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Labour Focus on Eastern Europe

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CONTENTS

Boris Kagarlitsky

Russian Trade Unions Today

In Russia, the times are troubled. In the eight years since Mikhail Gorbachev proclaimed his "policy of openness", countless aspects of Russian life and society have changed beyond recognition. The Soviet Union has disintegrated. The Communist Party, after expiring, has been reincarnated; after being banned, it has been restored. Government ministers have been purged and parliaments dispersed. Parliamentarians have completely lost the confidence of citizens. Only one structure remains solid, holding out against all odds. That structure is the trade unions.

The labour movement in Russia cannot boast of dramatic successes. Nevertheless, it is striking that the trade unions should have proven viable when other institutions have collapsed, and when times have not exactly been favourable for the labour movement in the West.

The traditional unions

The traditional Soviet trade unions played an important role in society, but one which rarely attracted much attention. The unions concerned themselves with questions of social welfare; organised workers' leisure-time activities (in particular, providing facilities for children); helped provide workers with consumer goods; and at times, consulted with enterprise managements on questions related to industrial safety. The leader of the trade union at an enterprise was in effect an

unofficial deputy director with responsibility for social matters. During the perestroika period the trade unions remained virtually untouched by the reforms. The unions continued to deal with their accustomed tasks, distributing travel concession vouchers and hard-to-get consumer products in the workers' collectives. It was only in 1990 and 1991 that serious changes began in the union structures.

The miners' strikes of the summer of 1989 showed that the old trade union structures were unable to cope with the challenges presented by the new conditions. In most cases, the strikes were not accompanied by a mass exodus of members from the official union, or by attempts to form new union bodies. The miners in most cases continued to regard the existing union as a useful organ of distribution - worth belonging to, but quite irrelevant to labour conflicts. Workers' struggles were seen as the province of strike committees, which in the course of 1989 and 1990 arose in all the coal mining regions of the USSR. But as the months passed, the leaders of the strike committees came to understand the potential of the trade union as an organisational form. A section of the activists in the miners' movement took leading posts in the traditional union bodies. Eventually, other activists began establishing a new union. The first generation of activists in the independent labour movement held numerous hopes that turned eventually into cruel disappointments. The leaders of the workers' committees took a suspicious attitude to the intelligentsia, but were readily co-opted by government apparatchiks and local populist leaders who used the miners to further their own intrigues. Within a few years many leaders of the strike committees became prosperous business entrepreneurs and state officials. The slogan "The workers' movement should stay out of politics!" was used to justify a refusal to pursue an independent working-class political course, and later, to bind the workers' committees to the policies put forward by Yeltsin and his neo-liberal associates - policies that were anti-worker in their very essence.

The new unions

The emergence of alternative trade unions represented the first serious challenge to the traditional structures. Large numbers of "alternative" trade unions arose after 1989 and attracted worker

activists who were dissatisfied with the bureaucratism and inactivity of the official trade union structures. The largest of the new organisations was the Independent Union of Miners (NPG). Somewhat earlier, the Association of Socialist Trade Unions (SOTSPROF) had been formed. The word "socialist" in this name was later tactfully changed to "social", and then dropped entirely. This reflected the organisation's political evolution. The left socialists and anarcho-syndicalists who had been active in SOTSPROF during its early days were purged from the leadership.

The new trade unions immediately launched a furious struggle against their traditional counterparts, which they saw as their main adversaries. Before long the "alternative" union leaders, who had originally acted as oppositionists criticising the old unions for their links with the state, themselves began appealing to the government in hopes of winning support against their rivals. The anti-Communism of most of the alternative union federations drove them into the embraces of extreme neo-liberals. After the collapse of the USSR, when the Russian government set its sights openly on broad privatisation and the construction of capitalism, the leaders of the alternative unions gave their backing to any decision made by the Russian authorities. They ignored the fact that many of these decisions were openly hostile to workers' interests.

It is not surprising that the new trade unions failed to win the majority of workers to their side. Even where a significant exodus from the old unions took place, people were in no hurry to join the new organisations. Political purges, splits and financial scandals in the alternative unions began attracting publicity. Press reports spoke of the NPG having received money from the Russian government for the purpose of organising the anti-Gorbachev strike in the spring of 1991. NPG members publicly accused their leaders of corruption and of misappropriating money. Analogous scandals took place in SOTSPROF and smaller organisations.

