through giving enterprises to the workers - this is another political fairy tale. We need to stimulate production.

How do you envisage the enterprises operating? In a market or would you reinstitute some form of central planning?

There are two main elements. First, at the level of the enterprise, workers need to be able to control economic decisions. So enterprises need to be

independent of the state and we may need to organise companies which control state property but which are not its owners. These companies make profits and give part of this profit to the state through taxes. The next element involves communications between enterprises. We need to organise a state company for exchanging information financed from the state budget. This would not involve commercial exchange. Every state enterprise would want give information concerning what and how much they wished to produce to this company. Private companies can get information at low prices. If the economy were organised in this way we would have a chance of overcoming the crisis.

Presumably this would just be at a Russian level. How would you envisage relations with the other republics?

We need to be united but under new principles: much greater freedom for regions and for local and republican government. But not independence, that's impossible. But our main priorities are the unity of labour and the maintenance of social guarantees.

Trade Unions in Moscow

by M. Nagaitsev
vice-president, MFTU

Moscow Federation

Overwhelmingly the largest trade union organisation in the Moscow region is the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions (MFTU), which has 5 700 000 workers and 39 affiliated unions. The main affiliated unions are those of the construction workers, science and education workers, health workers and engineering workers. Each of these unions has between 400 000 and 600 000 members. The railway workers union has 300 000 members. Others are smaller, for instance, the theatre workers union which has 5 000 members. All affiliated unions are equal within the Federation and have the same rights. In December 1990 the MFTU declared itself independent of all political and state structures.

The MFTU is financed by contributions from affiliated unions, with workers' contributions set at 5 per cent of wages. It also has an income from the Trade Union Bank, which it owns. The union receives no money from the government or from employers. The unions of the former USSR distribute social security payments as well as payments for medical treatment and holidays. The new Russian government wants to take over this function.

Other unions

There are three other trade union organisations in Moscow, leaving aside very small organisations with membership in single figures. The first is the Trade Union of Small Businesses, Innovative Enterprises and Other Forms of Enterprises (MAKKIP). This organises the workers of the small private enterprises, leased businesses, etc., although the MFTU also organises some of these workers. The MAKKIP has 15 000 members. The Moscow Federation is on very good terms with this union and cooperates with it. MAKKIP generally supports the activity of the Moscow Federation and has participated in the actions organised by it. This union sees its job as protecting the interests of the workers in the small private businesses but it does not consider strikes to be an appropriate weapon.

The other union is SOTZPROF. This originally called itself a 'socialist union' of the USSR but now it describes itself as a 'social trade union'. It is difficult to know its membership exactly. SOTZPROF is a very politicised union, very much oriented towards Democratic Russia [a mainstream political bloc led by Popov, Afanasiev, etc and supporting Yeltsin. Ed.] The MFTU claims that SOTZPROF backs out of agreed joint activities whenever Democrat Russia opposes them. For example, there was a rally in Moscow on 23 October 1991, organised by the Moscow Federation, which attracted 40 000 people. Having initially agreed to participate, SOTZPROF withdrew. It also actively participated in rallies organised as part of Yeltsin's [presidential] election campaign. They have now come out in favour of the Yeltsin's economic programme of price liberalisation. They appear to have a lot of internal organisational problems.

CFTU

The third union organisation is the Confederation of the Free Trade Unions of the USSR. SOTZPROF is affiliated to this federation but it is unclear at the moment whether the independent miners' union, the NPG, is affiliated. The NPG has been severely weakened by financial scandals. There is a split in the NPG because of violations on the part of the executive committee of the union, which has its offices in the ministry for coal production. The journalists' union, with about 320 members, is also affiliated. Altogether the Confederation probably has between 50 000 and 150 000 affiliated members. It is openly supported by and has links with the AFL-CIO, which has donated computers, fax machines, photo-copying and printing equipment as well as experts and training. There is no attempt to conceal this.

Legislation at the moment is very inadequate and this causes big legal problems for the unions. The old Soviet legislation is no longer operative while the new Russian legislation hasn't begun to operate There are quite a few legal conflicts as a result. On the question of price liberalisation the Moscow Federation, after a meeting with the chairs of the sectoral unions, adopted a position of opposition to liberalisation until adequate social guarantees are given.

CROATIA

The myth of 'historical conflict'

by Drago Roksandic

For the Serbs in Croatia it is a matter of urgency that this war, which never should have started, be brought to an end as soon as possible and that the issues affecting the relations between Serbs and Croats be settled through political dialogue. This is essential, especially in Croatia, but also in the other territories inhabited by Serbs and Croats, including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.

This conflict has led to incredible human suffering among the Croatians and among the Serbs in Croatia. Property and cultural artefacts created jointly by Serbs and Croats over decades, indeed centuries, are being destroyed to an unimaginable degree. But even if we ignore, for the moment, the moral aspect of this unnecessary war, we still must condemn it. Neither side is able to resolve its most elementary problems against the will of the other. The whole culture of human and national interaction which existed between the Serbs and Croats in this area is being destroyed in an unprecedented manner.

This war is being fought in the name of the Serbs in Croatia. The republics of Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the Yugoslav army, actively supported by a considerable number of Serbs in Croatia, are pursuing this war. It is essential, therefore, from the point of view of the Serbs in Croatia, to make something absolutely clear: the war in Croatia is a war against Croatia, fought for Croatian territories, and it is a war which is fundamentally against the interests of the Serbs in Croatia and elsewhere.

As in other countries of central and eastern Europe, in the process of dissolution of the system of 'real existing socialism' which, at the political level, took place in an extremely short period of time, many key social issues were not adequately dealt with. Here is a source of real conflict for the future, creating many uncertainties. From a historical viewpoint, it is deplorable that the 'political revolutions' of 1989-1990 completely ignored the problem of the relations among different nationalities. Croatia is no exception, but the consequences here have unfortunately been more tragic than elsewhere.

History

From the point of view of the political-cultural interaction of the Serbs and Croats in Croatia, it must be said that the manner in which the changes were carried out in Croatia in 1990 was a step backwards compared to the way in which these relations have been managed over the past two hundred years.It is important to stress this because there seems to be a general acceptance of the myth of a centuries-old irreconcilability of Serbs and Croats.

The whole history of the relations between Serbs and Croats on Croatian territory in the 19th and 20th centuries provides ample evidence that any policy of exclusion, any policy that ignores the national interests of either community, can only lead to conflict, with negative consequences for both national communities and for the whole of Croatian society. This same history also demonstrates that the periods in which the fundamental national interests of both communities were reconciled were also periods in which Croatian society moved forward, modernised, and in which Croatian as well as Serbian national identity were preserved and developed.

An example of this was the Illyrian movement of 1835-1848, which was an important phase in the national integration of the Croats, but also of the Serbs in Croatia and Slavonia. Other instances were the period of revolutionary upheaval in 1848-49, the period of renewed constitutionalism from 1860 to 1868, as well as the period of the Serbian-Croatian coalition from 1905 to 1918.

The conflicts between Serbs and Croats in Croatia, following the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the aftermath of the First World War, only lasted until 1925 or, at most, until 1927. This was followed by a period of cooperation between the Croat Peasants Party and the Independent Democratic Party (SDS) which represented the Serbs in Croatia. This cooperation lasted until 1941. Both sides in the conflict today tend to ignore the fact that it was this Independent Democratic Party of Croatian Serbs, led by Svetozar Pribicevic, which opposed most strongly the dictatorship proclaimed in 1929.[On 6 January 1929 democratic forums were abolished by King Alexander and a dictatorship

proclaimed, in order, it was said, to safeguard national unity.] In 1939 the government signed an agreement with the Croat Peasants Party which gave autonomy to those parts of Yugoslavia in which Croats were a majority. The majority of experts today overlook the fact that this agreement was supported by the Independent Democratic Party. In fact, had the SDS opposed this agreement it is unlikely that it would have come about.

Chetniks

In the period 1941-1945, following the creation of the independent state of Croatia in 1941 and the genocide carried out by the Croat Ustashi, the overwhelming majority of Serbs in Croatia did not go to war against the Croatians or against the Croatian state. On the contrary, their response was to form an alliance with anti-fascist Croatians who were fighting for a federalist Croatia and a federalist Yugoslavia. There is also a tendency today to ignore the fact that during this difficult period, when their physical existence was being threatened, the majority of Serbs in Croatia opposed the Chetniks [Serbian right-wing royalist movement] precisely because of the latter's anti-Croat policy This decision of the majority of Croatia's Serbian population at the time is of tremendous significance for our situation today.

For each of these examples of positive cooperation on the part of the Serbs, we could also provide instances of a similar attitude on the part of the Croatians. In fact, this cooperation could never have come about had the Croats not been willing participants. Again and again in the 19th and in the 20th century, the leading political, social and economic forces among the Serbs and Croats in Croatia found ways of working together, of reconciling their national interests, with different degrees of success. In the situation which confronts us today, the fundamental question is: why is this cooperation lacking now, at a time when it is so essential?

Errors

It is not possible, within this brief article, to give a comprehensive answer to this question, but the basic elements can be stated. I deal here with Serbia only to the extent that it is necessary for understanding the situation of the Serbs in Croatia.

No one could dispute the fact that only the framework of a Yugoslav state could provide an overall territorial solution to the national question in both Serbia and Croatia. Every conceivable division of Yugoslavia could only exacerbate the national problem for both Serbs and Croats. The present division into six independent states creates immense problems for both sides. A quarter of Serbs, more than two million people, live outside of Serbia. Likewise, roughly a quarter of Croats, around one million people, live outside the territory of Croatia. This massive population of three million people lives, for the most part, in mixed areas, generally with Muslims and Montenegrins.

From this fact alone, it becomes obvious that both sides, Serbs and Croats, had a fundamentally flawed approach to the whole question of a new political order in Yugoslavia during 1989 and 1990. It is clear today that neither side thought in terms of a modern, democratic, national programme. This is the primary cause of the present conflict, quite independently of the degree of responsibility on both sides. The two previous models for a Yugoslav solution to the national question, the unitary-federalist model from

1945 to the late 1960s and the national-decentralised model that existed until 1989/90, both failed and, since 1989, neither the Serbian nor the Croatian side has succeeded in creating a new liberal model.

New Model

Any new model would have to do two things: firstly, to ensure the principle of national self-determination for people living within their mother-republics and, secondly, to ensure the principle of 'internal' self-determination for national groups living outside their mother republics (Serbs in Croatia, Croats in Serbia, and so on). I took part in numerous discussions, before, during and after the multi-party elections in Croatia, with leading political figures across the political spectrum, and I can state quite categorically that all of those political leaders, both Serbs and Croats, by and large ignored the tragic consequences that might result from establishing Croatian independence without a clear policy on relations between the two national groups within Croatia. They also ignored the consequences of this new situation for relations between Serbs and Croats in general. This is obvious today if we look back and read the newspaper reports from that whole period.

Why were the Croatian political leaders so convinced, during 1989 and 1990, that during the transitional period after the elections, the issue of the relations between the Serbs and Croats inside Croatia would not become a serious problem? One could enter into a lengthy explanation but it boils down essentially to a few main factors. Firstly, there was the relatively successful integration, sometimes assimilation, of Serbs into Croatian society after 1945. We can add to this the fact that the Serbian population was gradually declining as a proportion of Croatian society. There was also an extraordinarily high degree of identification on the part of both communities with the party state. This in turn was a result of the strong identification of Serbs in Croatia with the Croat popular liberation movement during the years 1941 to 1945.

Populist nationalism

This is the background also to the Croat-centrism of most of the political parties during the election period. There was a widespread belief that the overwhelming majority of the Serbs in Croatia would

maintain their allegiance to the reform communists who had just constituted their own Croatian party. The election results seemed at first to confirm these assumptions. However, the changes introduced after the elections created the conditions for a powerful national polarisation. These changes put a question-mark over the entire post-war settlement and in many cases involved a positive reassessment of many aspects of the previously independent Croatian state. Indeed, there was an overall re-evaluation of the whole of Croatian history.

This led, among the Serbs in Croatia, to a desperate attempt at establishing some form of self-identity. Among the Croatian Serbs, however, there didn't exist a sufficiently strong layer of intellectuals who were able to enter into this debate under way in Croatia and combine the issue of democratic national identity with a radical critique of the whole post-war experience of Yugoslavia. Under such circumstances, a populist-nationalist mobilisation based on mythology was inevitable. This, in fact, fitted in well with the interests of the political parties on the Croatian side, especially given the increasing signs of disintegration of the Party of Democratic Renewal, which had been the common party of both Serbs and Croats in Croatia during the elections.

As this polarisation increased, the entire political culture of Serbian-Croatian cooperation that had been established over the past two centuries was thrown overboard. The road to disaster was now open for both sides.

Serbia

The crisis in the Serb-populated areas of Croatia intensified dramatically as a result of the influence of Serbian populism since 1987. This Serbian form of populism emerged as a synthesis of the authoritarianism of the communist-party regime with traditionalist nationalism. This synthesis represented the complete negation of the political culture of the Serbs in Croatia. Its rapid and uncritical acceptance was very destructive, politically and intellectually, for both Serbs and Croats in Croatia.

The uncritical reception of Serbian populism in Serbia, reinforced by the illusory slogan 'All Serbs in a single state', led a significant number of Croatian Serbs into a war against Croatia. Actually, it manoeuvred the Serbs in Croatia into a suicidal situation.

The policy that Serbs and Croats could not live in a single state meant the end of Yugoslavia. The consequence is a war for territories on which they can live separately. But this means tragedy for millions of people of both nationalities who now face not just war and misery but also the disaster of being uprooted from their homes and from the areas where they have always lived.

National rights

If the aim really is that people should be able to go on living in their native towns and villages, in the framework of sovereign states of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, then the only possible solution is to begin a process in which the national interests of Serbs and Croats can be articulated in a democratic manner. But a fundamental precondition for this is the recognition that national rights are only one part of the general human and civil rights of each individual. It is the duty now of the international community to establish the framework for a dialogue on this basis. What the international community has so far done has only strengthened the authoritarian illusions on both sides. It has failed to give the necessary support to the politically liberal forces on both sides, which would enable them to vigorously pursue a policy of reconciliation between their two peoples, who simply cannot flee from each other.

The proposal that Croatia should establish legal guarantees for national rights is no solution because this South Tyrol model does not correspond to the reality of Croatia. Only a quarter of the Serbs in Croatia live in communities in which they are a majority. Three quarters of them live in mixed communities spread all over Croatia, from Dubrovnik to Zagreb and from Pula and Rijeka to Vukovar and Osijek.

Dialogue

The key question is, how to open a dialogue in Croatia between those Serbs and Croats who understand that the only possible solution is one which is acceptable to both sides. The duty of the international community and of international public opinion is to support such a dialogue because this is the only way out of the dreadful situation in which both Serbs and Croats now find themselves.

This article was translated from the Austrian magazine, Ost-West Gegeninformationen, *December 1991.*

No anti-war protests

"International protests against the war in Yugoslavia have been very limited. Since the Gulf war, the resolution of conflicts by military means meets with less resistance than previously. Many, among them the many hundreds of thousands who took part in the peace demonstrations of the early eighties, now place their hopes in 'peace keeping forces' of the UN or the EC. In Austria there was an anti-war demonstration by school students, as well as the Vienna 'Initiative for Serbo-Croatian Dialogue'. Otherwise little was done. Meanwhile the Austrian media have stirred up anti-Serbian feelings to such an extent that Serbian refugee families deny their identity and pretend to be Croatian. (...)
Whatever one thinks about the issue of recognising Croatian independence, there are other steps which are more crucial and more helpful, above all support for all those organisations in the Yugoslav republics which favour non-violence and dialogue between the nations and nationalities and which offer humane support for refugees from the areas of conflict."

Editorial comment from Ost-West Gegeninformationen *December 1991.*

The post-Solidarity left

Three interviews, translated and introduced by

DAVID HOLLAND

The first free parliamentary elections to be held in Poland for at least half a century, held on October 27th 1991, produced a parliament fragmented between 26 different political groupings and revealed a deep cynicism in the electorate towards the political options available. Only 43% voted. It took two months of negotiations to produce an unstable coalition of the centre-right, led by Jan Olszewski.

Whilst the weakness of this government will reduce its ability to impose the social costs of the transition to capitalism, such as major economic re-structuring, closures and mass unemployment, it also increases the scope for President Walesa to resort to authoritarian methods, over-riding parliamentary dithering. Indeed only fear of Walesa playing the 'Pilsudski card,' delivered a parliamentary majority to the new Government, since the three parties formally within the coalition do not have a majority in the Sejm.

Ironically, although the new government is ideologically to the right of the former government parties, it has been more willing to bend to political pressure from below for more state intervention in the economy and the maintenance of minimum welfare standards. It is making up for this with demagogic support for the church and for the 'de-communisation' witch-hunt.

Ex-communists

One striking aspect of the election was the relative success of the ex-Communist 'social democracy,' which campaigned under the name Democratic Left Alliance (mainly the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland or SDRP). The DLA scored 11.98% of the poll and elected 60 MPs. The 'post-Solidarity left (Labour Solidarity; Social Democratic Movement; Polish Socialist Party) by contrast did badly, gaining only 2.5% and electing only 5 MPs.

The relative success of the ex-Communists is against a background of a rising wave of industrial unrest, as workers protest against a further decline in living standards, particularly sharply rising heating charges. These events have created some space on the left, as the need for re-alignment becomes apparent and the new lines of divide, between an anti-capitalist left and an authoritarian, Catholic-fundamentalist right, gradually replace the old division between regime and opposition.

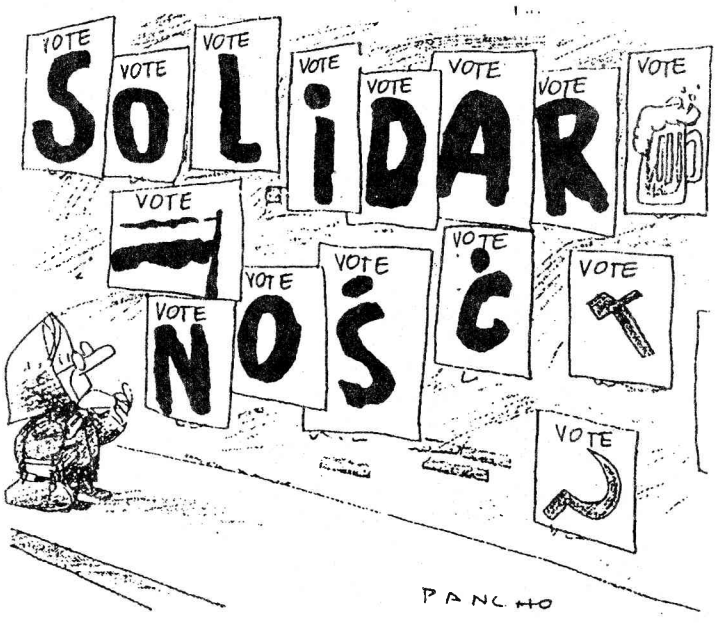
Thus the Congress of Labour Solidarity, held on 11th January, issued an appeal for the creation of a new Polish Labour Party. This appeal however specifically excluded the ex-communists and was addressed to the Social Democratic Movement, headed by Bujak and the tiny Polish Socialist Party.

Labour unrest

Recent industrial unrest has featured manoeuvring between Solidarity, the breakaway Solidarity '80 and the OPZZ federation, which is linked to the old regime. Each union centre has been anxious to canalise social discontent and put itself at the head of workers' protests. Solidarity, which is most closely linked to the last two governments, headed by Bielecki and Mazowiecki, is particularly anxious to avoid being out-flanked in militancy by its rivals.

Thus, after the announcement of an OPZZ 'day of action,' jointly with 'Solidarity '80,' demanding the withdrawal of large increases in heating costs, Solidarity announced its own nation-wide stoppage. This was immediately supported by the other union centres, who are as determined to force united action on Solidarity as Solidarity is to act on its own. Significantly, Solidarity did not demand the withdrawal of the price rises, but merely protested against the absence of consultation.

It is worth noting, that by contrast with the General Election turn-out, support for the strikes has been extremely solid, rising towards 95%. A widespread discontent therefore clearly exists but cannot find adequate political expression. More strike action has been threatened at the end of February.



New left

We publish below three interviews of representatives of the post-Solidarity left, conducted by journalists from two titles from the "post-Communist" press: respectively *Trybuna*, (formerly *Trybuna Ludu*, "Organ of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party,") and *Nie*, (or "No") the controversial and successful political weekly, edited by former press spokesman for the martial law regime, Jerzy Urban.

Those interviewed are, firstly Zofia Kuratowska, the leader of a new left faction in the Democratic Union, the liberal secular Party of the ex-Solidarity intelligentsia, which includes figures well known in the West, such as Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik (the Party gained 12.3% of October's poll and 62 MPs); secondly Ryszard Bugaj, one of the parliamentary representatives of Labour Solidarity, a nascent social democratic current; and lastly, a group of young left-wingers from the Wroclaw based Socialist Political Centre, whose best known representative is socialist and former Solidarity underground leader, Jozef Pinior. Two of this last group, Jarek Wardega and Krystyna Politacha, stood in the parliamentary elections on a Labour Solidarity platform.

The tensions between interviewer and interviewed reflect the continuing pariah status of the ex-Communists, as well as the growing mutual appreciation of the need to re-group to oppose common enemies on the right. Although the ex-Communists are proportionately larger, they desperately need the legitimacy which would be conferred upon them by alliance with well-known figures of the former opposition.

Two of the interviews refer to Miller, leader of the SDdRP fraction in the Sejm and "red smear" allegations that he received money from Moscow in the past. This smear campaign was denounced by Jozef Pinior, in an earlier interview with *Nie*. Pinior was a member of the national underground leadership of Solidarity during martial law and was therefore in a good position to observe the large scale American financial assistance to the union. As the Treasurer of Solidarity in Lower Silesia, he was also the victim of unsuccessful attempts at financial smears from the Communist authorities and so occupies a strong moral position to attack politically motivated smears, now that the boot is on the other foot.

The creation of a mass party of Polish labour is an urgent priority. It is scarcely surprising that there is some natural reserve on the part of those who only a few years ago were being jailed and persecuted by police obedient to politicians now extending the hand of friendship as fellow social democrats. However, organisations like the SdRP are not the same as the many million strong PUWP of old: few careerists would seek advancement through donning red ties now. The process of dialogue and realignment on the left is indispensable if a political challenge is to be mounted to the triumphal advance of free market capitalism.

The other surprise beneficiaries of October's elections were the nationalist right wing Confederation for an Independent Poland, who won 7.5 % of the poll and elected 46 MPs. Christian Democrats took a further 49 seats. The advance of deeply socially reactionary politics is reflected in the efforts to criminalise abortion. This theme too appears in two of the interviews.

The left wing of Democratic Union

Interview with Senator ***Zofia Kuratowska*** *president of the social-liberal faction of the Democratic Union, conducted by* ***Artur Siedlarek*** *and first published in* ***Trybuna.***

Democratic Union

The social-liberal faction of the Democratic Union (DU), which you lead, developed from the Association for Democratic Action (ADA or 'ROAD' in Polish). With the benefit of hindsight, what do you think now about the decision to merge ADA into the Democratic Union ?

Prior to the unification congress of DU, I had many reservations. It seemed to me that the Union should be a coalition of groupings, rather than one political party. However, in hindsight, in spite of differences, which undoubtedly exist within DU, I think that the decision was right. Fragmenting political movements into different tiny groupings doesn't bring anything good. On the one hand I would like the Union to have a more distinct profile, but on the other, it represents a huge human potential and this is important, including people with very widely differentiated views.

What unites and what divides Union supporters ?

The differences are particularly evident if you compare the positions of my faction with those of the

Forum of the Democratic Right. Chiefly these are differences in approach to Church-State relations. We are decidedly against the introduction of elements belonging to philosophical world views into legal instruments and thence into our public life. We speak expressly about the division of Church and state.

The second fundamental difference is in the socio-economic sphere. For example, it is the view of our faction that the state has major obligations to citizens. The participation of the state in areas of public life such as education, health care and culture is indispensable. A certain amount of state intervention in the economy is also indispensable, at least in the transitional period.

However, despite differences, there is much that unites us in the Union. We have similar views on democracy, on the conduct of policy, on the role of the law and state institutions, such as parliament, president and government.

In spite of this, it often seems that the Union is kept together by force...

People are very hostile to divisions. They are very impatient with them because they often do not understand their basis. When I speak at meetings about factions in the Party, I frequently encounter a fear of disintegration of this Party, which they trust. The Union is and should remain one Party.

Labour Solidarity

You were a guest at the programmatic conference of Labour Solidarity. You spoke there about many issues which unite you. How close are Labour Solidarity (LS) and the social-liberal faction of the DU?

It seems to me that we attach significantly greater weight to the liberal programme, to the necessity of the existence of a free market, than LS does. I am close to LS. LS grew out of the 'Group Workers' Interests' which existed within the Citizens' Committees, to which I belonged. Later our paths diverged because the ADA was established and I strongly supported its programme, of which I was a co-author. We have many reservations about the strong support LS has for the workers' self management councils. We also have differences of view about the Balcerowicz Plan, as a point of departure for reform which LS criticised so strongly, . We accept it, albeit only as a point of departure. Moreover, I also have the impression, perhaps erroneously, that LS places too much emphasis on workers. I certainly would not wish to deprecate the role of workers, but I am against the division of people into workers and intelligentsia. That is a classic division from the past period. I am afraid that there has come into being a kind of shaky equilibrium between the interests of the workers in the productive sphere and those dependent on the state budget, who are nearing pauperisation. They should be treated on an equal basis, because both these productive spheres are equally important to the state.

Social Democrats?

The name social-liberal faction may be a bit of a mistake, after many months of governments of so-called liberals...

Yes. Perhaps it is a mistake. The word "liberalism" does not for us chiefly imply economic liberalism, although it does mean support for the free development of economic initiatives. What is most important for us is the conception of liberalism arising from the European tradition, such as defence of the rights of individuals and social groups i.e. the acceptance of political and philosophical pluralism, opposition to lack of tolerance and discrimination against people for whatever reasons.

How would you place your faction on the political spectrum?

I would say that we could be placed somewhere between the German FDP and the social democratic parties.

Would you venture to describe yourself as a social democrat?

I am not at all afraid of this description and certainly I am extremely close to such a position. I am however aware that my political views are still something in between.

The Democratic Left Alliance MPs (the electoral coalition made up of ex- Communist groups) are saying that a collapse of civilization threatens Poland...

Certainly without a good educational system, without an efficient health service, without the development of culture, we cannot build a modern state. Every set-back in these areas has irreversible effects.

You have often expressed the fear that a caricature of democracy may be established in Poland...

For me an excellent example of a caricature of democracy was this unfortunate congress of doctors and the adoption of a Code of Medical Ethics. I think that ethical norms cannot generally be chosen by voting. It was forgotten at the congress that there is a principle of democratic conduct known as consensus. As a result, the minority, because the delegates are a minority of the whole body of doctors, imposed upon the majority something which is wholly unacceptable to that majority - and this was undoubtedly a caricature [the reference is to the adoption of a virtual ban on abortion - transl.]

Abortion and the church

You were strongly opposed to the consideration in parliament of legislation to protect the foetus...

Personally, I think that this matter should at least be deferred, since society is entirely unprepared to discuss it. There is no sex education or knowledge about contraception, or even moral education, (in spite of the efforts of the Church). What is more, the measures that have been proposed completely take away women's right to determine their own destiny. Our social infrastructure is also quite unprepared for a demographic explosion. Today there are already increasing problems with criminal and pathological behaviour amongst young people and children, and a large number of abandoned children. We should exert every effort to change this unfavourable situation before we discuss restrictive laws.

At the end of the last parliamentary session, the Union proposed its own bill to regulate abortion and then withdrew it. What is the situation now ?

The earlier bill put forward by the parliamentary group of the Union was withdrawn because from the one side it was attacked by the church and on the other side by part of society which was opposed to this kind of law. At present our group does not intend to put forward any kind of initiative on this subject. Unfortunately, a bill is now circulating which bears the signatures of MPs from the Christian Democratic Union. In my opinion, this bill is dangerous. One must bear in mind, however, that every bill has to undergo amendment in committee and it may still be amended out of recognition or thrown out.

What do you think about the role of the church in the state and about political groupings which loudly appeal to the authority of the church?

We must remember that we owe the church a debt in the struggle for independence and democracy in Poland. However, because of this and other factors, the situation has changed. This is why the relationship between politics, state and church should be put on an entirely new basis. I am against those groupings which abuse the church for their own ends, in order to subordinate people to them. Some parties batten upon religiosity, on beliefs, on ideas dear to the majority of society. This serves the interests of the church in Poland very ill.

And perhaps the church in Poland is not entirely without fault?

Certainly some clerics get up to things which are difficult to accept. For example, among the observers of our elections from the European Parliament were members of Christian Democratic Parties who spontaneously expressed their opposition and shock at instances of political agitation in the churches before the elections.

You said to people from Labour Solidarity that what you shared with them was more important than what divided you from them. Would you have the courage to say the same to Democratic Left Alliance MPs?

Certainly - only not to the DLA as a party, but to particular people with whom I share values. In quite a few concrete matters, I can see the possibility of joint activity and cooperation. I am a foe of discrimination against people on account of the past and the more so if it is the past of their political grouping. I think, however, that it is necessary for the DLA to sort out its attitude to certain activities in the recent past and to certain people who took part in them, for example, an MP like Miller. Then the situation would be straightforward.
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The politics of Labour Solidarity

Interview with ***Ryszard Bugaj,*** *one of the leaders of Labour Solidarity.*

The interview was carried out by ***Artur Siedlarek*** *and was first published in* ***Trybuna,*** *28 January 1992.*

Solidarity

Two governments originating from Solidarity have come and gone. How do you evaluate their record ?

It is a mixed one. Some desirable changes took place. There was a profound democratisation, whilst the stability of the country was maintained. Also on the positive side, it is indubitably the case that Polish sovereignty has increased - although this was in large measure due to the events on our Eastern borders. However on the economic front, unfortunately it has to be said that the balance sheet is predominantly negative. The stabilisation programme has broken down and the process of transforming the system has reached an impasse.

From the experience of the last few weeks, do you think that the support given by the Labour Solidarity Parliamentary Group to the Olszewski Government was right ?

It was right at the time. What Olszewski was saying then merited support. Now we would like to hear something more concrete. I am well aware that in such a short time one cannot prepare a comprehensive programme, but I also know that the people who have taken over the reins of government have been preparing for this for a long time and that they have promised real changes.

You were associated with the Solidarity movement from the beginning. What is your attitude to the Solidarity trade union today ?

My view of Solidarity is first and foremost that of a union member. I identify with it and I have certain expectations of it. I have always felt that this movement brought very beneficial changes to Poland, so I do not agree at all with Zbyszek Bujak's position of apologising for Solidarity. But at the same time I think that in the last two years the union has made its share of serious mistakes. The failure to reach an express agreement with the Mazowiecki Government on socio-economic policy was a fundamental error.

Solidarity should have tried for an agreement which took cognisance of economic realities, but at the same time defined the conditions under which the union could still support government policy. This was the union's fault and Lech Walesa's fault. I think that Solidarity has paid a huge political price for this, in its base and currently shaky social standing. It is high time for a carefully considered policy of representation of the workers' interests. There are already clear signs of this taking place and I am therefore optimistic about the union's future.

Do you think that the Solidarity ethos still exists?

Yes, I think so, even if it is not very evident on the public scene. The Solidarity ethos is characterised by a feeling of solidarity, with a small 's,' a strong feeling for social justice and a wish to resolve all matters in a democratic fashion. These are not values held in very high esteem today by a significant part of the new political class.

Labour Solidarity is for the welfare state and therefore a state with some resources. Where should it derive these resources from?

A state can provide welfare only in accord with its capacities. These are very limited now. However there are some possibilities of increasing incomes, without waiting for the end of the recession. For example, it would be a simple step to end tax concessions, which have indirect pathological effects as well as direct ones. I am thinking of the tax concessions ordered by Balcerowicz, which have had the effect of turning us into a nation of middle-men. Something else that could be done would be the introduction of import franchises. If the right to import goods on a commercial scale was held not by two million firms, like now, but, let's say, fifty thousand, this would fully safeguard competition, but also permit the introduction of some kind of turnover tax, or import duty. This would not only help the budget, but also act against disloyal competition with Polish industry. If taxes of this kind are not imposed, especially on higher quality goods, then the importer can retail 40% cheaper than the Polish producer. In this situation our unfortunate industry has no chance. In the absence of any other alternative, I would be in favour of raising turn-over taxes on some high quality goods, which would reduce imports of consumer goods and redirect demand towards domestic production. One could add to these ideas. They are better ones than those put forward by Minister Miskiewicz for a poll tax to pay for the health service...

Social Democracy

Labour Solidarity activists are beginning to describe themselves as social democrats...

The Polish political scene is slowly crystallising and we are not exempt from the increasing pressure. But we have never advertised left wing sympathies and are still not doing so, not because we do not have them, but because of the enormous political confusion. The SdRP (Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland) MPs say they are left wingers... I think that only some of them are, some simply don't know how to get rid of the left-wing label. There's a similar situation on the other side. People in the Union of Christian Democrats (UCD) say that they are right

Olszewski and Walesa

wingers, but when they speak on socio-economic topics, they voice left wing views. For our part, we want to avoid this confusion and so do not underline our leftism, but if we are asked...

Then you are social democrats?

So we are coming to realise. But we are avoiding any appeal to this tradition. We want to avoid entanglement with ideological baggage, even when it is undeniably in tune with our views, such as the PSP (Polish Socialist Party) tradition. We are trying to define ourselves in relation to the problems of Poland and Polish society and not in relation to our descent from the deeds of our predecessors long ago.

However, one can say that Labour Solidarity is an organisation which sets itself the task of struggling for the interests of working people?

Of course. But I think that in the modern world, the times of class struggle have ended, however you define class. From this point of view, the Peasants' Party for example, with which we have a lot of sympathy, seems a bit of an anachronism. We consider though that in today's Poland it is the interests of the wage earners which are most weakly expressed. This leads to a political imbalance, which we should like to correct.

Left groupings

What has Labour Solidarity done for working people? Perhaps other leftist groupings have done more?

Unfortunately, all of them put together have done very little. As regards our activity, which only dates back about six months and so far comprises the activity of 1,500 to 2,000 people, I would say that we have undertaken various initiatives, rather than that we can show concrete results. In parliament we have tried to oppose policies leading to economic recession. We have demanded that the costs of the reforms are distributed fairly, with higher taxation on higher incomes. We have opposed and still oppose attacks on workers' rights, such as the powers of the workers' self management councils. This does not mean that we have lost touch with reality. I do not want to hide our support for the amendment of the pensions' legislation. But to do otherwise, as some on the left of the chamber wanted, would have represented economic insanity. I think that we have

succeeded in exerting a certain amount of pressure in parliament and also achieved a couple of trifling victories. However we were weak in parliament. Our demands were not supported by colleagues from the Democratic Union (DU) or the Citizens' Committees. Nor were they supported by the side of the parliamentary chamber that likes to call itself left wing. I can give some concrete examples, if you are doubtful...

Please do.

For example, the privatisation law. We wanted to amend it so that it would be more favourable to the workers and included guarantees of protection against corruption. No support was forthcoming. We wanted to get stronger representation for workers on the supervisory boards of one-person partnerships with the state treasury, but again there was no support. The causes of this kind of attitude were simple enough. The Communist Party grouped people from all political orientations, including some very right wing ones on fundamental matters. I once used the term "Red Thatcherism" and I consider that in the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) there were and in the SDRP there still are a large group of supporters of this philosophy.

Ex-communists

Have not the Labour Solidarity MPs elevated historical differences over programmatic agreement rather too often?

There are historical differences that will remain important for some time to come. When I look around the Sejm today, I see a lot of faces that I remember from the television screens as sycophants of Edward Gierek. I do not deny that people can change their opinions in politics, but the balance sheet of people's personal biographical histories also counts for something. On our side too there are people who were members of the PUWP and during this period were responsible for some ugly deeds. In general however they have paid a price for this history. It's a different matter for many of those on the present left of the chamber. It seems to me that a little humility is needed. Someone who was involved for a long time in policies which had nothing in common with Polish interests of any kind and has never paid any penalty for this, has not gained the moral right to public statements and expositions of their views. That doesn't mean that we are supporters of the Centre Coalition's (CC) ideas on de-Communisation.

Do you also condemn members of the PUWP who were in favour of reform and democratisation?

I reject this theory which MPs like Kwasniewski (leader of the SDRP) have so often pressed into service. I am thinking here of the role the reformist faction of the Party played during the 'Round Table' negotiations, which had a completely different direction, not much advertised by Kwasniewski today. This was to retain power, whilst sharing responsibility. It did not succeed, because the lack of cohesiveness of their camp was not anticipated, nor what was to take place on our Eastern, Western and Southern borders. Decadent regimes can be saved in two ways: by sharp repression, or though a project of controlled opening, whilst holding on to the crucial positions. If the old PUWP had taken the road of intense repression, then the view taken today by supporters of the CC would be understandable. The option that was chosen was better for the authorities in power then, for the opposition and for society as a whole. This should be accorded due appreciation - but not over-valued.

In the aftermath of the electoral catastrophe experienced by the post-Solidarity left, would it not be more sensible to put these prejudices behind you?

As far as the situation in parliament is concerned, I think that there is absolutely no obstacle to pragmatic co-operation on concrete matters with the SDRP, or the UCD. Our principled evaluation of the SDRP is not in contradiction with real politics.

The future

Do you think that the post-Solidarity left will represent the future for the left?

Perhaps that would sound ridiculous, even megalomaniac, but if I have to give an opinion on this... please take a look at Western Europe. There are many strong left wing parties, but the Communists, outside Italy, have not survived anywhere. But in Italy the Communists initiated the process of transformation themselves, against the whole set-up. They have been doing this for almost 30 years and this is a fundamental difference. Apart from this Communists have never succeeded...

Do you think that in European categories, the SDRP is more of a Communist Party?

I do not want to push this analogy too far, because the European Communist parties have kept a great deal from the orthodox canon, whereas the SDRP immediately and unhesitatingly threw out the whole orthodox ideological package.

Labour Solidarity

Andrzej Milkowski has called for the swift organisation of a political party on the basis of Labour Solidarity, the PSP and the Social Democratic Movement (SDM). You have argued against haste. Does your position not make the development of the post-Solidarity left impossible?

In Poland we have had the experience of dozens of parties, which were set up very quickly, only for nothing to come of them. Today the establishment of a party must be a process, in which a significant number of people are involved. I do not think that we could repeat the methods used to create the DU or the CC. Both these Parties were created from above, by people in power and attracted people aspiring to power. We are not in power. We can only compete for influence on power.

Then you think that a union of Labour Solidarity, the SDM and parts of PSP would still be too small?

Definitely too small. We will only be successful when we manage to reach a wider audience of workers. Without this, I would have to accept the creation of a party on the basis of an agreement between three leaderships of little organisations, a fusion and a division of influence in this new organism. This does not augur any good. It does not interest me...

Solidarity dissidents in Wroclaw

*This interview was conducted by **Stanislaw Pelczar**, and appeared in the 2nd January 1992 issue of **Nie**. The interview is with young supporters of the Wroclaw based **Socialist Political Centre**, whose best known representative is the socialist and former Solidarity Underground leader, Jozef Pinior.*

Grzegorz Wojtowicz is 22 and works as a metal worker in the Wroclaw factory, Pilmet. When Solidarity was still underground, he acted as a courier for illegal publications. He formally joined Solidarity in 1987.

Krystyna Politacha works in the Municipal Transport organisation in Wroclaw. She has been a member of Solidarity since 1980 and was an activist in the underground structures of the union after the proclamation of martial law. She became a leading union activist in the union after the Round Table Agreement legalised the union once more and took the lead in forming the Solidarity Womens' Section.

Jaroslaw Wardega is 27 and a journalist. He was active in the underground work of the Independent Students' Union, was a co-organiser of the 'Orange Alternative,' and made contact with Western socialists in trips to Athens and London.