As the conflict grew between the Russian authorities and the leadership of the traditional trade unions, the alternative unions began to enjoy increasing government support. In the Russian Trilateral Commission on Labour Relations, the number of places allotted to the alternative unions was out of all proportion to their membership. The

leadership bodies of SOTSPROF were provided with office space in state buildings (for example, in the Moscow Soviet), and the state-owned mass media gave these unions generous publicity. The alternative unions also received substantial support from the American trade union federation, the AFL-CIO.

During the 1992 strike by teachers and health workers, representatives of SOTSPROF appealed to workers in these sectors - admittedly, without success - to refrain from joining the stoppage. After two years, the old and new unions had effectively swapped roles. The alternative union organisations merged increasingly with the authorities, while the traditional unions took on the role of an independent opposition force.

Union reforms

Meanwhile, changes were taking place in the traditional unions themselves. The All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions was abolished, and the General Confederation of Trade Unions was established to take its place. After the collapse of the USSR, this was transformed into an "international association". The Russian unions set up the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) headed by Igor Klochkov. The traditional unions continued to play the role of consumer cooperatives and of a "safety net", helping their members solve everyday problems that ranged from buying cheap sugar to finding places for children in summer camps; in conditions of acute economic crisis, these functions of the traditional unions were valued more and more highly. At the same time, the unions took on new and unfamiliar tasks. New people, many of whom had never been part of the old bureaucracy, appeared in the leadership of the branch and territorial organisations. Some of these new leaders were people who had been active in the strikes of 1989 and 1990.

The changes in the trade unions followed a contradictory course, but for millions of people who were suffering from the economic crisis and from the government's policies, the FNPR remained the sole all-Russian structure through which something at least might be achieved.

The most radical renewal took place in the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions (MFP). The MFP's new chairperson, Mikhail Shmakov,

immediately let it be known that he intended to turn the federation into an influential social force, capable of defending its positions both against the authorities and the leadership of the FNPR. Shmakov, who turned 45 in 1993, is a typical representative of the new generation of union leaders who took up their posts between 1989 and 1992. As these people came to prominence, rapid changes began to occur. The new leaders sought to break as rapidly as possible with the past of the "official" trade unions. They brought with them a new style and new ideas. Shmakov was the first person in the Russian trade union movement to enter into dialogue with the young radicals of the "informal" left-wing organisations that had arisen during the perestroika years.

The left and the unions

Radical left activists who earlier had been making furious attacks on "the old trade union bureaucracy" were soon to be found among the consultants and officials of the trade unions. Many of these people not only learnt to wear ties, but also proved unexpectedly effective in their new roles. One of the first such people to go to work for the trade unions was Andrei Isayev, a prominent Moscow anarchist and organiser of some of the first opposition meetings in 1987 and 1988. As chief editor of the MFP's newspaper *Solidarnost*, he transformed it in the space of a few months from a dull and unpopular organ into a lively and original publication. The print-run of *Solidarnost* leapt from 5000 in August 1991 to 30-40,000 in 1993. The readers came to include not only trade union activists and officials, but also members of the intelligentsia searching for an alternative to the liberal experiments.

In an effort to define the position of the trade unions, Isayev advanced a thesis on the need for a "left conservatism": "We weren't bad revolutionaries," he wrote in *Solidarnost*. Now, however, it was time for leftists to become conservatives. There was no paradox in this; the forces of the left had brought about important changes for the better on the world scale. These conquests had to be defended from the neoliberal reaction that had gone on the offensive after the collapse of the Communist system. In order to defend the welfare state and the real social conquests of the Soviet period, leftists had not only to challenge the new authorities, to protest and to summon people

to struggle, but also to reaffirm historical traditions. Faced with the kind of "progress" suggested by Thatcher, Yeltsin and Gaidar, Isayev argued, there was nothing alarming about appearing conservative.