Solidarity

You weren't in the PUWP (Polish United Workers' Party) the SYU (Socialist Youth Union) or even the SSPF (Society for Soviet-Polish Friendship). Your political nursery was Solidarity.

J. Wardega: I certainly grew up through it. In 1980, I was 16 and at school. I went on the marches, to the meetings, joined the demonstrations. In the family home, I was also involved with Solidarity.

K. Politacha: August 1980 above all represented hope to us. We rebelled against the people who treated us like robots and excluded us from everything.

G. Wojtowicz: When Solidarity began, I was 11 - 12. was the tanks surrounding PAFAWAG, the factory where my father worked. He was a union activist and was interned. We sent him parcels. At home people talked a lot about Solidarity. It was a chance for workers' families like mine. When I was still a boy, I went on the demonstrations, gave out leaflets, stuck up posters. The whole time I knew that Solidarity was the only hope for my future. Now it seems to me that the union has lost its direction. The leaders have got to the top and forgotten about us.

Walesa once said that he had to say different things sometimes so as to fool the communists. Did he ever seem to be a fraud to you?

J. Wardega: Solidarity was an authentic movement, originating from below. This movement sought new solutions. It developed the Programme of the Self-Managing Republic. Not much is heard of this nowadays and if it is mentioned it is distorted. This programme sought a third way. A blend of market, plan and self-management was our patent for the future. But after martial law, the leadership rejected this road. In 1987 they had already started to discuss a change in the programmatic goals of the union. The free market option appeared and contacts with the IMF. The result was that in 1989 Solidarity supported the Balcerowicz Plan, which had little in common with the Self-Managing Republic.

K. Politacha: When in the 1980s we struggled with the party-state bureaucracy, none of us thought that soon the union would be just as bureaucratised and that we would have to begin our struggle from the beginning once more.

On the 4th of December Solidarity organised a protest march in Wroclaw. Did you march?

K. Politacha: No ! From what I heard from some of the participants it was like one of the old Party events that people were herded to. Some of the activists said

frankly "We're going, because we've been ordered to." I will go to something when I am convinced it is right. This protest march, it seems to me, was organised by the regional executive because elections were coming.

J. Wardega: That's right. It was a manoeuvre, not part of a proper strategy. The conception of the founders of Solidarity of the changes needed in Poland were first and foremost from the stand-point of securing basic workers' rights. It is true that many perceived the West as an Arcadia, but nevertheless there was an awareness that reform in Poland would need to incorporate the positive elements from both systems.

Socialist conditions of work and a standard of living like under Western capitalism?

Krystyna Politacha: Certainly not. That's just a joke. I remember that the strike in the Gdansk ship-yards began after Anna Walentynowicz was sacked. That was the real beginning of Solidarity. How can you compare that with today? Today there are hundreds of thousands of such tragedies befalling workers and Solidarity helplessly sits back with its arms folded. People are being thrown on to the street one after another without any future. That is what is happening in the collapsing state factories. However it's no better in the 'transformed' work-places. There is no labour code there, no trade unions, no workers' self-management council. The worker is defenceless.

J. Wardega: In Solidarity in 1991 we are dealing first and foremost with a powerful bureaucratic apparatus. What is more, this apparatus is completely insensitive to the step-by-step elimination of labour legislation, giving the alibi that this is a communist relic. However the labour code was not a present given by the authorities, but something won by the struggles of the workers. Even today this labour code is the envy of Western trades unionists. They regard it as progressive.

Defending workers

Why cannot the unions effectively defend the workers?

K. Politacha: The trade unions today are marginalised in the work-places. They are restricted to organising tickets to the circus and things like that. They are beginning more and more to resemble the old CRZZ unions [the official regime trade union federation before 1980 - transl.] All that's lacking is that they sort out supplies of vegetables for their members.

G. Wojtowicz: Today a factory worker really doesn't know where to turn. Even if they do try, the unions are ineffective and that's what counts, not good intentions.

K. Politacha: Ordinary workers are often accused of being responsible for the failure of the union - they are apathetic and do not want to get involved. However, at the base, we talk to each other and we know that people now are waiting for some kind of movement. It is not possible to define exactly what at present. But I remember 1980. There was a similar feeling of anticipation then. Perhaps the workers should organise themselves from below again.

J. Wardega: It is also worth saying, that on the basis of observations through rank and file structures like the Inter Factory Co-ordinating Committee, that there are people in the factory commissions, who are still active. These activists have not forgotten that this a workers' union. In the Wroclaw ASPA plant, for example, such a proper workers' commission beat off efforts to impose mass redundancies, held a referendum and forced through its own ideas for the establishment of a workers' co-operative. Unfortunately, such activity is ever less and ideas like these cannot be won on the regional executive. Because at a regional level, they are putting forward proposals for universal privatisation. These activists I was talking about are isolated. They do not have political support. That is why more and more of them are talking about the need for a new political organisation like a Labour Party. The thing is that no platform has developed inside Solidarity, which can effectively defend the interests of the working people.

G. Wojtowicz: This has caused a tremendous despondency amongst the workers, because they see it and that it is they who suffer the consequences. I see it myself in PILMET and at home too. My father, who still works at PAFAWAG, is no longer motivated. He is disenchanted and filled with resentment. He has withdrawn from active work.

No left force

Perhaps you should blame today's leaders, who have cynically used you and having done so, cast you aside?

J. Wardega: They also made some mistakes in the process. The programme wanted by the IMF was adopted too hastily and without taking account of any social programme. They just tried to tell us that there was no alternative, except a return to the past, which no-one wanted. Moreover, no political force capable of realising an alternative programme has been developed.

K. Politacha: It is sad that no such force emerged from Solidarity. As far as I am concerned, the workers' interests can only be realised by a left wing force. But Solidarity people fear this label like the devil fears holy water.

J. Wardega: The image of the left in Poland is completely distorted. The Solidarity political elite is dominated by people of a right wing orientation, who

are conducting a continuous anti-left campaign, appealing to the history of the PRL [People's Republic of Poland - transl.] and of the whole of the Eastern bloc. Everything is branded with the same taint of Stalinism. It is forgotten that the ethos of the left is made up of the experience of trades unionists and activists of left wing parties, who were also victims of Stalinism. These propaganda campaigns have instilled a reflex antipathy amongst the workers to the traditions of the left.

And is that why the workers vote for the KPN? (Confederation for an Independent Poland - a right nationalist Party - transl.]

J. **Wardega:** That is why it is difficult to build effectively an authentic left wing force with people deriving from a variety of currents.

The future

Do you think 1992 will create new dispositions or will the workers' movement suffer further disintegration?

K. Politacha: Nothing is going to happen in the short term. Ten years ago, I never would have thought that I would be expressing my views in a weekly run by Urban. So much had to happen. And we are here and discussing with each other. I think that people who think similarly will begin slowly to join forces.

G. Wojtowicz: People will rebel. Especially young people who have absolutely nothing. School leavers can't find work and in the factories it is the oldest workers and the youngest who get the push. The youth today haven't got a chance. We can't even join one of those damned housing co-op queues.

J. Wardega: We are threatened by a further pauperisation and marginalisation for workers' families. The revolt appearing in the strike-wave at the moment is practically ignored by main-stream political discussion. The present strikes are an expression of the canalisation of this mood of rebellion, often with the active involvement of the trade union apparatus.

K. Politacha: That's right. We must oppose the intense bureaucratisation of the union, because it does not permit any rank and file movement. I say this with my own experience in mind. In 1990 I founded a national Womens' Section of Solidarity. This really was a rank and file movement. From the beginning we had problems with apparatchiks. They are so strong that in May 1991, the Section was closed down. We managed to keep it going only in some regions. Even in Lodz, where there are so many women workers with specific problems, President Slowik would not agree to the creation of a Regional Womens' Section !

Why was there this bureaucratic blockade?

K. Politacha: The real reason was our attitude to the abortion bill. The union decided to support it. We were against this decision. So we were forbidden to adopt resolutions, write to the newspapers, give interviews. We had to take everything to Gdansk for approval from the centre. Every bit of paper. Party discipline in the old style. That is how rank and file mobilisation is stifled today.

There was a time when you were ready for anything in defence of your rights, for your vision of Poland. You went on to the streets. You conspired. What about now?

G. Wojtowicz: There is an urgent need for thoughtful activity, because our interests are threatened anew.

J. Wardega: What may yield less immediate results, but is more urgently needed is systematically constructive work. We have already mentioned workers' co-operatives, similar to those in some Western countries. What is most important is that people who want to be active, to defend democratic gains against the threat of authoritarianism, should begin to join together, because otherwise things will turn out very badly. I am convinced that there are many activists in Poland who are thinking like we do. We must find a way of organising ourselves in common activity. If we succeed in this in 1992 there is hope.

The Party of Democratic Socialism

by Gus Fagan

The emergence, in a major capitalist country in Europe, of a party to the left of social democracy, with a significant base in society and a presence in parliament, would be a matter of some importance to the left in Europe. Or is the German PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) simply the successor party of the old Stalinist state party, the SED , comparable to a number of similar parties that now have a precarious existence on the margins of Czech, Polish and Hungarian society? The possibility that the PDS might represent a new beginning for the German left generated enthusiasm not only on the radical left but also on the left of the Greens and even among some members of the SPD. On the other hand, the harsh rejection of the PDS by the West German Social Democrats and the hostility to the new party shown by almost all of the new political forces that emerged during the revolution in the old GDR did much to isolate the PDS not only within Germany but also internationally.

First of all, the basic facts about the PDS: the party's new name, its programme and leadership date from the Special Congress of the old SED in December 1989, less than two months after the resignation of Honecker and just a few days after the resignation en bloc of the old leadership, then led by Egon Krenz. The old SED had 2.3 million members, one in every five working persons in the GDR. PDS membership, at the end of 1991, was around 180 000 (down from 350 000 at the beginning of 1990). Over 99 per cent of its membership still comes from the old SED. In purely numerical terms the PDS is one of the biggest mass political parties in Germany.

In the local government elections of 6 May 1990 in the territory of the GDR the PDS won over 10 000 seats in regional, city and local assemblies. In the parliamentary elections of December 1990, the PDS/ Linke Liste grouping won 17 seats in the Bundestag, the German parliament. Electoral support for the PDS (on the territory of the GDR) declined throughout this period: elections to the East German parliament in March 1990 (15.2%); local government elections in May 1990 (12.6%); state elections in October 1990 (11.6%); parliamentary elections December 1990 (9.9%). This represented a loss of two million votes.

1. ORIGINS OF THE PDS

The 'Successor Party' of the SED.

The PDS is both formally and politically the successor party of the SED. At the special conference in December 1989, the party had adopted the name PDS-SED, this name in itself a visible expression of the internal conflict about its identity. The 2 700 delegates at this conference voted unanimously against the dissolution of the SED. It was a crucial decision. More than anything else, this decision determined the attitude of the new political forces in East Germany to the PDS.

The PDS, in its policies, structures and self-understanding is clearly something quite different from the SED. However, the political-cultural tradition which it inherited from the SED, its role in the GDR revolution in the autumn of 1989, as well as the way in which it established its new identity are part of a complex 'burden of inheritance' (*Erblast*) which is important in understanding the present dynamic of the PDS. Before looking at the party's programme I will look briefly at those three aspects of the party's past which crucially help to determine its internal life and external political dynamic today.

The Tradition of Conformity

Unlike in the other societies of eastern and central Europe, there did not emerge in the GDR, neither in the period preceding the disintegration of the ruling system, nor during the process itself, a radical-democratic alliance of citizens and intellectuals. Whatever the deeper roots of this much remarked on conformism of the GDR intelligentsia, it has been a persistent feature of that society.

In addition to such common factors as security of position, social mobility and material privilege, it was certainly true that the SED regime was particularly efficient and effective in its management of repression. Another important factor was emigration or forced emigration to West Germany. Up to the building of the wall in 1961 around three million citizens left the GDR, among them many potential oppositionists. In the late seventies and again in the late eighties, enforced emigration was a deliberate policy of the regime in dealing with potential opposition.

There were, however, other integrative factors which were quite specific to GDR society and which have deep roots in intellectual political culture. If we understand legitimacy as the acceptance by society, articulated in a system of shared values and goals, of the established system of rule, then we can say that the system of party rule, with its ideological accompaniment (Marxism-Leninism), maintained its legitimacy in the GDR, especially among the intellectuals, far longer than was the case in Hungary, Czechoslovakia or Poland.

The East German Revolution

'The revolution in the autumn of 1989 didn't come from this party. This is a scandal which the one-time members of the SED will have to live with.' (Bortfeldt, 1990, p.10) This assessment by one PDS writer rather understates the problem. Very few SED members participated in the demonstrations of October 1989 and party intellectuals were very slow to realise the full significance of what was happening. Those who protested against the policies and paralysis of the party leadership kept their protests within the boundaries of the party and, in their counter-proposals, didn't really question the essentials of the system.

One of the big unanswered questions about the GDR revolution is why, in spite of the impetus provided by the Gorbachev reforms in the Soviet Union after 1985, no radical/reform current came forward in the SED which was capable of linking up with the mass movement in the summer and autumn of 1989. It is known that there was a growing dissatisfaction among ordinary party members during this period. This is indicated by the number of members who left or were expelled from the party during 1988 and 1989. In 1987 the number of members expelled from the SED was 2 792. In 1988 the number rose to 11 000. Between January and October 1989, the number expelled from the party rose to 18 000. Embittered by the hard line of the leadership, many members simply left the party. In the two months of July and August 1989, 14 000 members handed in their party cards.

The significance of these figures is that they demonstrate that the reformist intellectuals were not without a potential base of support in the party. Why didn't they attempt to organise this potential? The answer is that, right up to the final collapse, the intellectuals still hoped for some 'reform from the top'. There is a strong indication of this in the many party-internal resolutions and statements that came from party intellectuals in the summer and autumn of 1989 and which have since been published in various collections.[1] In none of the statements that I am aware of do the intellectuals call for independent action by the people nor do they challenge the party's 'leading role'.

As late as 9 November 1989, the day on which the Berlin wall finally came down, the highpoint of the revolution, leading reformist intellectuals in the SED, many of them now leading members of the PDS, published a statement which said that 'The transformation can only be made irreversible when all party members, under a new party leadership, are able to contribute their political experience, their democratic potential and socialist ideals. (...) The leading influence of the party's policies is something which we ourselves recognise as necessary for socialism in the GDR...'(*Berliner Zeitung*, 9 Nov 1989)

From SED to PDS

Politically, the opening of the wall on 9 November had initiated a mass movement of 'unity from below' which was by then unstoppable. The whole project of the SED reformers - a renewed party in an independent democratic socialist GDR- had collapsed. The sober realisation that this was the case led to the final exodus of most of the career bureaucracy. It was clear that the SED, the old 'Marxist-Leninist state party', had no future. In this situation some elements of the old apparatus, in alliance with reform-minded intellectuals, stepped in to rescue

October revolution without SED members

what was possible from the old party and transform it into a post-Stalinist modern democratic socialist party. On 3 December 1989 a 25-member committee was established, made up mainly of party regional secretaries. Leading figures in this committee were Wolfgang Berghofer, mayor of Dresden, Hans Modrow, party first secretary in Dresden, Gregor Gysi, lawyer, and Herbert Kroker, first secretary in Erfurt. This committee undertook the preparation of a special party congress to be held within days, on 6 December 1989.

It was during these days of imminent dissolution that the new programme was elaborated which was to determine the character of the new party. It was drawn up by a group of reform minded intellectuals and accepted without any serious discussion by the 2700 delegates and was formally approved as party programme by the party conference held in February 1990.[2]

What is remarkable about this qualitative transformation of the old party, with its new programmatic goals, newly adopted traditions and new self-identity, is the fact that it took place without any critical discussion and without any involvement of the party members. It was truly a 'renewal from the top'. One of the few written accounts of this process describes it thus: 'The once alien social democrats Kautsky and Bernstein, previously "renegades", "opportunists" and "revisionists", became overnight indispensable theoreticians of the party. The delegates accepted without any difficulty this new state of the party's tradition. The party, in the process of self-renewal, has to ask itself to what extent its members knew or could know anything about the origins and contents of this new programme. The collapse of the all-powerful state party caught the members so unprepared that they were willing to accept anything that offered a glimmer of hope. This is the only way to explain the fact that they elected a party leadership which they hardly knew and accepted a programme which previously had been considered revisionist.' (Bortfeldt, p.26)

The absence of a culture of critical debate in the old SED and the strong tendency towards conformism among the GDR intelligentsia, with its roots in a 60-year history of fascism and Stalinism as well as in the specific status of the GDR as the 'socialist nation on German soil'; the failure of the reform-minded intelligentsia in the party to mobilise the

"The party wants to dissolve itself."
"The party is always right."

party base to play a meaningful role in the revolution during the crucial months of October and November 1989; the overnight transformation 'from above' of the old Stalinist SED into a 'modern socialist party', committed to a market economy and reform, the uncritical adoption of a new identity, a new conformism - these factors have had a profound influence on the political character of the PDS. A hostile political environment, experienced not only at the level of party politics but also, and perhaps more crucially, in the day-to-day lives (and careers) of party members, as well as the strongly felt need to demonstrate a complete break with the past, help to reinforce this new 'unity around the leadership', this headlong rush into a new conformity (near unanimous support for the leadership line at party conferences, hostile reaction to the 'conflictual style' of the western radical left, rejection of criticism as undermining solidarity, etc.).

We can throw some light on this problem from another angle if we look at the social composition of the PDS. Who were they who stayed with the party during the difficult period of 1989/90?

2. SOCIAL COMPOSITION

In his report to the 'Renewal Conference' of the PDS in September 1990, Gregor Gysi said that the party consisted of three main groups: 'First of all, there are the old faithful comrades. Secondly, there are the young comrades, many of whom were part of the old inner-party opposition in the SED. Thirdly, there are the one-time career functionaries of the party and state apparatus. In this mixture there are problems but also opportunities.'(Gysi, 'Referat', p.33)

There were many from the old apparatus of the party and mass organisations who remained in the SED/PDS, partly because they retained socialist ideals and saw the need for some form of organised political activity, partly because they had no other perspective either in politics or career. These still constitute the essential organising and mobilising force inside the party. They make up around 20 per cent of the membership. It was this layer which really saved the party from the jaws of imminent disintegration in November/December 1989. But it is a section of the party which is hit particularly hard by social developments in the ex-GDR and there is a significant problem of demoralisation.

The real mass base of the party, almost 50 per cent, are members who have reached the pensionable age. They are faithful to 'the party', still identify with the post-45 'construction of socialism' in the GDR and are not really, either emotionally or politically, part of the 'new identity' of the PDS. They are also, of course, by and large inactive.

Members under the age of 30 make up only 9 per cent of the party (January 1991). Among new recruits, however, of which there were around 3 000 in 1990, 35 per cent are in the 18-25 year group. Workers make up around 20 per cent of the membership, although some estimate it to be really lower than 10 per cent. The party completely lost its base in the factories and doesn't have any organised intervention there or in the trade unions.

By far the most important layer in the party is that of the intelligentsia, who make up 25 per cent of the membership. It is this layer which is the real social base of the party's 'renewal'. Threatened existentially, not so much by the revolution of November 1989 as by the West German annexation of the GDR with its subsequent 'cleansing' of GDR academic/cultural institutions of any form of Marxist influence,[3] ; strongly influenced by social and political movements in both eastern and western Europe; without a secure niche in the political-cultural landscape of post-communist Germany - this intellectual layer, in an uneasy alliance with the layer of ex-SED functionaries, has a very uncertain and unpredictable relation to the PDS party project.

3. PDS PROGRAMME

At the renewal conference of the PDS in September 1990, Gysi said it was the goal of the PDS to be ' a new party, which has a completely different understanding of itself from that of the SED, which understands itself as a left-wing force and which, in common with other forces, feels itself bound to the socialist tradition'. ('Referat', p.18) The PDS in early 1990 quite consciously offered itself as something new. In this it differed from all the other ex-communist formations in eastern Europe which, like the Hungarian Socialist Party, deliberately adopted the social-democratic cloak. This, of course, had a lot to do with the specific situation of East Germany, which initially the PDS wanted to maintain as an independent (socialist) state, and also with the PDS's competitive-hostile relation to the German SPD. It was this proclaimed self-understanding of the PDS as an anti-Stalinist party to the left of the SPD which attracted the interest of the western left.

"Help - I can't tear myself away!"

A Socialist Party of the Left

The programmatic proposals adopted at the special conference in December 1989 described the SED-PDS as 'a modern socialist party in the tradition of the German and international labour movement. It proclaims itself to be part of the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and of the democratic, communist, social democratic, socialist and pacifist movement.'[4] This basic definition of the party's self-identity remained very similar through all its subsequent formulations.

The question of where the PDS places itself in the political spectrum between radical socialism and social democracy has been a difficult one for the party. At the renewal conference in September 1990 Gysi addressed this problem: 'We are neither a social democratic party not, in the traditional sense of that word, a communist party. What we are on the road to becoming is a modern socialist and internationalist democratic German party...' (Gysi, 1990, p.34)

In its programme the PDS proposes ' a partnership relation with the Social Democracy'. (p.91) However, 'we, as a socialist party, with our reform demands, go beyond the Social Democracy, because we don't want to stay at that level but consider a social alternative to capitalism essential... It has been clear for some years now that the SPD has made its "peace" with capital. The decisive difference lies in our goals, in our understanding of democratic socialism, in the programme and politics of the PDS which point beyond capitalism.' (Gysi, 1990, p.21)

The sense in which the PDS's programme points 'beyond capitalism' is however, a subject of some debate, both inside and outside the PDS. Party leaders do not describe the party as 'anti-capitalist' and the party has a very uneasy relationship with the German Marxist left which, by and large, considers the PDS to be a reformist party.

Socialism

The programmatic document of December 1989 describes the kind of society that existed in the GDR as 'state-administrative socialism'. The term used in the party programme is 'administrative-centralised socialism' (p.88). The view that what existed in the GDR was not socialism of any kind, either 'state-administrative', 'bureaucratic' or 'really-existing', is generally rejected in the PDS. According to one of the party's leading theoreticians, Andre Brie, 'we are letting ourselves off the hook too easily if we say this this was no kind of socialism. Socialism this century did take this form, this dictatorial form.'[5]

What kind of 'socialist model' is to be found in the programmatic thinking of the PDS? In common with most of the other groups that grew out of the German revolution, the PDS tends to express itself in the language of values rather than in the concrete pragmatic political language more common in the Anglo-American left. The first section of the party programme gives a list of such values - individuality, solidarity, justice, meaningful labour and leisure, freedom, democracy, human rights, preservation of the natural world as well as inner and outer peace. Democratic socialism is defined as a 'peaceful, humane and solidaristic society' (p.92). The programme rejects the notion of socialism as a 'social system' and sees it rather as 'a way, a constant task and challenge' (p.93). Socialism is often spoken of as 'an age-old idea ..as immortal as christianity'. This Bernsteinian thought is most clearly expressed in the speeches of Gregor Gysi: 'Socialism is no longer understood by us as a specific type of society but rather as a process, a movement of change, of transformations with a revolutionary character which develop all areas of social life in the direction of democratisation.' ('Referat', p.35)

André Brie

There is a strong reluctance, in view of what the PDS sees as the discrediting of that concept by Stalinism, to even use the term socialism at all. In a new programme drawn up for the party congress in June 1991, the term 'socialism' has all but disappeared. (It is used only to describe the party itself.) The party's goals are now expressed as 'a civil, ecological and solidaristic development of society'.

Capitalism

In the first programmatic document of December 1989, the PDS declares its goal to be ' a third way, beyond administrative socialism and beyond the rule of profit'. This concept of the 'third way' was, of course, linked to the expectation that the GDR would survive as a state. In the programme which was formally adopted in February 1990, this concept of the third way had disappeared. By now it was clear that capitalism would be restored in the GDR as part of the unification process. The harsh critique of capitalism has also disappeared. The accent has shifted onto the global problems of humanity. 'Capitalism is economically efficient and has enriched world civilisation. But it has proven itself incapable of resolving the global interests of humanity by securing peace, disarmament or a balanced relation to nature. Nor has it succeeded in creating social justice.' (p.89)

In the final programmatic draft (May 1991) the term 'capitalism' itself has been, in most instances, replaced by 'capital-dominated society' and the problem displaced onto the global scale: 'Can the new global challenges as well as the international and national relations of forces force the owners of capital along lines of profit production in which civil goods and services, environmentally friendly technologies and consumption patterns and a partnership relation with the third world dominate?' (p.5)

The Economy

This programmatic development of the PDS from 'third way' to reform of capitalism is also reflected in its economic conceptions. The initial programmatic project of December 1989 envisaged an economic

PDS leader Gregor Gysi

reform which would 'transform state property into genuine social property'. The programme adopted in February 1990 calls for a 'market economy because it makes possible rapid scientific-technical progress and a high level of economic effectiveness.' This market economy has to be 'complemented by strategic economic guidance on the part of the state...'. (p.93) The programme calls for 'a variety of different forms of ownership of the means of production' in which 'social property would have an important place'(p.93)

The earlier concept of self-management was replaced by a concept of 'influence': 'The party is in favour of the free and democratic election of enterprise, economic and social councils. It favours the establishment, in enterprises with foreign capital investment, of democratic representative bodies. These social supervisory councils should be made up of representatives of the workers, managers, capital investors, regional representatives and experts and they should ensure the influence of the workers on strategic decisions.' (p.94)

As Gregor Gysi expressed it, in his report to the renewal conference of the party in September 1990: 'We are fighting for a new historical compromise in the distribution of social power between capital and labour as well as between bureaucratic elites and citizens.' ('Referat', p.39)

The 'producers' of the earlier draft have become 'the people and their communities'. Heinrich Bortfeldt, in a PDS brochure quoted from earlier, remarked that in terms of membership and electoral support the PDS had 'moved house, from the factory to the community'. (p.38) Something similar has also happened at the level of programme.

The working class

In its programme (of February 1990) the PDS describes itself as 'a socialist party open to all popular forces... It is oriented especially towards the interests of the workers and all wage-earners.' (p.90) This special relationship to or special interest in the working class, however, is no longer part of the PDS's self-identity. The last programmatic draft (of May 1991) states quite clearly that the 'fundamental change' which the party aims for 'cannot be the historical mission of one class or of one political party'. (p.7)

The working class is no longer the subject of social transformation, much less the 'revolutionary subject'. 'The solution of global problems of humanity demands an approach which transcends classes, which cannot be developed from the understanding of a particular class.' (Gysi, 1990, p.20) According to two leading intellectuals of the PDS, Dieter Klein and Michael Brie, the problem of labour is no longer central: 'In our view, the social situation of the four fifths of humanity who live in the developing countries has replaced today what was the primary social problem of the nineteenth century, the situation of wage earners in the industrialised societies.'[6] The PDS understands itself therefore 'not as a class or a mass party'. It is open to an alliance with all 'left and democratic forces'.

Marxism

Just as the PDS does not see itself as a class party, nor does it see itself bound to a particular ideology or *Weltanschauung*. While identifying itself, in its founding document, with 'the traditions of Marx, Engels,..' etc., it rejects any 'political or ideological values or limitations placed on science'. It also sees itself as open to 'contact with christian and other religiously-based humanistic standpoints'.

There is broad agreement in the party that it has to be ideologically pluralistic and that Marxism-Leninism, understood as the edifice of dogma that served as the ideological support for the communist parties' monopoly of power, has been discredited.

Theoretical discussion in the party on the broader issues of Marxism, the heritage of Lenin, critical evaluation of the different historical currents in the Marxist tradition - this has hardly begun. There is very little sympathy in the PDS for the radical tradition in Marxism - the Bolsheviks, Rosa Luxemburg, etc. There is a certain amount of 'rediscovery of Bernstein' which is received very sympathetically. There is also a large amount of interest in Gramschi. Up to now there has been no great interest in Trotsky.[7]

It's now a question of history, what was possible in the GDR in the autumn of 1989. The subsequent rush to the West German capitalist model has tended to overshadow the fact that, in its early and more spontaneous stages, not only the intellectuals and citizen's rights groups, but also a majority of the population wanted what could be described as a socialist-inspired alternative to the West German consumer society.[8] PDS policy, in the early days, was a reflection of this mood, which changed later to a more positive evaluation of West Germany's annexation of the GDR, seeing this as 'a change from half-way modernisation to a modern society'. (Michael Brie, in *Neues Deutschland*, 7 July 1990)

On other issues - international policy, ecology, feminism, racial and sexual politics - the PDS shares the attitudes common to most radical and left-wing movements in Europe. The new social movements in western Europe (feminism, peace, ecology) as well as the civic oppositional movements in eastern Europe, including in the GDR itself, (strong moral character, emphasis on the 'citizen') have had a strong influence on the PDS. In his introduction to the special edition of the Fischer *Welt Almanach* on the GDR, Dietrich Staritz described the new movements in the GDR: 'What moved this avantguard seemed to be a mixture of traditional Marxism, post-industrial values and a strong orientation towards rank-and-file democracy. This was also true of the SED-PDS, whose base and

theoreticians, in the meanwhile, have adopted this whole mixed catalogue.' (Staritz, 1990, p. 32)

On the basis of its programme alone, it would be difficult to make any final judgement about the character or trajectory of the PDS, especially if we take into account the way in which this programme was adopted in December 1989/February 1990. From the point of view of the party leadership wh. h saw the need to salvage something from the old state party at the end of 1989, the new party was certainly conceived of as reformist and parliamentary. In its programme and political practice the PDS is no longer a Stalinist party. On most political issues it also stands to the left of the Green Party.

4. POLITICAL CURRENTS

One of the most important achievements of the PDS has been the thorough democratisation of the party. Members have the right to organise themselves into political platforms with the right to use party premises, media, etc. The statutes also provide for the existence of interest groups (*Interessengruppen*) that are active in particular areas of politics such as ecology, economic policy, etc. as well as 'working groups' (*Arbeitsgemeinschaften*). For instance, youth, women, lesbians and gays are organised in these 'working groups' (AG).

Among the political platforms, the most important was the Communist Platform (KPF), which formed itself at the end of December 1989. In its founding declaration, it stated that it wanted to 'bring the communist tradition into the programme and political practice of the SED-PDS.'[9] The Communist Platform was the only platform to argue against the dissolution of the SED.

A number of political platforms were established (Social Democratic Platform, Democratic Socialism Platform, etc), but by the end of 1990 only the Communist Platform continued to exist. Up to now the KPF has functioned as a loose ideological current in the PDS. Its organised intervention in party conferences, etc. has been very weak. Two members of the KPF were elected to the party praesidium at the party's second congress in January 1991 but this was not a result of delegates' support for KPF positions. The congress simply decided that the platform and the other interest and working groups should be represented.

The KPF has also not succeeded in its aim of attracting communists outside the PDS to join the party. A couple of small Trotskyist groups operate as a tendency inside the KPF itself but their influence is minimal. The platform claims to have about 25 000 supporters in the PDS of whom, however, only about 1 000 could be considered active.

Women and Youth

There are many interest and working groups (IG and AG) but, from the point of view of organising large numbers of members, only two of them are significant: the youth group (*AG Junge GenossInnen*) and the women's group (*AG LISA*). Given the age structure of the party, the youth group tends to be the organisational home for most young members. Although it is not a political current as such, its positions tend to be to the left and very critical of the PDS leadership and policies. The AG Junge GenossInnen probably has something over 1 000 active members.

In November 1989 a Women's Working Group (*Frauenarbeitsgemeinschaft*) was established in the SED. At the special conference in December 1989 a party commission was established that was to deal with women, youth and sport. There were problems in the relationship between the base groups and the commission. On 26 May 1990 the founding congress of AG Frauen (LISA) (*Linke Sozialistische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Frauen*) was held. LISA is now the main organiser and initiator inside the PDS on the women's question.

At its election congress in February 1990 the PDS adopted a Women's Action Programme. In the PDS's parliamentary group the number of women corresponds to the percentage of women in the PDS (42 per cent). There are two representatives of LISA on the Party Council (*Parteirat*). A 50 per cent quota operates in the election of PDS leading bodies. A member of LISA, Marlies Deneke, is also vice-president of the PDS.

Andrea Lederer, M

5. PDS AND GERMAN LEFT

The hopes expressed in early 1990 for a realignment and renewal of the German left around the PDS proved in a very short time to have been illusory. Similar hopes among the Greens for new life from below via the citizens' movement of the GDR proved likewise to have been unrealistic.

SPD

Although the SPD had traditionally been the champion of rapprochement with the GDR and the SED leadership, even signing the inter-party agreement in 1987, it adopted an extremely hostile attitude to the PDS. This was partly because it didn't want competition from the left in the five new German states in the east and partly also because it wanted to distance itself as much as possible from any connection with the discredited 'really existing socialism'. There was no seriously organised left in the SPD which could have been a dialogue-partner for the PDS although there were individual SPD members who were critical of the party's ostracism of the PDS. A small number of SPD members went over to the new party but nobody with even a middle-ranking position in the party.

Greens

The Greens as a party were also hostile to the successor-party of the SED. The collapse of the system in eastern Europe and in the GDR gave an added boost, in fact, to the 'ecological capitalism' wing of the party which saw the collapse as proving that 'there is no positive socialist utopia which is superior to the market economy'. (Fischer, 1989, p. 58) But there was sympathy from the radical-ecological wing associated with Jutta Ditfurth. Some of the left Greens also went over to the new party, among them the Green MP Ulrich Briefs. Although Ditfurth was one of the speakers at the election conference of the PDS and its West German left-wing

allies (PDS-Linke Liste) in July 1990, there was no organised co-operation and relations between both groups have considerably cooled since the German elections in December 1990.

The groups that came out of the East German revolution and that went to make up the citizens' movement (New Forum, Democracy Now, Independent Womens' Union, etc) were generally quite hostile to the PDS. These groups fought the December 1990 election in the alliance Bündnis 90-Grüne. The left-wing grouping, United Left (*Vereinigte Linke*) had representatives in both alliances, the Bündnis 90 and the PDS-Linke Liste. Most of these groups now have only a shadow existence in the ex-GDR. Bündnis 90-Grüne has eight MPs in the Bonn parliament.

PDS-Linke Liste

The PDS-Linke Liste was meant to be the first practical attempt of the PDS to establish political co-operation with the West German left. The questions posed by the *Arbeiterkampf*, newspaper of the *Kommunistischer Bund* (Communist League), in August 1990, were a matter of intense debate right across the German left in 1990: 'Does reunification offer us the possibility at last to be represented by a socialist group in the coming parliament? By overcoming the 5% hurdle, could the socialist parliamentary group, PDS-Linke Liste, become the crystallisation point for an all-German mass socialist party? After all the years of marginality, is this an opportunity to come out of the ghetto?'[10] The questions were answered differently, of course, including in the Bund itself, which split within the year, largely over this issue.

The PDS-Linke Liste never really became the kind of project that the PDS had envisaged. This failure was also reflected in the election outcome. The support for the PDS-Linke Liste in west Germany was only 0.3 per cent, which was about what the DKP (the West German CP) used to get when campaigning alone (1976: 0.3%; 1983: 0.2%). The result is severe disillusionment with the initial hopes for some kind of qualitative renewal. The poor election showing for the PDS has also dampened hopes that the PDS will get into parliament in the next election and that it will succeed in becoming more than an ex-GDR regional party.

Groups like New Forum hostile to PDS

6. PDS IN CRISIS

The PDS has faced an existential crisis a number of times since it established its new identity in December 1989. There was the dissolution crisis of January 1990. Then in the autumn of 1990 the finance scandal prompted a large exodus of members, put a serious question mark over the willingness of the PDS to make a clean break with its SED past and led to an attempt on the part of the state government in Bavaria to have the party banned.[11] The federal elections in December 1990 also put in question the ability of the PDS to establish itself as a German party.

Membership

The decline in membership is also a serious problem. After the massive exodus in late 1989 and early 1990, the party had around 350 000 members in the summer of 1990. At the beginning of 1991 membership had declined to around 284 000 and during the year up to its conference in December 1991 the part lost another 100 000 members. Membership in West Germany is around 600. But even these figures themselves are deceiving. The big majority of members are inactive, either because of age, demoralisation, fear for their jobs or simply because they no longer believe that it is possible to change anything. Financial contributions from the membership are uncertain and the party supports itself, up to now, on the money inherited from the old SED. Under those circumstances it is difficult for the party leadership to mobilise the base of the party around any kind of political action.

Inner-party discussion and theoretical debate are at a very low level, exacerbated by the lack of communication between the leadership and the base. Party conferences take place without any serious debate or criticism of the leadership policy, something admitted, in a self-critical manner, by the Communist Platform. The paper *Neues Deutschland* has not become an organ of political debate or discussion. There is one political/theoretical journal, *Utopie Kreativ*, published independently by PDS members, but the articles generally reflect party official thinking and, in any case, it has not become an organ of debate or an instrument for policy formation for the membership.

Workers

The most serious problem for the PDS, as a socialist party, is its near total absence in the German working class. Lack of support for the PDS in the working class of the ex-GDR became very clear in the all-German elections in December 1990. According to the polling organisation 'infas': 'The link between the industrial working class and "left" parties, a link which has existed for over a hundred years and which is changing only very slowly, has completely disappeared in the eastern part of Germany'. Jakob Moneta, a prominent left-winger in the West German trade union movement for many years and now member of the praesidium of the PDS, made this assessment of the election results: 'We can make no greater condemnation of Stalinism than this, that it so totally destroyed the faith of the class, in whose name it ruled, in what it claimed to be socialism. The PDS will have to live with the consequences of this for a long time to come. ' (in *Sozialistische Zeitung*, 27 Dec 1990)

"Which letter did you start with?" asks SPD leader Jochen Vogel

FOOTNOTES

1. The most important collection of documents from this period is *Der Schwerer Weg der Erneuerung. Von der SED zur PDS. Eine Dokumentation*, published by Dietz, Berlin, 1991.
2. The full text of the PDS Party Programme, adopted in February 1990, is contained in *Wahlparteitag der PDS*, Dietz, Berlin, 1990. Page references in the text to the Programme refer to this edition.
3. According to a clause in the unification treaty, the government was given the right to examine, reorganise or close down academic institutions, university departments, etc. in the GDR which were ideologically influenced by Marxism-Leninism. Affected are the social sciences, economics, philosophy and even literature.
4. The initial draft programme, 'Für eine sozialistische Partei der DDR. Ein Angebot für Diskussion zum Programm', was published in *Neues Deutschland*, 12 December 1989.
5. André Brie, Debate with Ernest Mandel, Berlin, May 1991. Unpublished.
6. Michael Brie and Dieter Klein, 'Das Ende des administrativen Sozialismus. Chancen für neosozialistische Bewegung', in *Wir brauchen einen dritten Weg*, p. 63.
7. Trotskyist groups are accepted as tendencies within the Communist Platform but the general attitude to Trotskyism in the PDS is quite hostile. The ex-GDR publisher, Dietz Verlag, has published a volume with (significantly) Trotsky's *Terrorism and Communism* and Kautsky's reply.
8. According to opinion polls in November 1989 and January 1990.
9. The Declaration of the Communist Platform (KPF) is in *Neues Deutschland*, 3 January 1990. Basic documents of the KPF are in Auskünfte von und über die KPF, published by the PDS, 1990. The KPF publishes its own *Informationsblatt*.
10. 'Take it Gysi!', in *Arbeiterkampf (AK)*, no. 321, August 1990. 11. In 1990 a member of the PDS leadership was arrested in Norway and accused of attempting illegally to smuggle SED funds out of Germany. The PDS praesidium claimed ignorance of the transaction but the scandal was a severe blow to the credibility of the PDS.

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Mezzogiorno in the East?

by Peter Kammerer

It was a common feature of both German and Italian history that national unity was achieved late and with some difficulty. The political and economic structure of both countries was characterised for a long time by the coexistence of modern industry and relatively feudal agrarian conditions. This contributed to an instability of democratic structures. It also contributed to the fact that the colonisation of weaker national economies, a tendency common to all of the imperialist countries, was directed towards neighbouring countries and was accompanied by a particularly aggressive form of domestic politics.