Isayev's formulation summed up the thinking of many union leaders and activists, and was also in line with the moods of the masses. In meetings and demonstrations, people were condemning the destruction of the country's productive potential, and speaking of the need to save the social and productive infrastructure. After August 1991, when the Communist Party was suspended and the structures of the USSR collapsed, the trade unions remained almost the only mass organisations in the country. More than 80 per cent of union members remained faithful to their organisations despite the changes that had taken place. The FNPR and the regional federations retained their property and incomes. Compared with the chaos and corruption prevailing in Russia, the trade union bureaucracy, which was accustomed to precisely observing traditional norms, seemed a model of honesty and efficiency.

Union radicalisation

However, the trade union leadership lacked both a clear strategy and a full understanding of its own strength. At first the FNPR leaders were ready to give critical support to the Russian government, while the Moscow Federation leadership called for a more radical and independent course. But as the social costs of the reforms became obvious, the FNPR officialdom underwent a radicalisation. The trade unions fought for the indexation of wages, and for the setting of the minimum wage at a level equal to the subsistence minimum income. Privatisation, accompanied by job losses and often by the shutting down of enterprise union organisations, aroused acute dissatisfaction among unionists. Within the FNPR, the conviction grew that the social interests of workers were being defended far better in state sector enterprises than in privatised ones.

This, of course, ran directly counter to the philosophy of the Russian government. The authorities held talks with the trade unions and made various concessions on matters that were not crucial to the government's pro-capitalist strategies. However, the wage indexation law adopted in 1991 was not observed. Moreover, the Finance Ministry

made a deliberate practice of refusing to provide state-owned enterprises, and even other government departments, with the funds they needed to pay wages on time. This could not fail to radicalise the trade union movement. An illustration is provided here by the story of Pavel Kudyukin, Deputy Minister of Labour and the only Social Democrat in the "reform government" of Yeltsin and Gaidar. Following a series of strikes and demonstrations organised in 1992 by the "traditional" trade unions, Kudyukin spoke of confiscating the property of the FNPR, and conducted a bitter polemic against left-wing critics of the government. But after a year or so Kudyukin resigned from his post, and joined with the FNPR in harshly criticising the antisocial policies of the authorities. While striving to end the dominance of Communist ideology in the trade union movement, the FNPR leaders constantly stressed that the unions needed to stay out of politics and to keep their distance from political parties.

Nevertheless, the heightened conflict with the government showed that trade unions could not remain apart from the political process. At a mass meeting of MFP activists in October 1992, Andrei Isayev called for "a new course and new reforms", which the trade unions needed to advance in place of "the failed reforms of the liberal Gaidar team." The concept which Isayev and other labour movement radicals put forward involved a mixed economy with a strong state sector capable of becoming the "locomotive of development". A further element was an agreement between the government, enterprise managements and the trade unions to ensure control over prices and wages.

The FNPR leadership faced the problem of finding political allies willing to aid its struggle for a new course. Klochkov and a number of other trade union leaders spoke out in support of the initiatives of the centrist Civic Union. Meanwhile, many trade union activists were involved in moves to establish the Party of Labour. The trade unions joined with the Civic Union in campaigning to preserve functioning industries and economic links between regions of the country, and in calling for the development of the internal market. However, the Civic Union rested above all on enterprise managers, while the task of the FNPR was to defend the interests of hired workers. The Party of Labour sought to formulate a program that

expressed these interests, calling for the defence of the public sector, for full employment, and for social welfare provisions.

Strikes

Meanwhile, the trade unions and the government in the summer of 1993 were effectively at war with one another. In the Urals region factory whistles sounded and defence plant workers gathered for mass meetings, while in Rostov Province in the south coal miners held a one-day warning stoppage. In the Maritime District in the far east, a general strike took place on August 10. Ships that had not been unloaded lay in the ports and sounded their sirens. The crews of foreign ships replied with their own sirens, expressing solidarity with the strikers. The main issue behind these struggles was the violation by the government of the general wage agreement that had been negotiated with the FNPR. At the meetings, workers demanded not just the observance of this document, but that the government should resign. In the first ten days, one and a half million people took part in collective actions.

Unlike earlier waves of strikes and demonstrations, the struggles during the summer of 1993 were led by the trade unions and took place throughout the whole country. For the first time since 1905, workers were mounting protest actions simultaneously in the most diverse sectors and regions, advancing general, all-Russian demands.

The success of the traditional unions in drawing millions of their members into action in the summer of 1993 took the government by surprise. The FNPR had earlier showed its ability to conduct tough, effective negotiations on general, regional and sectoral wage agreements designed to defend workers' jobs and incomes. But the union federation's weak spot had been its inability to mobilise workers in active struggle. When the authorities worked out tactics for dealing with the trade unions, they consciously exploited this weakness. Making concessions during talks, they then refused to fulfil the obligations they had accepted, confident that the unions could not hit back. In 1992 the FNPR had been powerless to counteract this policy. As a result, the authorities did not expect that the trade unions would be able to mount serious resistance in 1993 either. However, the

situation had changed dramatically. Two years of liberal reforms had not only resulted in a catastrophic decline in production, the collapse of the internal market, falling living standards and hyperinflation. People had also become more conscious of their interests, and sensed the need to personally defend their rights.

The opposition to Yeltsin was growing with every day. When it violated its general wage agreement with the FNPR, the government did not anticipate that the unions would be able to mount serious resistance, and did not expect the call for collective actions to receive broad support. The authorities received a rude shock. Still, the fact remained that the union leaders and activists were operating without a clear strategy and programme of action.

However much the FNPR suffered as a result of "trade union bureaucracy", its most dangerous malady was arguably spontaneism. The demands which the trade unions were putting forward in mid-1993 were ones which had arisen spontaneously from below; the higher echelons of the union leadership simply recorded these demands, summarised them, and presented them to the government. The strength of the collective protests was in large measure the result of this responsiveness to rank and file sentiment. But the failure to develop a consistent analysis, and the lack of a coherent political project, represented crucial weaknesses. Relying largely on trial and error, the unions consistently lagged behind the development of events. The FNPR let almost a year go by without declaring its opposition to the government's course. While the MFP immediately found a niche in constructive opposition, the all-Russian union federation tried to maintain a line of critical support for the reforms. This was while Gaidar and his team were implementing a programme which had been dictated by the International Monetary Fund, and which required the smashing of the trade unions as effective organs of workers' self- defence.

Labour movement activists in Russia discovered the price of these errors from their own experience. In the course of 1993 the FNPR repeated the path which the Moscow unions had traversed in 1992. Meanwhile, the MFP had become far less radical. The Moscow Federation leaders had become hostages of their own success. With their determined actions in 1991 and 1992 they had won concessions

from the city government, but now they were having to concentrate on preserving their gains and on "not rocking the boat".

Aftermath of October 1993

The events of October 1993 resulted in a serious defeat for the Russian trade unions. Labour struggles practically ceased while the political conflicts in Moscow were being fought out. After the parliament was overthrown the government confiscated the social welfare fund from the trade unions, and in some regions the authorities tried to seize union assets. The collective actions in August had to a significant degree unfolded spontaneously, and in September they began just as spontaneously to abate. In August it had been possible to foresee two scenarios: an optimistic one, in which the unions mastered the situation and became an important social force, and a pessimistic one in which the unions lost control over events and became incapable of effective action. Everything developed according to the pessimistic scenario. After Yeltsin's Decree no. 1400, which declared the parliament dissolved, Klochkov was faced with a choice. If the trade unions failed to threaten strikes in favour of the constitution, no-one would take their declarations seriously. But if the unions called for strikes, they would not be able to organise them successfully. The result was the adoption of an ambiguous call for protest actions "up to the use of strikes"; this failed to bind anyone to a concrete course of action, and frightened nobody.

Seeing that the FNPR was helpless, the authorities launched their next onslaught, stripping the unions of control over the social welfare funds and threatening the FNPR with dissolution. The Russian government does not appear to want the complete abolition of the FNPR, since there are numerous everyday problems which the authorities are simply unable to solve without the help of the trade union apparatus. However, the government succeeded in intimidating the trade union leaders.