After the second world war, both Germany and Italy experienced their capitalist economic miracle in only half of the country. Today, after the collapse of the GDR, the economic and social differences between eastern and western Germany are assuming forms very similar to those that exist between the north and south of Italy: different levels of income, differences in the level of infrastructure and private capital, and the need for large-scale transfers of public funds.

In 1989, 36.6 per cent of the Italian population lived in the south, 30 per cent of the employed and 59.1 per cent of the unemployed. Creation of value per head of population in the south is 56 per cent of the level in the north. In the present article, I would like to look at the relationship between the north and south of Italy and ask whether we can learn something from this about likely developments in the relation between eastern and western Germany. I am aware of the difficulty of drawing exact historical parallels and of drawing conclusions directly from such parallels.

Annexation

Garibaldi's forces, who liberated southern Italy from the Bourbons in 1860, had definite illusions about their own strength and about the mood of the population. Within months of their victory, they were a moral symbol but no longer a political force. The south was de facto annexed by Piedmont which transferred its laws and administrative system directly to the new territory.

In the first phase, it was thought that the introduction of free trade and the scrapping of feudal restrictions, especially the privatisation of common land, would lead directly to advance and improvement for the middle classes. But the price for this privatisation was paid by the poor peasants who began to idealise the old regime and became reactionary 'social rebels' on a very large scale. But for reasons of political stability and in order to protect private property, the north and the new administration in the south supported the old hated power structure of the big landowners. As Tommaso Di Lampedusa said, 'everything had to change, so that everything could remain the same'. The new agrarian middle class that did emerge remained weak and under the political tutelage of the big latifundia.

Property

A large amount of unclarity remained in the south about the legal rights to land and property. The new laws and regulations were manipulated in the interests of the new property owners. Among the mass of the people this led to rebellions and occasional sacking of land-registry offices. Landlessness and memory of the old common land were key factors in determining popular consciousness.

This chaotic and fragmentary dissolution of feudal property relations led to the emergence of a new and lucrative economic criminal class, the Mafia. The Mafia was by no means a feudal relic doomed to disappear under capitalist conditions; it was rather a hybrid structure of feudal and capitalist elements which later was given new life in the hothouse of the modern welfare state. The Mafia doesn't just replace the market, it also needs the market.

Free trade and an expanded domestic market benefited first of all the intensively-farming small and middle farmers (wine and citrus fruits). The introduction of protective tariffs in the interests of developing industry and the grain-producing big landowners was destructive for the small and middle farmers but was good for the extensive agriculture of the big estates. Naples, at this time, was a developed industrial centre similar to Genoa in the north. It was in Naples that the first Mediterranean steamer was launched (1818) and this city was also in the forefront of modern railway construction. But the sudden shift to free trading after unification had extremely negative effects. Industrial development was nipped in the bud.

The move to protectionism in 1887 came to late for the south and was a practical benefit only for the north. It was in the very first decades after unification, therefore, that this alliance was created between industrialists in the north and big landowners in the south, creating a national division of labour between southern agriculture and northern industry, a division which prescribed a subaltern role for the south.

Postwar economy

After the second world war, under the influence of political and economic concepts of development then current in the USA, the south of Italy was described as a developing country. It was thought at the time that the south could catch up with the north in about ten years if the mistakes of the past were avoided. Up to then, the north had financed its own development with capital drawn from the south; now this direction was to be reversed. Up to then there had been an urban-rural division of labour between north and south; now there was to be land reform and investment in infrastructure as a prelude to the

industrialisation of the south. An authority was created, the 'Cassa per il Mezzogiorno', and the task of this authority was to redistribute public funds, improve infrastructure and and allocate investment subsidies to private industry. Low-interest credits and other fiscal measures were also part of this plan.

Within a few years, however, it was becoming clear that the south was not catching up with the north. At best, they were able to achieve an equalisation of growth rates. The situation is essentially the same today. Between 1950 and 1986 value-creation per head of population in the south rose from 55 per cent to 60 per cent of the northern level, sinking back to 56.4 per cent in the period up to 1989.

The difference between north and south increased every time there was an economic boom in the north This was most obvious during the years of the 'economic miracle' between 1958 and 1963. The south contributed significantly to this 'miracle' and thus to its own relative backwardness. Public and private spending in the south paid for goods produced in the north, while cheap labour from the south improved the international competitiveness of northern Italian industry. Even at the high point of the economic miracle, before 1963, there was no increase in real wages. In spite of all this, liberal economists blamed the lack of investment in the south on the lack of downward-elasticity in wages.

By the mid 1960s, Italy's economic miracle had led to three fundamental imbalances: (a) the poorer areas had adopted the consumption model of the richer countries and neglected collective needs (health, transport, education) in favour of a policy of satisfying expanding private consumption demands; (b) the gap had increased between traditional labour-intensive industry and the modern capital-intensive sector; (c) the gap between north and south had been intensified.

A majority in all parties, from the communists to the christian democrats, were of the opinion that only democratically planned investment could move in an opposite direction to spontaneous market forces and solve these problems. According to the new consensus, the problem of the south was not just a problem of the south alone: a single mechanism ('il meccanismo unico') was creating wealth on the one side and underdevelopment on the other. A solution to the problem of the south could not therefore be found by simply transferring accumulation funds to the underdeveloped area; the accumulation model itself had to be examined. The driving force behind this practical critique was the labour movement.

Hybrid modernisation

Already in 1957, big industries with state participation were required to place 60 per cent of new investment in the south. The consequence of this law, which was never really adhered to, and of the shift away from promotion of labour-intensive investment towards the creation of major capital-intensive projects, was the creation of large petrochemical and steel centres in the south, the so-called 'cathedrals in the desert'. The new working class in these industrial enclaves, supported by the workers in the north, fought against the 'gabbie salariali', the wage differences between north and south. Similar wages in the north and south, it was thought, would stem the flow of workers from the south and would force industry to consider placing planned new investments in the south. And this did indeed happen between 1969 and 1973.

During those years, southern Italy's share of industrial investment rose from 28.1 per cent to 33.5 per cent. But the oil crisis and the steel crisis of the

Bitterfeld: will GDR industry survive unification?

mid 1970s brought an abrupt end to this phase of industrialisation. In the 1980s, southern Italy's share of industrial investment fell to below 25 per cent.

By the end of the 1970s, politicians and economists who were concerned about the Mezzogiorno, found themselves confronting a conceptual shambles. None of the expectations had been met. Neither the gradual modernisation and rationalisation theory of the technocrats nor the concept of dialectical transformation entertained by the political economists gave a correct picture of the reality. It was time for a change of paradigm.

To the modern observer, southern Italy appears as a hybrid combination: resistant to modernisation but, at the same time, easy prey to modernising projects; a primitive landscape subject to earthquakes and, at the same time, post-industrial; rebellious, but christian-democratic; an Eldorado with a state-promoted shadow economy in which the mafia is the biggest enterprise, with a turnover bigger than Fiat. Respectable political economists are horrified by this image and leave the field to the anthropologists and the sociologists. The south, in its transition from feudalism to capitalism has apparently discovered a third way. Or, to express this more cautiously, it has discovered its own economic style, one which is now pushing its way northward. As Sciascia has written: 'The palm line is moving north.'

Free Market

The south of Italy is quite different from either Germany or eastern Europe. But I do believe that it has relevance for what is likely to happen in eastern Germany, even more so for the rest of eastern Europe.

The goal of Italian government policy was the creation of a modern free-market economy in the south. The means used towards this end - transfer of funds, investment subsidies and tax concessions - were essentially similar to those being pursued now by the government in Bonn.

Not only did these policies fail to bridge the gap between north and south, but the regular and large-scale transfer of funds altered the class structure of southern Italy. The complex channelling of funds, extending from Rome through to even the smallest villages, created not just a bureaucracy but a whole social layer of mediators and agents. These people marketed their know-how and connections and played the role of brokers in the trading of political power and public funds. Access to both political power and public funds is essential to the success of any enterprise and is a matter that touches the existence of wide layers of the population.

The same is true of the labour market. It is only in this complex network of familial and client relationships that jobs can be found. The most sought-after jobs are not in production but in the formal and informal apparatus that controls and distributes public funds. This apparatus, a large part of which is in the hands of the criminal fraternity, plays a central role in the southern Italian economy and society. It has hegemony over the whole structure of production. The allocation of money, credit and jobs takes place via the market, but the way this market functions has little to do with our usual conception of a free market economy. Augusto Graziani, the well-known Italian economist, described the situation thus: 'We persist in describing these structures as a market economy. In reality, however, this is a modernised version of a feudal economy, with this difference, namely, that the role of the land has been taken over by public funds.' (In *Il Manifesto*, May 1990) If Graziani is right, then the attempt to introduce a free market economy doesn't necessarily lead to a free market economy.

No 'western model'

These considerations may be more relevant for eastern Europe than they are for eastern Germany. But even in the case of eastern Germany they do put a question mark over the established consensus, which expresses itself more or less as: 'We want the western model. There is no third way. No more experiments!' The example of Italy demonstrates that there is no such thing as 'the western model', that capitalist reality is more differentiated, even within a single country, than is usually assumed. The relatively homogenous West Germany was more the exception than the rule and the unification process has made the reality in Germany also more differentiated and complex.

The introduction of a market economy doesn't take place in a vacuum, but in a society in which there already exists a complex set of more or less resistant material and non-material structures. The attempt to reach back to the past, to the period before 1945, shows how important past history is for the future. But the German Democratic Republic, the social-political structures created there as in the rest of the eastern bloc, are just as much part of that history. The attempt to introduce a free market economy into these societies of so-called 'really existing socialism' is actually an experiment, the outcome of which is very uncertain.

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The Polish economic crisis

by Andrew Kilmister

This article is an attempt to draw some conclusions from the experience of the Polish economy since January 1990. It is common knowledge that the introduction of the economic reform programme, associated with Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz, has led to a deep recession. What is not so well understood on the left is what this recession means for Poland and what economic influences it represents. The tendency has been to assimilate the Polish experience to a model of capitalist crisis, in which crises lead to the elimination of unprofitable firms with a corresponding restructuring based on the flow of capital to new profitable sectors. Most research on the last two years in Poland paints a very different picture. The argument of this article is that the Balcerowicz plan has, if anything, hindered restructuring in Poland. In what follows I concentrate on internal developments in the Polish economy ; to draw firmer conclusions the analysis would have to be extended to include external factors, particularly foreign investment.

Profitability

The generally accepted view of Polish industry is that it is largely unprofitable and that the recession in Poland reflects this. The decline in the economy is seen as an inevitable consequence of introducing market forces into such an environment, as recommended by the free marketeers. Jeffrey Sachs, the Harvard-based adviser of the Polish government has been quoted as saying "My goal was to lead the big nationalised enterprises to bankruptcy". However, the facts are slightly more complex.

The drop in state sector industrial production of about 25% in 1990 was almost entirely concentrated in January. In other words, the slump in output came in the first two weeks after the adoption of the stabilisation programme at the beginning of the year. But profits were high throughout this period. Mark Schaffer gives figures for the percentage markup over costs for the socialised sector. These show this measure of profits reaching a peak of 44% in December 1989 and falling to 29.9% in January 1990, then remaining stable for the first half of the year (Schaffer p25). Profits were high in 1990 compared to the pre-September 1989 level. The very high profit levels of late 1989 were a result of high inflation boosting inventory values. Janusz Dabrowski and his co-workers carried out a study of 50 enterprises during this period. They found increases in profits for most firms in the early part of 1990 "caused by massive increases in the price of goods made with materials purchased at pre-stabilisation prices" (Dabrowski et al p417). So the Polish recession was not caused, at least initially, by a crisis of profitability. Schaffer argues that prior to 1990 only about 10% of state owned enterprises were loss making before taxes and subsidies, and none after (Schaffer p3). Loss makers were heavily concentrated in food processing and coal mining,

The high levels of profitability in the early part of 1990 raise the possibility that enterprises may have been exploiting monopoly power in the newly liberalised economic environment, cutting output and raising prices in order to raise profits. If true, this monopoly power indicates a significant barrier to industrial change and restructuring in Poland.

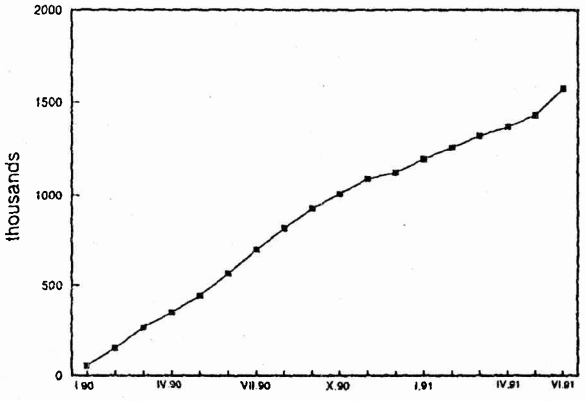
Profitability did begin to decrease in the second half of 1990. But this was not a straightforward consequence of the recession. It partly resulted from holding the exchange rate constant while inflation was higher in Poland than elsewhere, thus hitting exporters. This policy has now been relaxed. The decline in profits also resulted from rising real wages in the second half of the year (Schaffer pp25-6).

Wages

Real wages fell dramatically in January 1990, by about 50%, and in February as well. After that they grew by about 3.5% a month for the remainder of the year (Schaffer p4). The reasons for the initial fall have been much discussed, since as noted above profits were high. Both Schaffer and Dabrowski argue that an important issue was the role of employee councils in Polish firms. They argue that, as the Polish government retreated from the direct guidance of enterprises, the vacuum was filled by these councils, which had been in existence, but largely ineffective, since 1982. Councils, and the managers they appointed, were concerned to protect employment and ensure the survival of enterprises. They were very cautious in the new economic environment. But "it gradually became clear that neither their own enterprises, nor nearly all other state-owned enterprises were going to fail" (Schaffer p9). In addition, "short-term survival could be insured through price increases, interfirm borrowing and moderate adjustment strategies" (Dabrowski et al p418). Gradually real wages began to rise.

Two conclusions follow from this. Firstly the infamous *popiwek*, the tax on wage increases above a certain limit, only became operative towards the end of 1990 (Schaffer p7). Thus the policy of limiting wages cannot explain the initial course of the recession. Secondly, as Warsaw economist Grzegorz Kolodko notes, wages did not play a role in restructuring the labour force. He argues that wages changed in roughly the same proportions within industries and between industries, so that wages did not play a role in reallocating workers to new

Total unemployment - Poland (Jan 90 - June 91)



activities. Consequently, further wage increases will be necessary in the future to encourage this reallocation, and this may well lead to new inflationary pressures (Kolodko 1990 p28).

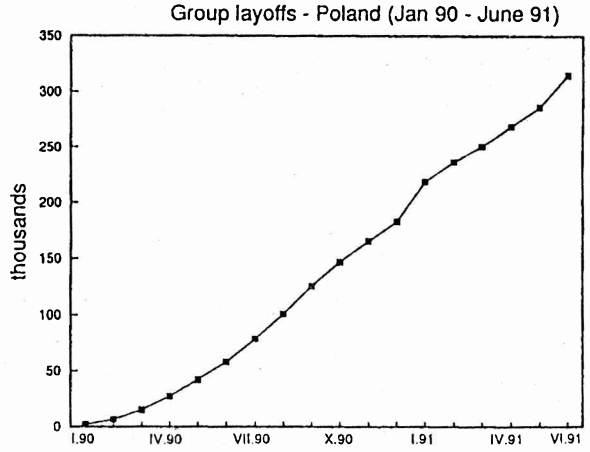
Unemployment

Neither wages nor profits were instruments of restructuring in 1990 in Poland. This has consequences for the analysis of unemployment.

Unemployment reached 2.1 million by the end of 1991, 11.4% of the workforce (*Financial Times* 7 February 1992). In addition the number of pensioners rose by 800,000 last year to 8.3 million, some of which represents disguised unemployment. Since July 1991 unemployment benefit is only paid for 12 months. But Marek Gora and Hartmut Lehmann conclude that "restructuring ... has not been an important source of unemployment (Gora and Lehmann p2) and that "unemployment can be expected to rise to much higher levels in the near future if restructuring gets under way in earnest" (Gora and Lehmann p2).

They argue that, within the stock of unemployment, the proportion of group layoffs, which is an indication of unemployment due to plant closures and restructuring, was only 20% by June 30 1991. Group layoffs occur when firms shed at least 10% of their labour force or 100 workers (in firms with more than 1000 employees), or when firms go bankrupt or are liquidated. There were relatively few bankruptcies in 1990 (Dabrowski et al p419). Individual layoffs represented the largest component of the stock of unemployment, but also significant were school leavers and those coming into the arena

Group layoffs - Poland (Jan 90 - June 91)



of wage labour from outside, particularly peasant farmers affected by the very severe economic situation in the countryside. Those school leavers who did not find jobs soon faced lengthy unemployment. At the end of 1990 about 28% of the stock of school leavers for that year were still unemployed (Gora and Lehmann p18) and of those school leavers unemployed in October 1990 only 18.4% had found a job by May 1991. This suggests that a significant amount of unemployment in Poland during the first eighteen months of the Balcerowicz plan arose from new entrants to the labour force.

This is borne out by data on vacancies, which fell from 254,500 in December 1989 to 20,100 in February 1990, then rose gradually to 64,000 in October 1990 before falling sharply for the next four months (Gora and Lehmann p19). The unemployment/vacancy ratio rose from almost zero in January 1990 to 33 in June 1991. This concealed sharp gender differences - for women the ratio rose to over 70, while for men it was around 20 (Gora and Lehmann figure 11). In December 1990 51% of those unemployed were women and 57.9% were unemployed graduates (from secondary or higher education). During 1990 the number of positions open to women represented just 26.1% of vacancies handled by the regional Labour Offices. Regional differences were also significant. In December 1990 the unemployment rate varied from 2.1% in Warsaw to about 10% in several other regions, such as Katowice and Lodz (figures from Gora pp157-9)

The conclusion here is that the majority of unemployment in Poland during the current recession has not been the result of changes in the structure of the economy. It results more from a generalised tendency for firms not to hire new workers at a time of falling demand and sales. As Gora and Lehmann argue, this implies that if restructuring does take place in Poland unemployment can be expected to climb dramatically higher than present levels.

Inflation

The Balcerowicz plan was in large measure an anti-inflationary plan. The image of the plan in the West has been centred around it's role in curbing hyperinflation and allowing a 'rational' price structure to emerge in Poland to facilitate the emergence of a market economy. However, this again is something of a myth. Grzegorz Kolodko argues that, far from the inflation of 1989 being something uncontrollable, it largely resulted from two specific decisions made in the round table negotiations of that year. These were the wage and price indexation system and the liberalisation of agricultural prices "without the necessary previous demonopolisation measures in the area of the agricultural products trade and the supply of agriculture with production means. This operation largely contributed to the price rise in August by as much as 40 percent in comparison with July" (Kolodko 1990 p9). Kolodko, a supporter of a transition to a market economy, nonetheless argues that the inflation of late 1989 was induced by the Polish authorities in order to obtain political consent for a shift to a shock therapy for stabilisation and to soak up excess money savings from households. Whether or not this is true, he does show that the trend of inflation was down in late 1989, prior to the stabilisation programme, from 54.8% in October to 22.4% in November to 17.7% in December, raising questions about whether inflation

could have been controlled in some other way.

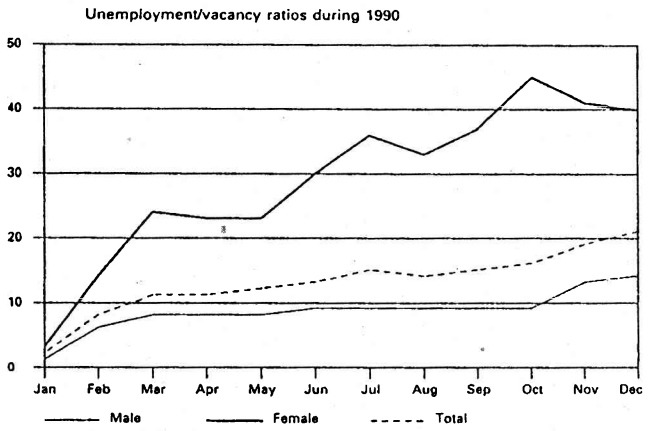
The view of the Balcerowicz plan as leading to a more rational structure of relative prices is also questionable. Kolodko shows that in December 1989 the share of freely negotiated prices in total sales was 86% for consumer goods and services and 89% for procurement goods; though of these 6.6% of the figure for consumer goods and 21% of that for procurement goods represent goods subject to a maximum allowed price rise (Kolodko 1991 p9). So prices were largely flexible prior to the Balcerowicz plan in January 1990. The key element of pricing policy for the government in 1990, for Kolodko, was a massive rise in centrally administered prices, particularly energy prices. The aim was not so much to change the entire price structure of the economy, by introducing market forces, but rather to raise the relative prices of a particular set of goods. These did in fact rise dramatically in January 1990. But the higher than expected inflation rate throughout the rest of the economy in that month meant that they did not rise as much as planned in real terms. This has created the need for continual further 'corrective' rises in energy prices, provoking the recent strikes in January of this year. While rises in energy prices, relative to other prices, may well be necessary in the long run, for ecological reasons, the Polish experience shows that they are not easily achieved in a context of the introduction of free market prices throughout the economy.

The Balcerowicz plan has not eliminated inflation from the Polish economy. The monthly rate fluctuated between 2% and 8% during the February to December 1990 period. As real wages rose in the latter half of the year prices also rose since Polish enterprises tend to set prices according to cost plus a mark up. Kolodko also makes the point that the recession itself, by reducing supply, has an inflationary impact.

Recent Developments

The above analysis tries to show that the first year of the Polish government's stabilisation programme did not encourage a restructuring of Polish industry. It is obviously important to analyse what has happened in the last year as well. However, this is rather more difficult as detailed data on things like profitability are harder to obtain for the recent period. Clearly the Polish economy deteriorated significantly in 1991. There was a decline of 8-10% in GDP and of 8% in investment. Despite the devaluation of the zloty, the hard currency trade surplus which was one of the successes of 1990 was eliminated in 1991 (*Financial Times* 3 February 1992). The predicted current account deficit for 1992 is $2600 million (*Financial Times* February 18 1992), and an 8% fall in GDP is also forecast. Inflation was at 60.4% for the year in 1991, and is forecast to be around 40% in 1992. The government budget deficit has grown sharply, and is expected to be around £3.3 billion or 5% of GDP this year. To what extent does this modify the conclusions drawn above from the experience of 1990?

A central development in 1991 was a steep decline in enterprise profitability. The *Financial Times* of 7 February 1992 reports nearly half of Poland's 8,400 state enterprises as making losses. As argued above this trend began in the second half of 1990 as real wages rose. But it worsened dramatically in 1991, partly due to foreign competition and the collapse of trade with the Soviet Union (Wellisz p217). This is



one of the main reasons for the collapse of the state budget which is highly dependent on profit taxes on state firms (Schaffer pp27-9).

The Polish government has been forced to respond to these developments. In February of this year it agreed upon a modification of economic policy, which has now been put before the Polish parliament. This new approach attaches greater importance to supply side policies aimed at increasing investment and exports, and hopes through this to improve the balance of payments, reduce the government budget deficit and lower unemployment. However, it not clear exactly how these objectives are to be achieved. The main policies announced so far are tough wage controls, which aim to cut real income by 5% this year and higher taxes on consumer goods. The idea is that this will boost profitability and lower imports. However, this means that the government is relying on firms to use these profits to carry out restructuring, whereas the experience of 1990 indicates rather that low wages and high profits will lead to cutbacks in output with little industrial change.

Do developments such as the decline in profitability mean, however, that the recession in Poland is now beginning to take on the form of a capitalist crisis and that restructuring is starting to take place?

It is too early to answer this question. However, the above analysis suggests that if restructuring is taking place in Poland it is as a process superimposed on a very different set of developments. The first eighteen months of the Polish recession were characterised more by a general fall in output, and by economy-wide changes in wages, profitability and unemployment, than by significant changes in industrial structure. In addition, the survey carried out by Dabrowski and his colleagues suggest that even as profits fall there are significant barriers to the restructuring of Polish industry. To a large extent these barriers originate in the financial sphere.

Finance and privatisation

In Dabrowski's survey the largest falls in profitability were in large firms. Yet the response to this was a growth in interfirm borrowing, at least relative to monthly sales or profits, with the larger firms borrowing from smaller, financially healthier firms. Similar conclusions arise from looking at borrowing from the state commercial banks. Here, over the course of 1990 short term borrowing increased at the expense of investment loans and weak firms expanded their borrowing while strong firms often reduced it. "In short, weak firms are making more

use of the banks than strong ones, and the banks continue to subsidise minimal survival rather than promote development. Not surprisingly, strong firms often complain that they are refused credit while their nearly bankrupt neighbours receive it" (Dabrowski et al p422). The *Financial Times* of February 18 1992 reports that some 40% of bank loans in Poland are non-performing and there have been a number of financial and banking scandals.

The above account is based on a relatively small survey, but it does suggest that the development of the financial sector of the economy will be crucial to whether restructuring, and in fact capitalist restoration, takes place in Poland. Kolodko also stresses the importance of financial policy, but he concentrates on the flow of finance from households to firms. His argument is that interest rates for household savings have been too low, given the level of inflation in Poland, to encourage savings which he sees as necessary to facilitate privatisation and provide a flow of capital between different sectors of the economy. In particular he bemoans the failure of the government's attempt to issue bonds which could later be redeemed with shares in privatised companies. These have now been withdrawn. The government has faced a dilemma here; for anti-inflationary reasons they wanted to reduce the level of household money balances, but household savings are necessary to allow for privatisation. This raises the whole question of the relationship between the government's stabilisation plan and it's privatisation objectives.

The Polish government has put forward a series of ambitious privatisation programmes, but so far these have amounted to relatively little in practice. In October 1991, for instance the minister in charge of privatisation, Janusz Lewandowski, told a seminar of Austrian businessmen of a plan to privatise 400 companies, representing 25% of state owned industry. The idea was to set up 20 investment funds to manage these firms and trade shares in them, and to give all Polish citizens shares in the investment funds. However, in an interview afterwards, Lewandowski said that the number of firms to be put under the control of the funds was being cut to 204, just 7% of state industry, and that public shareholdings in the funds were unlikely to be issued before May 1993 (*The Guardian* October 16 1991). In 1991 just 6 companies were listed on the new Warsaw stock exchange and 18 were sold to foreign investors (*The Guardian* January 7 1992).

The problems with privatisation are threefold. Firstly, because of the lack of restructuring, many companies are unattractive to potential purchasers. Secondly, it is not clear who has the resources to buy Polish firms. Households have seen their real incomes drastically reduced over the last two years. There are strong pressures against selling too much of Polish industry to foreigners, and relatively weak foreign interest anyway. Schemes have been developed to give away shares in the companies to the population as a whole. But this will mean that privatisation will not provide money either for restructuring, or for reducing the government budget deficit. Thirdly, as Dabrowski points out, the increased power of employee councils and managers, as opposed to the state, in Polish firms, means that privatisation cannot simply be imposed by the government. It has to be negotiated with workers and managers, who can be suspicious or hostile. The government retains a formal commitment to rapid privatisation. However, the new head of the privatisation ministry, Tomaz Gruszecki, was reported at his first press conference as saying that privatisation policy should be subordinated to industrial policy and that "his ministry will focus on legal reforms to allow the state to act as a true owner for its thousands of companies. State companies often behave as though they were ownerless, with no one demanding that they increase efficiency and produce profits" (*The Guardian* January 7 1992).

Conclusion

The argument of this article is that the Polish government has, so far, failed to initiate a restructuring of Polish industry. Such a restructuring, guided by market imperatives, would be a necessary prelude to establishing a capitalist economy in Poland. Without it the process of institutionalising capitalism will remain fraught with contradictions. In addition, the stabilisation programme is in some ways an obstacle to this process. Polish economists, even those who support the introduction of a market economy, are aware of this: "The market mechanism may be able to put a market economy back on the rails again when it is out of equilibrium, but I doubt that it is able, on its own, to transform a command economy into a market one". (Gora p162) "We cannot continue to be steeped in illusion that the problems of structural changes and economic recovery will be solved by the market itself" (Kolodko 1990 p37). The Balcerowicz plan has not, so far at any rate, meant the replacement of plan by market as a regulator of the Polish economy - it has meant the replacement of the plan as a regulator by no regulator at all. The consequences of this remain difficult to predict but of central importance for Poland and for the rest of Eastern Europe.

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Women in Eastern Europe

by Chris Corrin

Representation

One of the most noticeable features of the new governments elected throughout 1990 in eastern Europe was the absence of women. In Czechoslovakia there is only one woman among the ministers of the federal government, and one in the Czech government. In the Praesidium of the House of the People there is one woman, but none in the Praesidium of the House of the Nations of the Federal Assembly. The number of women in parliament in Bulgaria and Romania dropped between 30th June 1989 and 30th June 1991 from 21% to 8.5% and from 34.4% to 3.6% respectively. Although this has much to do with former quota tokenism it does not bode well for the participatory nature of these so-called new democracies.

In Hungary the situation is not much better, with a total of 27 women MPs in an Assembly of 386. Of these 28, only Solt Ottilia has written anything critical concerning women's situation. Her article in Beszélö early in 1991 stressed the need for women to organise themselves to gain proper representation of their interests, given the absence of women in politics. Several MPs stressed their belief to me that women do not have particular needs or interests which need representation. In the Free Democrats, and to a lesser extent, the governing Hungarian Democratic Forum, women politicians echo their male colleagues in stating that the most urgent task facing Hungary today is to 'sort out the economy', given rising poverty levels and the fact that for vulnerable groups there is no, or inadequate, social provision.

What does this absence of women within the political elites mean? Firstly, it reflects the tokenism of the quota systems under the former regimes and, secondly, it represents the legacies of former political organization - for instance, the idea that politics is a 'dirty business' and therefore a male arena. Within this is also the legacy of the public/private divide, in which women are more concerned with the domestic side of the new politics, servicing active men, and working in the offices and on policy documents behind the scenes.

A second justification of the status quo is that 'people would not vote for women'. Although this argument was voiced in general terms many times during the Hungarian elections, the prejudice behind it became most clear in the case of the leader of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, Anna Petrasovits. Ms. Petrasovits was quite blatantly criticized for the way in which she dressed, was blamed for her party's poor showing in the elections and was generally given the 'gossip' treatment from several national newspapers. This seems to be part of a general prejudice against the notion of women as powerful, capable and able to assume leadership qualities - prejudice internalised to some extent by women, so that some of Petrasovits' worst critics were in fact female.

Whatever the underlying reasons for women's reluctance to participate at the higher levels of decision-making and citizens' reluctance to support women who choose to stand for such office, there are women who do want to challenge their lack of representation in decision-making positions, including in the trades unions. Such women are calling for radical changes in the overall approach to women's issues and are trying to translate their dissatisfaction into political action. The women's groups that have been formed have been fighting very much against the odds but have a sense of their own history of struggle upon which to build.

Political organisation

The major distinction in participation before and after 1989 is that before it was not possible to set up autonomous women's groups, political or otherwise. This was vetoed by the existence of the official women's councils and other bodies sanctioned by the ruling parties. No other groups being able to exist in such a climate, it is particularly regrettable that there was so little encouragement and discussion of women's priorities within oppositional circles. However, while the dangerous world of opposition politics remained largely the preserve of men, within environmental and peace groups women were active participants. It was through the organization of some young Hungarian women within FIDESZ (Young Democrats) that initial moves were made to protest against the Danube Dam. This participation remains largely unrecorded, and unrecognized.

In Hungary the beginnings of distinct women's organisation arose amongst intellectuals at the time when trades unions and political movements were starting to be formed. One of the first women's groups was set up within the TDDSZ, the Democratic Union of Scientific and Research Workers. Later, a movement arose from a course at the university in Budapest, a seminar series entitled 'Women and Society'. It became clear over the course of the seminar that women were interested in meeting with non-students outside the university to discuss feminist issues and to organise some practical activities. On 8th June 1990, 26 women founded the Feminista Halózát (Feminist Network).

Much debate was had about using the word 'feminist', which has bad connotations throughout eastern Europe. The word network implies a number

of small groups linked together, which is how the women would ideally like to work, but as yet there are just a couple of groups in Budapest and Szeged. The Network lacks a strong base at present, most of its contacts being with feminists in the west. Feminism in Eastern Europe generally faces enormous odds: economic recession, rapidly growing poverty, and a return to Christian-Nationalist conservatism. Issues concerning women's rights over their bodies have recently fired much feminist debate and activity in Poland.

Abortion

The existing abortion bill (1956), already severely restricted in April 1990, is to be replaced with a Senate bill on the protection of the unborn. The coalescence of oppositional activity and Catholicism had been a major factor throughout the 1980s. There was some evidence, however, during the Pope's visit to Poland in Summer 1991, that his emotive and quite shocking appeals concerning the 'holocaust of unborn children' fell on less than enthusiastic ears. Now that the communist party has evaporated in Poland, it may well be that the next monolithic institution to be attacked will be the Catholic Church. During all the debates in the Sejm (parliament's lower chamber), within the Catholic church and around referenda, Polish women activists have learned much, not just about political organisation, but about how the authorities view Polish women.

In Hungary over 8,000 signatures were collected against any change in the abortion laws during the summer of 1990. Pro-life groups in Hungary and Poland clamour for an outright ban on abortion. Yet the debates raging in the media, particularly in Hungary, are carried out almost exclusively among men. On 28 December 1990, pro-life groups prayed for "the almost 5 million Hungarian children who could not be born in the last 35 years because their environment decided that there was no room for them" and church bells tolled for the Hungarian 'victims of abortion'.

Lack of adequate sex education, either at home or at school, contributes to abortion being used as birth control. One of the booming industries across east-central Europe currently is the sex industry, with sex taxis, a sex boat on the Danube, pornographic magazines and videos. At the moment the rules and regulations concerning these new growth industries are unclear, but there is a danger of a backlash from the Christian right which could further injure women's rights and opportunities.

Peace movements

In the former GDR, much of women's activism arose from the peace movements. Women for Peace was one of the first independent political groups to develop. Despite their early resistance to 'women only' working, after ill treatment at the hands of the Stasi these women changed their views and worked in the non-hierarchical, grass-roots ways that many women's peace groups throughout the world have developed. Women for Peace integrated with a mixed group known as the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights in 1984, and it was not until 1989 that another large women's group came together to form the Independent Women's Union (UFV). Irene Dölling notes that representatives of the UFV played a significant role in composing the Social Charter (which guaranteed the social rights of GDR citizens within the unification process) and drafting a plan for a Women's Ministry or a Ministry for Questions of Equality.

As an umbrella organization, the UFV included various emerging women's groups, peace activists, lesbian groups, Christian women and radical feminists. In listing the reasons why the UFV in alliance with the Green Party received only 2.7% of the vote, Dölling lists amongst other factors that "the vast majority of women in the GDR do not associate themselves with emancipatory or feminist ideas and practices."

In Czechoslovakia women were involved in the Charter movement and the peace initiatives which linked with the western peace movement and the peace groups in the former GDR, Poland, Hungary and the former Yugoslavia. Yet, as Jirina Siklova points out, these were hardly mass movements. Of the women's groups active within Czechoslovakia today, numbering over 35 in early 1991, few are oriented toward anything that could be construed as feminist. Issues raised within groups such as Prague Mothers coalesce around campaigns against pollution and in favour of motherhood as an alternative to the 'double burden'. Women active within the Political Party of Women and Mothers are attempting to bridge the gap between the resistance to feminism and the need for a movement that recognises the distinct Czech and Slovak circumstances.

"The whole time the Stasi were looking for the man they thought was really leading the women's group."

Tina Krone, earlier a member of Women for Peace in the GDR, after looking through her Stasi file.

From the German magazine, *Avanti* 3/92.

Chauvinism

In eastern Europe there is a long legacy of chauvinism, much of it pre-dating the communist-party regimes, but certainly encouraged under their rigid and formalistic system. Authors such as Siklova, Dölling and Adamik all emphasise the weight of the past. Nowhere does this seem more apparent than in women's consciousness of their everyday situations. Living under the dual burdens of paid and unpaid work as workers and mothers, women throughout eastern Europe have had no opportunity to actively consider and prioritise their own lives. As has been pointed out by others (Sas in Hungary and Siklova in Czechoslovakia) cultural, change has been very slow, despite, or perhaps as a consequence of, immense political upheaval. In this context the political outlook of the major party in the governing coalition in Hungary, the MDF, in its distinctly conservative/nationalist mode, has important retrogressive implications for women. As elsewhere, particularly in some areas of the former Yugoslavia, women's rights to abortion are pivotally tied to nationalist questions.

Younger, militant women, contesting the new conservatism, face an inhospitable climate not just in terms of cultural and generational resistance, but

because of the decline of left-wing ideas. Siklova notes that "Young people simply cannot grasp that somebody could believe in socialist ideas. This is a substantial difference from movements in the West. The generation of students and of those who participated around 1968 in political life in Czechoslovakia either emigrated or adjusted themselves during the period of so-called normalization and even joined the communist party".

Patriarchal legacy

As there are no sizable left-wing groups politically active, within which the embryonic feminist groups could generate support, the feminist groups will remain isolated for some time. Yet Siklova does believe that the younger generation of women, 18-25 years old, will form themselves into a "political community in opposition to the silent and passive mass of women brought up under socialist regimes, against the generation of their mothers".

Irene Dölling makes the point that a legacy of the patriarchal state in eastern Europe has made women susceptible to parties which are ready to deprive them of their self-activity once again. And the expectation that women and the family will be taken care of by the state can be used to support strategies for the social adjustment to unemployment, devaluation of qualifications and degrees, cutting social supports and so on.

It is ironic that the MDF version of state paternalism is enthusiastic about women returning to the home and having more children, when little is offered in the way of social welfare legislation. As many women in Poland have discovered, it is not a progressive step to try to raise a family on less money in a situation of rising costs. In Hungary, creches are still being closed down, with arguments centering on the choice between making more workers redundant or closing the creche.

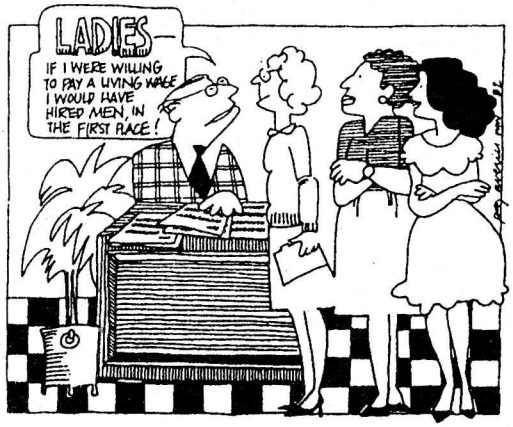
Employment

There is an atmosphere in which women's employment is once again seen as secondary, yet economically it is still primary to the survival of most families. That women are no longer guaranteed their jobs when they finish child-care leave could mean that many working mothers will form the ranks of the long-term unemployed. Despite rhetoric about women becoming important once again within the household, strengthening family ties (and responsibilities) and replacing the 'moral vacuum of socialism' with Christian values, the reality for hundreds of thousands of women is that they face increasing hardship.

One barrier to extending contacts amongst women has been the resistance of many of those within the new political parties to supporting women's initiatives. At a meeting on the abortion issue in the summer of 1990 in Hungary, there were representatives from many of the major parties. Unfortunately many women party members felt that they could do little within their parties as it was not a party issue. This party identification is an obstacle for those women who want to attract across-the-board support in the manner of groups such as the National Abortion Campaign in Britain.

Networking

A more positive prospect is that groups from other



countries can now call upon members of the emerging women's groups in eastern Europe to attend international women's conferences, such as that of the Women's CSCE in Berlin in November 1990. It was at that conference that the Central and Eastern European Women's Network was set up, in part to give those women trying to create and support women's activities in eastern Europe the opportunity to work with each other to compare experiences, setbacks and potential ways forward. (See below for statement of the Network.)