After the bombardment of the "White House", panic broke out among the union officialdom. A congress of the FNPR was held, and a new leadership was elected. MFP leader Shmakov became chairperson of the all-Russian federation. A new stage was proclaimed

in the trade union reforms. However, Shmakov took the helm at a time when prospects for the trade unions were far from promising. The new leadership was forced to make concessions, and to try to avoid head-on confrontations with the authorities. Shmakov and his colleagues stressed the need for moderation, while at the same time striving to bring the situation under their control. Will the attempts to reform the FNPR prove successful? Members of the organisation are faced with a complex of interlocking necessities: the need for labour movement struggle if the rights of Russian workers are to be defended; the need for broad rank and file involvement if this struggle is to triumph; and the need for union structures to be open, accessible and democratic if involvement is to be a reality.

There can be no confident predictions as to the outcome. The only certainty is that Yeltsin and his ministers will bitterly resist attempts by the unions to maintain jobs and living standards. If the Moscow authorities and the MFP have managed a degree of "social partnership", this will not be repeated on the level of Russia as a whole. The Russian government simply does not have the resources which the Moscow authorities have been able to throw into the solving of social problems. Even before the elections of December 1993, the likely nature of Russian labour relations during the next period was beginning to emerge. During November energy sector workers fought and won two important battles against the government. Ironically, the labour movement bodies involved included the Independent Union of Miners, whose leadership has increasingly been forced by government attacks on the coal industry to abandon its pro-Yeltsin stance. A hunger strike by NPG leaders in the Vorkuta coalfields in the north of European Russia, capped by a general strike of miners in the region on 11 November, obliged national leaders of the NPG to plan a Russia-wide coal strike for the first days of December 1993. This was called off after the government promised to provide funds to cover unpaid wages and to take action to clear debts owed to the coal industry. In the Nadym region of north-western Siberia, a nine-day strike by workers in the natural gas industry forced the state-owned gas firm Gazprom on 1 December to agree to a list of demands that included prompt payment of wage arrears dating back as much as six months. Management negotiators also promised to

draw up and implement a program for resettling redundant workers in the south and centre of Russia.

Few Russian trade unionists have the strategic power of the gas industry workers, and in many cases the government would be well content to see workers shut down production in loss-making plants. But falling real wages, swiftly deteriorating social welfare benefits and the prospect of catastrophic levels of unemployment are nevertheless forcing workers to look toward collective action to secure their self-defence. If this action cannot consist of strikes, it may well take the form of open political struggle. Whatever the case, workers will look toward the trade unions as natural tools for organisation. The pressure for the renovation and democratisation of union structures will increase, and to the extent that this process goes ahead, the effectiveness of workers' action will increase. ■

Rick Simon

Workers and Independence in Divided Ukraine

Ukraine is facing a triple transition: to independent statehood, to a market economy, and to political democracy. The first element was realised in a deceptively easy way - the failed coup of August 1991 leaving the Soviet Union as a hollow shell with no power at its centre and all power and legitimacy in the hands of nationalist movements in the republics. In Ukraine, the drive to independence, initiated by the overtly nationalist Rukh, was so successfully usurped by the apparatus of the former Communist Party of Ukraine, that erstwhile party ideologist Leonid Kravchuk romped home in the December 1991 presidential election. The results of that election, and of the parallel referendum affirming independence, revealed that support for an independent state overwhelmingly permeated all sections of the Ukrainian population and all regions of Ukraine. Ethnic differences within Ukraine were buried before the prospect of a territorial Ukrainian state, in which things could only get better if the nettle of independence was grasped. Having created an independent state, all that was needed was to embark boldly on the economic and political transformation of the vestigial structures of the Soviet state. However, it wasn't long before the wheels began to fall off Kravchuk's wagon.

Like the sun on the solar system, the Russian economy exerts a massive gravitational pull on the other nominally independent

economies of the former USSR. The economic crisis resulting from hyperinflation and the severing of links between enterprises in different republics formed the backdrop to the strikes in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine in June 1993, the biggest in the former USSR since the miners' strike of March-April 1991, which proved a major factor in the USSR's ultimate collapse.

The Donbass strikes again focused on the coal industry, which employs 1 in 4 people in the region, but the breadth of the strike extended beyond coal to encompass enterprises in other industries, particularly metallurgy and chemicals, and, in an echo of 1991, the demands of the strikers were primarily political, calling for the resignation of the government and president and ominously for the future of a Ukrainian state, for increased regional autonomy, renewed links with Russia, and in some cases for a federal Ukraine.

Divisions in Ukraine are now informed in particular by linguistic, and not necessarily ethnic, differences between those who use Russian and those who use Ukrainian as their language of everyday discourse. Both sides of the divide see the solution to the economic crisis in Ukraine's external relations, the former favouring improved links with Russia and the latter with the European Union. This division has been exacerbated in 1994 by parliamentary and presidential elections which essentially saw parties and individuals favouring one orientation or the other pitted against each other. In both cases, candidates representing interests in Russified eastern and southern Ukraine triumphed by narrow margins.

In July 1989, the strike by miners in all coalfields of the USSR represented the first mass industrial action in the Soviet Union since the 1917 revolution and was hailed by many on the left as the birth of a new workers' movement (see eg. Mandel). Subsequent events have served to dispel the early euphoria to the point where the emergence of any sort of effective trade union movement has been put into question (see Borisov, Clarke and Fairbrother). While the strikes of 1993 clearly had a major influence on the actions of the Ukrainian government and parliament, this article will seek to examine how far they also contributed to the emergence of an independent labour movement in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian economy

The state of the Ukrainian economy has been the fundamental cause of unrest since independence and it is useful to survey how Ukraine was integrated into the Soviet economy and how far it has been able to develop its own distinctive economy since 1991.

Ukraine in the USSR: Ukraine, with its heavily industrialised eastern region of the Donbass, was an important element in the economy of the former Soviet Union. In 1987, only 6-7 per cent of its industrial potential was controlled from Kiev. As Gorbachev's economic reforms took effect this increased to 45 per cent but all basic industries remained under the control of Moscow (Lukinov p.31).

Ukraine was third amongst republics within the former Soviet Union in terms of intra-republican trade, its volume representing almost 27 per cent of Ukrainian GDP (Dabrowski p.123). Two-thirds of Ukraine's exports comprised heavy industrial goods or energy in the form of coal or petrochemicals (Lukinov pp.35-6). Ukraine also remained an important agricultural republic particularly in its central and western regions.

Industrialisation had begun in Tsarist times in the Donbass region and had been accompanied by an influx of ethnic Russians. By 1989, 22 per cent of Ukraine's population were ethnically Russian but an even higher proportion spoke Russian on a day-to-day basis.

Independent Ukraine: The elation with which independence was greeted masked the shock which the disintegration of the USSR administered to the Ukrainian economy. Demand from the former Soviet Union for Ukrainian heavy industrial, and particularly military, goods dropped by 30 per cent between 1991 and 1992. In addition, the prices of oil and gas imports from Russia, on which Ukraine was heavily dependent, began to rise towards world market prices. Oil imports declined between 1991 and 1992 from 51.1mn tons to 34.1mn tons and high levels of subsidy were maintained in order to keep domestic prices low. Other problems appeared with the establishment

of borders between the republics of the former Soviet Union with the concomitant introduction of customs tariffs, restrictions on cross-border transport and the disruption of trade and production links between enterprises previously under the jurisdiction of a single ministry in Moscow (Dabrowski pp.123-4). Unrest in the Donbass, demands for links with Russia to be restored and participation in the CIS economic zone are understandable as 70 per cent of its supplies came from Russia and 85 per cent from the former Soviet Union (Jung p.52).

In the first nine months of 1993, Ukraine's trade deficit with Russia had risen to an astonishing six trillion coupons (1594 billion roubles) but even this was not the real figure as Russia's continued sales of key commodities at below world market prices implied a capital transfer to Ukraine of 1.2 trillion roubles, equivalent to 30 per cent of Ukraine's GDP (Dabrowski p.125).

Ukrainian independence also brought with it costs previously borne by the USSR budget, particularly in respect of the maintenance of a defence force, which quickly resulted in a fiscal crisis and a total budget deficit equivalent to 27.8 per cent of GDP in 1992 (Dabrowski pp.126-7).

In January 1992, Ukraine followed Russia's lead in price liberalisation provoking an immediate 250 per cent rise in prices. At the same time, the government of Vitold Fokin, dominated by elements of the old nomenklatura, undertook little reform of Ukrainian industry and continued to subsidise its most uncompetitive elements resulting in a hyper-inflationary spiral fed by the gradually increasing costs of vital resources imported from Russia.