Other major conferences have included two conferences of the European Forum of Socialist Feminists (EFSF). At the EFSF conference in Goteburg, Sweden, in November 1989, women from various east European countries including the Soviet Union were present. It was the first chance that many western feminists had to exchange ideas with women active in eastern Europe. There were many fertile discussions and much networking, which was continued at the next conference in Norwich, Britain, in June 1991. A further meeting of women within the Forum is planned for June 1992 in Brussels.

Discussion around whether to change the name of the Forum from 'socialist-feminist' at the EFSF conference in Britain in 1991 produced a fascinating array of arguments. The voices in favour of moving away from the name came mainly from participants from the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, their reason being that such labels were not useful to them in their own environments. However, arguments in favour of keeping the term also came from one woman from Leningrad and another from Budapest, who argued that the traditions and histories behind socialist-feminism in the western context should not be thrown out because of the eastern experience. The decision was to keep the name and re-open the debate at the next conference.

Such discussions provide real meeting points for women across different historical, cultural and political spectra. Several of the women from Hungary and the former Soviet Union discussed afterwards their interest in the points made by the speaker from the London-based women's group Southall Black Sisters. They found common themes - violence against women, ethnic conflict and patriarchal domestic and statist attitudes - but also big differences - for instance, in the methods the Southall women chose to organise themselves and gain support for their work.

The negative side of such networking is that, since only relatively few women can participate and often it is those women with the 'best' English who attend, it could lead to the formation of a 'feminist elite' unless more meetings take place in the east.

Women's Network

The following is the founding document of the ***Network of Women from Eastern Europe,*** *adopted at the meeting of the Women's CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) in Berlin in November 1990.*

Women from the countries of eastern Europe, present at the first meeting of the Women's CSCE, came to the conclusion that it is of vital importance to create an Eastern European Women's Network, in order to coordinate the activities of women's organisations in their countries and to share information about the situation of women internationally. Such a Network is necessary, especially in view of the fact that the newly emerging democracies in eastern Europe have proved to be conservative and authoritarian with respect to women. They perpetuate and promote male dominance in these societies. This is demonstrated by the higher rate of unemployment among women and by the attempts to limit or abolish the right to abortion.

It is necessary to develop close relations with women in the rest of Europe and beyond because we share similar problems, even if these manifest themselves differently; the increase in nationalism and ethnic conflicts in eastern Europe, as well as the xenophobia and racism in western Europe, have similar roots in the patriarchal system and have the same disastrous impact on all women.

Participants in the Women's CSCE from eastern Europe are convinced that the worsening situation of women in their countries during this period of transition can be prevented, and the worse problems overcome, only if women organise themselves and struggle against the still very dominant patriarchal culture and structures in these societies. With the spread of a women's movement from below, women from eastern Europe have a chance to change the societies they live in and to influence the power structures at all levels.

Examples of the way forward include a gathering of women from 'east' and 'west' which took place in Dubrovnik in June 1991, including women from the USA. Networks such as the Women's Commission within the Helsinki Citizens Assembly are active in bringing together various groups on specific campaigning issues. In December 1991 forty women from eastern Europe and some from western Europe met in Prague to discuss women's health and reproductive rights.

Perspectives

The changes set in motion in eastern Europe in 1989 are still variable in terms of openings for women. Women's formal political participation remains low. Many people are not even motivated to vote, as the October 1991 elections in Poland showed. This could result in demoralisation and loss of faith in the legitimacy of parliamentary parties; but conversely, it could lead certain groups to try to organise for themselves. Recent developments show tha women are starting to organise on their own behalf. Women's groups in different areas of the former Yugoslavia still operate SOS telephone lines. A refuge for women suffering domestic violence was set up in August 1991, just outside Budapest. In this uncertain period of transition, women across eastern Europe are facing great hardships, but if some of them can continue to challenge certain of the received myths about women and prove able to define their own expectations, then at least the door to positive change remains open.

Abortion rights in Poland

by Sheila Malone

"In the early fifties, five or six women died every month in my hospital from botched, amateur abortions." So wrote a Polish doctor in January this year, opposing the proposed new legislation to recriminalise abortion. (*Gazeta Wyborcza* 20.1.92) Only legislation in 1956, which made abortion available on demand, stopped such situations. Since 1989 powerful figures in Poland have organised themselves to put the clock back to the pre-1956 days. In parliament this has included a number of proposed bills on the 'rights of the unborn', spearheaded by the Christian Democrats and backed by the Church. Amongst the medical profession this campaign has led to a new anti-abortion code of medical ethics.

The proposals for legal restriction treat abortion as an infringement of the rights of the foetus, ignoring the rights of women. As a result, the latest bill permits legal abortion only when continuation of the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother. All other considerations, such as rape, incest, severe deformation of the foetus, or damage to the woman's health, have been swept aside by a bill which will make abortion impossible to obtain legally in Poland .

The penalty for illegal abortion is two years imprisonment, both for the mother and the doctor willing to help her. It is not surprising that faced with this threat there is a widespread fear of the human cost of a return to the back-street abortions of the 1950s, as the only alternative left open to women. Abortion is not an easy question to debate in a poor and mainly Catholic country like Poland. Even those who support a woman's right to choose criticise abortion as an inadequate and damaging form of birth control in a country where 45% of the population do not use any form of birth control. In a recent survey a quarter of respondents said that they did not use contraception because they were afraid of the opposition of the Church.

Although the Church strongly condemns abortion, it often becomes a last desperate resort for women with already over-large families. Women's opposition to the criminalisation of abortion is usually therefore closely linked to issues such as the availability of contraception, child-care provision and sex education, which alone can provide conditions in which a real choice can be made. This opposition to restrictive legislation is firm and growing. It is based upon the opposition of a majority of Poles to changes in the 1956 legislation, something ignored by reactionary senators, clergy and doctors. An unpublished survey carried out by the 'Doctor's Gazette' last year showed that 63% of doctors in Poland are opposed to any change in the law and that only 7% support a ban as envisaged in the current bill.

Women from the Democratic Left and some women from Unia (Democratic Union) have joined with womens' organisations such as Pro Femina to argue that the right of abortion is our civil and social right as women and as mothers, which we must not allow to be wrested from us by bands of predominantly male self-appointed guardians of women's morality. It is a struggle which we must win if these rights are not to be pushed back 40 years in the new 'democratic' Poland.

Conferences

Rifondazione Comunista

The Italian Communist Party which, up to a few years ago, had one and a half million membe and 30 per cent support in the Italian electorate, changed its name at its last congress in February 1991 to Party of the Democratic Left (PDS). The name-change and the political shift to the right which accompanied it was rejected by the left in the party, which had the support of about one third of the membership. In the event, about 700 000 joined the new party. The left split from the PDS and established the Rifondazione Comunista (Party of Communist Refoundation), which held its founding congress in December 1991 and January 1992. The PCR claims around 120 000 members.

1178 delegates attended the congress, one for every 1000 party members. A survey of 700 delegates revealed that 532 came from the ex-PCI, 113 from other political formations such as Democrazia Proletaria, while 56 had no previous political affiliation. 108 were blue-collar workers, 289 white-collar workers and 82 were students. Women made up 21 per cent of the sample.

With the collapse of the Communist-Party regimes in the east and the crisis of the western social democratic parties, many viewed the extent of support for the PCR as the beginning of a revitalisation of the left in Italy. There was much discussion as to whether the PCR saw itself as a continuation of the PCI or as a completely new beginning. The majority supported the latter position.

In a variety of political resolutions in both sessions of the congress, the PCR voted for a campaign in defence of the sliding scale of wages and a reduction in working hours, against the ratification of the Maastricht treaty, against NATO and for a campaign against the US blockade of Cuba. There were two foreign representatives, the Cuban ambassador and a representative of the PLO.

The PCR voted to stand candidates in all the constituencies in the coming elections to the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The Congress elected 45 members to the National Political Committee (another 180 members are elected by the provincial federations). Parliamentary deputies, including Lucio Magri, as well as three Euro MPs, including Luciana Castellina, were elected to the leadership, as were former members of Democrazia Proletaria such as Livio Maitan and Marida Bolognesi. Sergio Garavini was elected national secretary and the new party's president is Armando Cossutta.

Sergio Casini

German PDS

The congress of the PDS took place in Berlin on 14/15 December 1991. The main problem confronting the party now is the likelihood that it will fail, in the 1994 elections, to win the necessary 5 per cent, thus losing its seats in parliament. The PDS, with not more than 600 members in the west, seems set to remain a regional party of the east (currently 180 000 members). The failure to make any headway in western Germany has strengthened those forces in the PDS who were always sceptical of the western German left. In reality, it was the new left forces from the west that made up the most progressive wing of the party. It was they who were mainly responsible for the party's firm stand on the Gulf war, for its active opposition to the anti-abortion law and for its progressive stand on the question of asylum-seekers. As activists who have long been in opposition to western German capitalism, they brought into the PDS a wealth of experience which this one-time state party could not have developed on its own. In the PDS, however, they often met with a distinct lack of sympathy.

Although the PDS has hardened its views, and there is less tolerance of left-wing critique than six months ago, there is still a far greater amount of inner-party democracy and tolerance than in any other European party of a similar size.

Some leading members of the party's most important internal group, the Strömung [Current], left the party, seeing the whole PDS project as a failure. The Strömung is a numerically small but intellectually influential group which constituted itself in the summer of 1991. Made up largely of intellectuals who, from the beginning, fought hardest for a thorough renewal of the party, the Strömung have been demanding an uncompromising examination of the party's Stalinist past. According to Michael Stamm, one of those who resigned, this critique of history has been 'instinctively and deliberately blocked'.

The other main currents in the party, the youth section and the Communist Platform, made very little contribution to the congress. The Communist Platform is increasingly dominated by conservatives who use a Marxist terminology but are largely proto-Stalinist. They supported the attempted putsch in the Soviet Union. The platform is a refuge for conservative members and lets itself be used as a weapon against Strömung members, who are accused of 'objectively splitting and weakening' the PDS.

The PDS now is a large reformist party which, unlike the traditional social democracy, is without a base either in the state apparatus or in the organisations of the working class. It therefore lacks the essential precondition for a political practice. It is a colossos standing on the sideline. No large party can survive in this condition. Either, through big internal political debate, it will change its political character or it will disintegrate. But no one, either in the leadership or in the party currents, is addressing this key question.

Björn Krüger

Appeal to Support Democratic Socialism

Committee

At the end of 1991, a **Committee to Support Democratic Socialism in the USSR** was established in London by prominent figures in the Labour Party and the trade union movement. The Committee chair is Jim Mortimer, ex-General Secretary of the Labour Party, and includes Ken Livingstone MP and Ken Cameron, General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union. In December 1991, the Committee issued an **Appeal,** the text of which is given below.

According to a statement published by Jim Mortimer, the purpose of this initiative is: 'First, to encourage democratic socialists in the former USSR who, despite difficulties, have not become infatuated with market forces. They rightly see a place for market relations in a restored economy but argue for strategic economic planning, including the social ownership of large-scale industry and financial institutions. (...) Second, to challenge those in Britain who say that the failings of the former USSR demonstrate that socialism has no future. This view needs to be challenged vigorously. The Soviet economy broke down because of dictatorship in every aspect of life and the crippling arms burden. Socialism and democracy are inseparable.'

APPEAL

'The Committee to Support Democratic Socialism in the USSR believes that only the principles of democratic socialism provide a way out of the crisis in that country. It recognises that the reintroduction of capitalism into the USSR would be a tremendous setback for the Soviet peoples, and internationally, leading to a disastrous decline in production, inter-communal strife and the threat of dictatorship. The Committee completely condemns the crimes under the previous system. It believes only a democratic, pluralist socialism can defend the Soviet peoples from any threat of dictatorship and from the reintroduction of capitalism. The goal of the Committee is to promote this understanding in Britain and it supports those in the USSR dedicated to such goals. It asks others in Britain to add their names to this appeal.'

The Appeal is signed by Harry Barnes MP, Tony Benn MP, Bill Browning (chair, Haldane Society), Mary Brennan (vice-chair, CND), Ken Cameron (Gen Sec FBU), Tony Chater, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Campbell Christie (Gen Sec Scottish TUC), Harry Cohen MP, Colin Christopher (Gen Sec FTAT), Magan Dobney, Michael Foot MP, David Morris MEP, John Aitkin (Gen Sec EPIU), Bill Michie MP, Michael Hindley MEP, Alex Falconer MEP, George Galloway MEP, Ken Gill (Gen Sec MSF), Peter Heathfield (Gen Sec NUM), Prof. Roy Harrison, Ken Livingstone MP, Prof. Ralph Miliband, Jim Mortimer (ex-Gen Sec Labour Party), Alice Mahon MP, Stan Newens MEP, John McDonnell (ex-Deputy Leader GLC), Dawn Primarolo MP, Barbara Switzer (Dep Gen Sec MSF), Bill Speirs (Dep Gen Sec STUC), Prof. Elizabeth Wilson, Marc Wadsworth (LP Black Section), Joe Marino (Gen Sec Bakers Union).

Address: Committee to Defend Democracy in the USSR,

MEPs form new left group

For some months now, a new informal grouping of the left in the European Parliament has been meeting regularly. The European Parliamentary Left Group includes members of the Socialist Group (SOC), the Greens (G), the Group of the European Unitarian Left (EUL), the Rainbow Group (R) and the Left Unity Group (LU). Socialist Group members are drawn mainly from the left of the European Parliamentary Labour Party.

The European Parliamentary Left Group is convened by the Labour member for London Central, Stan Newens. It is concerned with promoting socialist-communist-green dialogue, with the aim of promoting the realignment of the European left to face the challenge of the 1990s and beyond. It has taken discussions on topics such as the growing crisis in the ex-Soviet Union.

The EPLG is now projecting a Conference in May in Brussels, aiming to bring together as many representatives of opinion as possible to discuss the future of the left.

The provisional list of sponsors includes the following MEPs:

A. Alavanos (LU Greece), J. Bandres-Molet (G Spain), J. Barros-Moura (LU Portugal), R. Bontempi (EUL Italy), J. Buchan (SOC UK), L. Castellina (EUL Italy), K. Coates (SOC UK), B. Cramon-Daiber (G Germany), P. Crampton (SOC UK), P. Derossa (EUL Ireland), A. Falconer (SOC UK), D. Geraghty (EUL Ireland), A. Gutierrez-Diaz (EUL Spain), P. Herzog (LU France), J. Iversen (EUL Denmark), A. Langer (G Italy), P. Napoletano (EUL Italy), S. Newens (SOC UK), E. Newman (SOC UK), M. Papayannakis (EUL Greece), R. Piquet (LU France), S. Ribeiro (LU Portugal), P. Roumeliotis (SOC Greece), A. Smith (SOC UK), W. Telkamper (G Germany), D. Valent (EUL Italy), N. Van Dijk (G Holland), L. Van Outrive (SOC Belgium), M. van den Brink (SOC Holland), F. Wurtz (LU France) also N. Kertscher and Y. Kaufmann (PDS Germany, observers).

Conflict over economic strategy

by László Andor

Hungary has had a freely elected government since May 1990. The elections raised high expectations that the new government would come forward with a new economic policy.

However, the period since the elections has demonstrated that the government has been able to change very little. The dramatic political change didn't lead to a radically new economic policy but to the continuation of already existing tendencies. This is not to say that the present government, led by the Hungarian Democratic Forum, applies the same measures as did the HSWP government up until 1990. What is the same is the trend in the direction of events, namely, a transition from a centrally planned economy towards a peripheral capitalist economy, under increasing pressure from the capitalist centre. The origin of this process dates back to the late 1970s, when the HSWP abandoned its traditional economic priorities.

The 1968 reforms

The HSWP introduced major economic reform in 1968. The intention of this reform was to change the system of economic regulation without changing economic policy. The significant decentralisation that took place after 1968 had the effect of increasing the competence of managers in state enterprises. But when economic developments began to deviate from policy goals (increase in foreign debt, relative decline of workers' wages) the centre intervened and saved the position of the top fifty state enterprises, returning previous wage relativities. This recentralisation was a result of strong management pressure and had the full support of the trade unions.

The economy continued to grow, as did the living standards of the workers. The government believed that the oil-price shock and the world economic crisis of 1974-76 would have no effect in the eastern bloc. It launched the biggest investment boom ever. The rate of investment reached 38 per cent in 1978. Growth was given absolute priority and top policy makers foresaw no danger in financing the boom with massive borrowing from western capital markets where interest rates were still extremely low.

By 1978, however, the deterioration in the current account was an urgent problem. Some leading bankers drew up a plan and the Central Committee passed a resolution laying down a New Path of Growth which would make it possible to restore the balance in the current account. This represented a major change in the economic policy pursued throughout the entire post-war period. Leading HSWP politicians who disagreed with this were dismissed. To stabilise the situation the political leadership decided that, for the time being, there would have to be sacrifices in the growth of living standards. It was this constant growth in living standards which had been the basis of the silent social contract between the Kadar regime and the people after 1957.

The 1980s crisis

Although economic growth slowed down significantly, to around 1-2 per cent, the almost overnight increase in interest rates, the effects of the oil-price shock and, eventually, the collapse of the western market during the recession of 1980-82, meant that the hoped-for stabilisation failed to materialise. Terms of trade declined further and, with the new cold war, especially after the introduction of martial law in Poland in 1981, normal management of foreign debt was difficult. Hungary had no choice but to join the IMF. The country was able to survive the liquidity crisis but this was to have many serious consequences for the future.

Although the government was able to avoid a crash in 1982-84 by means of a very hard centralisation of economic decision-making, it came to the conclusion, assisted by the experts from the IMF, that another emergency situation could be avoided only through the introduction of market-style reforms. Between 1985 and 1988 the main elements of this market reform were: the decentralisation of ownership functions to management, the establishment of a two-tier banking system through the creation of new commercial banks, the introduction of VAT and personal income tax as well as a significant liberalisation of foreign trade and prices.

However, Hungary's debt doubled in the three years from 1985 to 1988 and, in the second half of the 1980s, the economic crisis developed into a political one. In 1987 there was a change of government leaders; in 1988 the majority of the Politburo and the Central Committee had to go and, eventually, in 1989, the HSWP itself was dissolved. Of course, these political developments evolved under the pressure of international political changes as well.

Turn to capitalism

Under the last HSWP government and especially after the earthquake in eastern Europe it became obvious that capitalism was to be restored in Hungary. By the end of 1989 there were very few who were making any defence of planning, regulation, state ownership or CMEA cooperation. The public, it seems, had really opted for the creation of market institutions although some important questions about the transition still remained open. Since open political discussion and party formation had begun in Hungary much earlier than elsewhere in eastern Europe, the different transition alternatives were more or less coherent by the time of the elections in 1990.

In the second half of the 1980s, Hungary was definitely on the road to marketisation. In 1989/90 a milestone was reached when a decision had to be

left: Józef Antall

made about the circle of future owners. Who would be part of the new capitalist class? What is the best way to develop such a social layer? Should we start the process right from he beginning, as happened in the advanced capitalist countries some centuries ago or could we enter at the present stage of global capitalist development? Basically, there are two different approaches to answering these questions and here lies the major disagreement in Hungary about the transition to capitalism, the conflict between a national and a transnational project of transition.

Two approaches

According to the national concept, we have to start the transition to a capitalist economy where the advanced western countries did, in other words, at the lowest level of accumulation and embourgeoisement. We are at the stage where Britain and France were in the eighteenth century. The only way to emancipate ourselves in the developed world is through the creation of our own national bourgeoisie. Thus the ideology of this project is fairly nationalist and the recommended economic policy fits into this. It is protectionist, prioritises a stable national currency, which requires a firm anti-inflationary policy and moves towards reduction of foreign debt, and calls for measures to support domestic entrepreneurs.

According to the transnational conception it is anachronistic to believe that the capitalist development of Hungary could or should be started at an early stage. We have to recognise the contemporary rules of the global capitalist economy and find the appropriate strategy of adjustment, disregarding national pride. Such an economic strategy would involve: 1) a leading role for foreign capitalists who must be encouraged by tax breaks and guarantees of profit repatriation; 2) monetary policy must adapt to transnational norms and Hungary must remain a "good debtor", maintaining a tight monetary and fiscal policy; 3) international competition must determine structural development.

By the time of the 1990 elections, the two main parties of the new political stage had formed their policies around these two different strategies. The national project was more or less clearly represented by the Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF) while the Alliance of Free Democrats (AFD) defended the transnational project. The minor parties also made their choice. The Forum was supported by the Smallholders and the Christian Democrats while the Young Democrats and the Hungarian Socialist Party (the ex-HSWP) took positions close to the Free Democrats, the first more radically and the latter with some reluctance.

One should have no illusions about the extent to which the people were familiar with the programmes of the parties, but according to the election results the majority of the electorate seemed to support the national project. The new government was formed by the HDF president, Józef Antall, in coalition with the Christian Democrats and Smallholders.

Government U-turn

However, the pre-election promises of the coalition parties were not really implemented. Spontaneous privatisation continued, with managers of state enterprises transforming parts of state property into private business. There was a significant devaluation of the currency in January 1991 and there was no announcement of debt forgiveness. Benefits continued to be available for foreign investors.

The nationalist government, in fact, found itself in the same situation as the previous government of the HSWP. There was this one difference, however: the HSWP government had adopted the transnational marketisation programme of the IMF gradually during the 1980s, whereas the HDF government had to change its mind overnight, just after the elections.

There was one major reason for this change of policy. Foreign investors, aware of the pre-election policies of the HDF, withdrew large amounts of money from Hungarian banks in the month after the election, threatening Hungary with complete financial collapse. In order to restore the confidence of foreign capitalists, the government nominated György Surányi, a former World Bank employee, as president of the Hungarian National Bank. Surányi represented a guarantee of loyalty to IMF principles and he was able to negotiate an extraordinary three-year contract between the IMF and Hungary. The new finance minister, Mihály Kupa, also belonged to the same circle of monetarists as did Surányi and many of the Free Democrat economists.

The HDF leadership justified the U-turn by saying that the party had become a modern liberal christian-democratic party and not, as had been intended earlier, a national popular movement. As a result of these changes the former HDF leader, Zoltán Bíró, left the party and formed a National Democratic Alliance with Imre Pozsgay, former leading reform communist. At the same time, the opposition, led by the Free Democrats, began to criticise the government from a social viewpoint, warning the coalition about the enormous dangers of shock-therapy. One year after the elections, the new HDF government was playing the role of crisis manager rather than glorious founder of a new Hungarian capitalist society.

Turning point

The summer of 1991, however, was to prove a turning point. There is no question that western business had more sympathy for the opposition Freidmanites than for the Bismarckian policy-makers. There is also no question that these feelings were mutual: the HDF government was not happy about following IMF dictates and selling off undervalued state enterprises. But the election results meant that both sides had to do business together. Foreign interests had to recognise that it was to be a reluctant HDF which would have to carry through marketisation and privatisation. Likewise, the HDF had to come to terms with the necessity to follow the basic guidelines of the transnational project if they were to avoid imminent economic collapse.

But, in the bargaining process that took place prior to the middle of 1991, it was mainly the HDF that made the concessions. It was here that the change

took place in mid-1991. There were three main factors that helped bring about this change. First, there was the famous taxi blockade of October 1990 which showed that the austerity policy was causing a lot of discontent, even in the entrepreneurial layer. Secondly, there was the spectacular collapse of the eastern European markets, which showed that the transition would be much more difficult than had been anticipated. Finally, there was the national strike called in June 1991 by MSZOSZ, the largest trade union federation in the country. This was a warning to the government that it would face massive working-class action if significant changes weren't made.

The promoters of the transition process gradually came to realise that the transition to a market economy is not simply a technical or institutional question, but involves a realignment of social forces as an essential part of the process. Better later than never, the government set about trying to strengthen its social alliances. At the same time, western business and the promoters of transnational market forces had to acknowledge the need for such a period of adjustment.

Offensive

The coalition launched its offensive on many fronts. In July parliament was forced to pass a law making existing trade-union membership illegal and established a committee to supervise the property of the largest trade-union federation. The purpose of this action was to undermine the militancy of the trade union movement and to redistribute the trade union property in a way which would strengthen those federations allied to the HDF.

During the summer, parliament also passed a revised version of the Compensation Bill, earlier declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. The court did not veto the second version, which gives partial compensation to those expropriated after 1945. A similar compensation law was passed with respect to church property.

The HDF also returned to its earlier conceptions about the management of the economy. There are now fewer spontaneous privatisations which benefit "unreliable communist managers" and more controlled political privatisations which benefit the targeted voting base of the coalition. HDF MPs even submitted a bill to parliament which would revise the privatisation deals of earlier years. János Palotás, leader of the League of Entrepreneurs and Gabor Széles, president of the Union of Manufacturers, have both complained, in a radio interview, about irrational government intervention in the economy.

Meanwhile, the opposition, both inside and outside parliament, is in disarray. The only successful counterattack came from the Budapest city government, a liberal Free Democrat stronghold, which was able to undermine the government's plan for a World Expo in 1995.

Does this change after mid-1990 represent a fundamental policy change by the Hungarian government or are these temporary adaptations during a difficult period? The latter seems more likely. This last quarter of the century has seen a decline in the nation state in Europe and this tendency will be even stronger in the former planned economies of the east. The most important item on the agenda here is an intensified transnational integration.

Hungarian trade unions

Trade unions in Hungary can be divided between those that broadly support the policies of the major parties in parliament and those that see themselves in opposition. Among the former, the largest is the **National Association of Workers Councils** (MOSZ), which has a membership of around 106 000 (end of 1990) and which is close to the governing party, the MDF. Its president is the MDF MP, Imre Palkovics. The MOSZ has expressed itself in favour of a market economy and against strikes. Around one tenth of MOSZ members, concentrated mostly in the Ikarus plant in Budapest, broke away to form the **Non-party Workers Councils**, led by Ferenc Streer.

Similar policies to the MOSZ are defended by the **League of Independent Trade Unions** (FSZDL), set up in 1988 by intellectual oppositionists. It is politically close to the main opposition party, the Free Democrats, and claimed 200 000 members in the summer of 1991.

Among the oppositional unions, perhaps the most radical is **Szolidaritas**, a small union based in a few enterprises with a membership of 75 000 in 1991. In the public sector, the **Trade Union Cooperation Forum** (SZEF) organises mainly teachers. It had 560 000 members in 1991. As early as November 1990, the SZEF organised a demonstration against government austerity policy which drew 25 000 people. Closely allied with the SZEF is the union of university teachers, the **Trade Union of Intellectuals** (ESZT), which has around 63 000 members.

Among industrial workers, an important union is the **Coordination Council of Independent Unions** (ASZOK), which is organised mainly in the chemical industry and has around 375 000 members. It is politically close to the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and has links with chemical unions in other countries.

Finally, there is the **National Federation of Hungarian Trade Unions** (MSZOSZ), the successor to the old union federation, SZOT. It has around 1.3 million members and is organised strongly in steel, construction, transport and mining. The MSZOSZ is politically close to the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), the reformed successor to the old HSWP. The leader of the steelworkers' unionin within MSZOSZ is a Socialist Party MP. With its size and strength the MSZOSZ is the main opponent of the government's social and economic policy. The taxi-blockade in October 1990 was one of its first effective actions.

The MSZOSZ, however, does not actively oppose privatisation (around 15-20% of the economy has been privatised). The problem here is the absence of any alternative perspective. When the government, in May 1991, raised prices for heating and electricity, MSZOSZ called for a national strike on 12 June (it was boycotted only by MOSZ and the League). The union at that time called for more public control of privatisation. The strike-call was very effective and led to a number of government concessions (e.g. 15% of funds from privatisation to create new jobs), whereupon the union withdrew its threat.

The government began its attack on the oppositional unions in July 1991 with a law (supported by MOSZ and the League) which forced all unions to dissolve and re-register, with workers having to sign an opt-in clause for union dues to be deducted. The law also confiscated the property of the MSZOSZ (as property of the old SZOT) in order to redistribute it in a way that favours the pro-government unions.

READING ABOUT EASTERN EUROPE

The numerous committees that direct and administer EC policy towards the countries of eastern Europe, from the Group of Seven and the Council of Ministers to the lowliest committee in Brussels, are not subject to any kind of democratic scrutiny or control But they do produce a quite a few studies, with the help of academics and practical administrators, which can be very useful to anyone with a professional or political interest in this area. They are generally quite detailed and empirical and are usually more up-to-date than the average academic hardback. They also tend to be cheaper.

Reforming the Economies of Central and Eastern Europe, OECD Paris 1992 117p. £11.50 General survey of key issues facing central and eastern European countries in transition to capitalism. Contains particularly useful sections on the environment and the issue of migration.

The Transition to a Market Economy, OECD Paris 1991 2 Vols: Vol.I *The Broad Issues* 306p. Vol. II *Special Issues* 456p. Includes country essays eg Stanislaw Gomulka and Dariusz Rosati on Poland. Paul Marer and Salvatore Zecchini (eds.), 2 vols. £15 each.

OECD Economic Surveys - Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, 1991, 148p £13.00.

The Soviet Agro-Food System and Agricultural Trade - Prospects for Reform, OECD Paris 1991, 221p £33.00.

House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Chair David Howell, *Minutes of Evidence Developments in Central Europe,* Publishes monthly Evidence of academics on Yugoslav crisis etc. Prices variable but under £10.00
All the above available from HMSO

Socialist Economic Bulletin, Information Service of Socialist Economic News and Comment. December 1991, no.5, features Czechoslovakia, with articles from Peter Annear and Adam Novak from Prague. Subscriptions for Bulletin (6 pa) £12.50; with Briefings (10 pa) £25.00; with Research Papers (5 pa) £40.00. Cheques to 'Local Action Ltd.' From *Socialist Economic Bulletin,* Ken Livingstone MP, House of Commons, SW1A 0AA.

After the Wall. Democracy and Movement Politics in the New Europe, is a collection edited by Hilary Wainwright, Patrick Burke and Mark Thompson. It grew out of a conference organised at the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam in June 1990, which brought together members of Civic Forum, Solidarity, western peace activists, feminists, Green activists and trade unionists, to discuss the problems of democracy in the new Europe. The book aims to show that there's a place for the social movements in building the new European order. Published by Transnational Institute, June 1992, 148p, £6.95.

Authors

Chris Corrin is lecturer in politics at Glasgow University. A collection on women in eastern Europe, *Superwomen and the Double Burden,* edited by Chris Corrin, is published by Scarlet Press, 1992.
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Peter Singer, author of *The Road to Gdansk,* lives in Paris and is European correspondent for *The Nation* (US).

Bargain of the century

According to *Business Week* (10 Feb 1992) Russian businessmen are exporting their profits abroad. The magazine cites the example of Vladimir Kulistikov, senior executive in Russian Houses Ltd., which exports oil, timber and materials from the Urals. He stashes his foreign currency earnings in the Central European International Bank in Budapest. 'Everybody wants to keep their money abroad', says Kulistikov. US and European bankers estimate that as much as $25 billion may have fled the country since 1990. 'It just isn't profitable to invest in Russia now', says Moscow retailer, Igor Zubkov, who is putting his profits from his family's seven general stores into new shops and restaurants in Frankfurt. 'It's frightening that in poor hungry Russia, everything that's being earned is going to the west', said Zubkov. *Business Week* comments: 'Indeed, some think that capital flight has driven the ruble down so far that Russia is now the bargain of the century.'

BUDAPEST CONFERENCE OF LEFT-WING JOURNALS

In April 1991, the Hungarian journal, *Eszmélet*, invited representatives of left-wing magazines to a conference in Budapest to discuss the changes taking place in Eastern Europe and the need for greater collaboration among left-wing publications no longer kept apart by the cold war. About 50 people attended the three-day conference, representing journals in Europe, Australia, North and South America. Papers delivered at the conference are to be published in English in Budapest. The conference established a network for future collaboration and issued the following statement:

DECLARATION OF INTENT

On 11 and 12 April 1991 in Budapest the representatives of a number of independent left-wing journals discussed the possibilities of collaboration and agreed to the following points:

1. It is necessary to find concrete means of cooperation among independent left-wing journals around the world.
2. Cooperating journals will regularly exchange abstracts of articles they publish, these abstracts to be written preferably in English.
3. Cooperating journals will make every attempt to facilitate the exchange of ideas across journals, including republication of articles.
4. Cooperating journals will regularly exchange information concerning written materials, journals, books, papers and conferences of mutual interest.
5. Cooperating journals will investigate existing networks among left-wing journals and other forms of communication, including information bulletins, computer networks, and so on.
6. Cooperating journals will pursue all avenues for holding regular meetings of their representatives.

The founders call upon all independent left-wing journals to join this initiative by agreeing to the above points and registering with the Hungarian journal, *Eszmélet*, at the following address:

Eszmélet,
c/o Agnes and Gábor Kapitány
Herman Ottó út 8
1022 Budapest, Hungary.

The Declaration was supported by the following journals:
A Sinistra (Italy); *Concordia* (Germany); *Critique Communiste* (France); *Dialektiki* (Greece); *Eszmélet* (Hungary); *Forum* (Austria); *Forum Internationale* (Italy); *Green-Left Weekly* (Australia); *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* (UK); *MOZ* (Austria); *Rethinking Marxism* (USA); *Ost-West Gegeninformationen* (Austria) *Sprawy i Ludzie* (Poland); *Utopie Kreativ* (Germany).

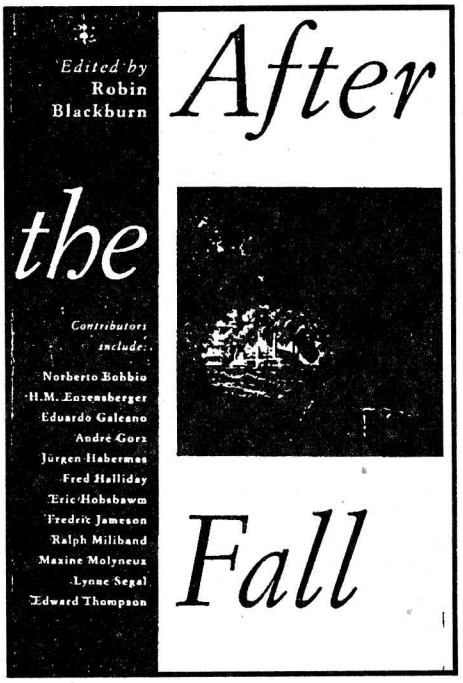
Reviews

R Blackburn ed. *After the Fall: The Failure of Communism and the Future of Socialism* Verso, London 1991 pp xvi + 326

This book consists of eighteen essays, of widely varying lengths, dealing with the significance of the record of communism in the USSR, Eastern Europe and China for the future of socialism. In addition, Edward Thompson replies to one of the pieces, by Fred Halliday, and Halliday replies back to Thompson, in turn. The majority of chapters first appeared in *New Left Review* and *Marxism Today*. Only one, by Fredric Jameson, has not appeared in print before.

The essays diverge significantly in quality and subject matter. They range from Maxine Molyneux's careful analysis of the position of women in the USSR and China to reinterpretations of the nature of socialism in the late twentieth century by Jürgen Habermas, André Gorz and Göran Therborn. In general the more focused chapters are the more successful. The Halliday/Thompson debate, for example, is interesting and worthwhile, while some of the shorter pieces really do not justify republication in book form, as opposed to their original existence as magazine articles.

The best essay, in my view, is the very stimulating analysis of the development of the labour movement on a world scale through the last century, by Giovanni Arrighi. Ironically,



this essay was written in May 1989, well before the collapse of the East European regimes, and is not centrally concerned with communism as such. This highlights a more general point. There is very little concrete analysis of the trajectory of the communist states in the book, apart from Molyneux's chapter. Neither is there any detailed discussion of the ideas of socialist critics of those regimes and states, apart from Blackburn's brief discussions of Kautsky and

Trotsky. In fact, while there is much interesting material in the book, very little is really new. Many of the ideas about the need for socialism to incorporate decentralised initiative, to link with social movements, and to preserve and extend democracy are familiar ones. Several chapters could have been written ten or fifteen years ago.

This raises a more fundamental issue - what exactly is the challenge posed for socialists by the collapse of the communist regimes? For the new left, which defined itself largely by opposition to Stalinism and social democracy, the collapse of one of these two enemies surely opens up new possibilities and opportunities. Why in that case is the tone of many of the pieces in *After the Fall* so defensive? In fact, some of the ideas which seem to lie behind the various essays can help to answer this question.

One concept which recurs throughout several chapters, especially those of Habermas and Gorz, is that of socialism as a limitation of capitalist or market rationality. The idea is that the role of socialism and of socialists is to restrict the encroachment of market criteria across the whole society, for example to prevent the environment becoming a commodity, or to limit working time in order to allow for free personal development. Now, this view is probably a necessary correction to technocratic conceptions of socialism, which simply adopt such criteria uncritically. But it is also a limited view. For Marx the subjection of whole societies to market rationality was both terrible - and also liberating, in its unleashing of innovation and dissolution of traditional ties. The task is not to limit such rationality but to use it for a different purpose, and in so doing to transform it. The problem with the approach of Habermas and Gorz is that, by concentrating on the restriction of the economic sphere, it neglects the struggle to transform that sphere. Further, since market rationality refuses to be limited in the way they propose, the strategy does not work. Thus despite Gorz's often inspiring policy proposals he concludes that "there can be no question of dictating to public or private companies conditions which make the calculation of real costs and performance impossible, or which are incompatible with initiatives aiming at economic efficiency, and consequently prevent economically rational company management" (page 297). So, the equalisation of incomes and reduction of working time is to be financed by indirect taxes "which are cost-neutral for the businesses" (page 297).

Something like this conception of socialism as the limitation or restriction of capitalism also enters into the essays more directly concerned with communist societies. In particular, the essays by Halliday, and Alexander Cockburn, come very close to dividing the world into two opposed and self-sufficient camps, one of which has now collapsed. In this framework capitalism was limited on a world scale, and now it is not - with potentially disastrous consequences in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Cockburn writes of how, without the Soviet Union, the Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions would not have survived, and Halliday argues that "it is to Brezhnev, as much as anyone else outside South Africa itself, that credit for cracking the racist bloc should go" (page 89).

There is clearly some truth in this view. But it neglects the way in which the ruling bureaucracy in the USSR acted internationally primarily to further its own interests. Without Stalinism, for example, the Vietnamese might not have won the war - but neither would the Vietnamese Trotksyists have been massacred, or the Vietnamese revolution demobilised and the country partitioned in 1954. The examples can be multiplied. The key point is that the communist regimes could not be relied upon as a counterweight to imperialism in the past and the fact that they are gone does not mean that imperialism will face no limits and resistance in the future.

Finally, the view that socialism is centrally about limiting capitalist rationality shows up in a separation in the book between models of the economy and political movements. On the one hand we have a vision of social movements challenging market criteria. On the other, a vision of socialism in which the market still plays a role. The two are rarely linked. So, Lynne Segal's essay concentrates on feminism as a social movement, but doesn't extend this to a view of how the demands of feminism can be co-ordinated with other demands in a wider framework. Robin Blackburn's work on the co-ordination of the economy doesn't really connect with political activity and pressure. It is the great strength of recent work on the concept of a 'socialised market', in my view, particularly, Diane Elson's writing, that it does make this connection. However, Elson's piece in *After the Fall* is very brief, and the connections need to be developed much further.

The pessimism of much of this book stems, I think, from problems with the view of socialism as primarily a limitation of market rationality, a delimitation of spheres of society where the market will not tread. Paradoxically, this leads writers to allow the market too much scope in those areas their own demands rather than capitalism's. It also leads to a neglect of the resistance which does exist to the market, even in those areas where it does appear to operate in an unchallenged way. Lastly, by separating the struggles of social movements from the issues of economic planning, it perpetuates a divergence which has weakened the new left in the past. In fact, the reintegration of the question of how a socialist economy will work with issues of political organisation and struggle is a central challenge arising from the collapse of the Communist regimes.

Andrew Kilmister