Towards a market economy?

Ukraine endeavoured to establish its credentials in international financial circles by joining the IMF in March 1992 and by creating its own, albeit transitional, currency, the coupon, which was so transitional it did not initially have serial numbers on its banknotes. Originally introduced into circulation at parity and in parallel with the ruble, it soon developed an inflationary spiral of its own, with goods being sold at distinct ruble and coupon prices. As the ruble was phased out and the coupon became the sole legal tender in

preparation for the introduction of a genuine convertible currency, the *hryvnia*, economic problems were solved by the emission of more and more currency, fuelling a situation rapidly bordering on hyperinflation, and furthering demands for higher wages.

Fokin was replaced as prime minister in September 1992 by Leonid Kuchma, former director of Yuzhmash, the largest missile plant in the world, at Dnepropetrovsk, and reputedly a more radical reformer than his predecessor.

Apart from price liberalisation, the major plank of any reformer's programme has to be privatisation. A privatisation programme had already been drawn up in July 1992, which envisaged privatisation through the issuing of vouchers to the population, with labour collectives having priority in the purchase of their own enterprise. This method was the one generally favoured by enterprise directors as it kept control in their hands. Nevertheless, little has been done to privatise large enterprises although some steps have been taken towards the privatisation of small and medium-sized businesses.

The energy sector

Ukraine is not naturally rich in sources of energy apart from coal although it may be possible, with sufficient investment, to harness the huge reserves of methane which permeates the coalfields. The collapse of the USSR even resulted in the disintegration of its electrical grid, leaving only one electrical line to Ukraine which is periodically cut off when demand gets too high, resulting in an energy crisis.

The Ukrainian coal industry is run by 23 mine associations administering 277 underground mines of which 20 associations and 254 pits are in the Donbass (Sagers p.399). The coal industry employs 1.2mn workers, 5 per cent of the Ukrainian labour force (Barshay). Coal output has decreased markedly in the last ten years. In 1985, 189mn tons were mined; in 1990 this had fallen to 164.8mn tons and by 1993 it was down to 115.7mn tons. Since the end of 1991 the decreasing availability of pit props and mining machinery from Russia has been a major contributory factor along with diminishing coal reserves (Jung p.52).

The Ukrainian coal industry is the most deadly in the world, four or five miners dying for every million tons of coal brought to the

surface, and it also has the lowest mining wages in Europe. Productivity is desperately low as a result of obsolete equipment and continuing high levels of manual labour. In addition, the coal industry contributes three per cent of global emissions of methane, and pollution in Donetsk and other cities of the Donbass is very high (Barshay).

The coal industry can only cover 20 per cent of its costs and survives because it is heavily subsidised: in November and December 1992 coverage of losses cost 68bn coupons and in 1993 coal industry enterprises were exempted from profits tax [Barshay; Sagers p.400]. Subsidies have been severely cut in 1994 but are still at the level of $50mn per month. Ninety-five per cent of production is accounted for by state orders, leaving only five per cent to be disposed of by enterprises on the free market (Barshay).

Ukrainian Politics

The democratic character of the Ukrainian state has been subject to criticism: the Ukrainian Parliament, the Supreme Council, had been elected in 1990 and was therefore composed primarily of anti-reform elements based on the old nationalised relations of production. The Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) had been declared illegal after the August coup and, in the absence of its framework, representatives of the old nomenklatura in the Ukrainian parliament, the Supreme Council, increasingly promoted sectoral interests. While the old relationship between party and state was no longer operative, creating a viable separation of powers between executive and legislature was to prove very difficult. The working relationship between Kravchuk, as president, and the prime minister, as head of government, degenerated with the appointment of Leonid Kuchma, former director of the gigantic Yuzhmash missile plant in Dnepropetrovsk, who wished to accelerate the pace of economic reform.

Ukraine's fortunes have been more and more dictated by the complex economic and political relationship with Russia. Ukraine depended for much of its energy needs on Russian oil and gas supplies, which until January 1993 were still provided at below world

prices, while the issues of the Black Sea Fleet and Ukraine's possession of nuclear weapons continued to be a source of tension between the two states.

Ukraine attempted to reap maximum economic benefit from the situation by increasing its charges for the transportation of Russian oil and gas across its territory to other European countries, and also to charge Russia for the use of the naval facilities in Stavropol in Crimea. Russia retaliated by raising its energy prices to world level.

The June 1993 strikes

While the immediate backdrop to June 1993 is one of increasing economic and political crisis, the strikes were not an isolated incident but the culmination of a series of threats and stoppages going back to the previous autumn. In September 1992, a strike by the Independent Miners' Union of Ukraine (NPGU) over wages was narrowly averted by the government's capitulation, and in April 1993, a three-day strike organised by all unions in the coal industry, but not supported by miners in western Ukraine, led to increased subsidies for the coal industry.

The raising of Russian energy prices was the official reason for the massive increase in the cost of basic goods in Ukraine by between 200 and 500 per cent announced on 5 June 1993. This followed a government announcement that the minimum wage would be 6,900 coupons with effect from 1 June (*Pravda Ukrainy* 3/6/93). The Federation of Ukrainian Trade Unions (FPU) had criticised this amount for being way below even the government's own estimate of the minimum income required (22,100 coupons.)

The strike began at the Zasyad'ko pit in Donetsk on the afternoon shift of 7 June, the first working day after the massive price rises were announced. Why it began at this particular pit is a slight oddity as it was renowned as a "scab" pit which had not been involved in either of the two major strikes after 1989 (July 1990 and March-April 1991). This particular mine had been rapidly turned round from being a poor producer to a highly profitable enterprise with well-paid workers after the appointment of Efim Zvyagilskii as mine director in 1978. Zvyagilskii had left that particular position to become mayor of Donetsk in April 1993 and was to play a major role in the ultimate

resolution of the strike. It seems significant, however, that the Independent Miners' Union (NPG) were very weak at the pit, with only about a dozen members. While Donbass NPG were planning a strike for 21 June, following the deliberations of the Novogrodovka conference of Donbass miners on 28 May, the spontaneous strike of Zasyad'ko workers on 7 June threw all the NPG's calculations out of the window. Zasyad'ko was quickly followed by one of the NPG's strongholds, Oktyabr'skaya, which struck when the workers learned of the actions (for details of the sequence of events at Zasyad'ko see Borisov and Clarke).

Both the local NPG and the local mine directors moved quickly to control the strike movement. For the NPG it was an opportunity to enhance their influence and strike a blow against the central government whose policies had seemed detrimental to the livelihoods of miners in the Donbass. For directors the strike was a convenient pretext for action against central government in pursuit of greater autonomy for the Donbass and re-establishment of the traditional economic links which had previously existed with Russia but which had been severely damaged by the disintegration of the USSR. A package of documents regarding the implementation of regional autonomy had apparently been lodged with the Ukrainian government some two months previously but no reply had been received (*Trud* 10/6/93).

Zvyagil'skii and the local directors were very supportive of the desire to spread the strike, so supportive that they laid on transport for workers wishing to attend the continuous rallies in Oktyabr'skaya Square in Donetsk, and encouraged enterprises outside of the coal industry to take action also. Within a matter of days the majority of pits in Donbass were idle.

A government commission headed by Viktor Pynzenyk, vice-premier for questions of economic reform, met with strike leaders and directors of the Donbass coal concerns within a couple of days of the strike beginning, but the strikers rapidly withdrew from negotiations believing them to be a waste of time as the commission offered no solutions to their demands and was without any real power to negotiate. Within four days, in an effort to break the deadlock, Zvagil'skii was whisked to Kiev in the guise of a new vice-premier with

responsibility for ending the dispute, although it has been suggested that Zvyagilskii had already been lined up for the vacant position before the strike began.

Demands

The initial demands, which emerged spontaneously, centred on economic questions: a revision of prices; removal of high income tax rates; raising the minimum wage; income indexation. However, after the intervention of the NPG, the main demands became essentially political with economic demands playing a secondary role. In an echo of the demands of the 1991 strike in all the former Soviet coalfields directed against Gorbachev, the major demands became the holding of referenda of (no) confidence in Kravchuk and the Supreme Council. The other main demand was for regional economic autonomy for Donbass, later extended to cover the four eastern provinces of Donetsk, Lugansk, Kharkiv and Dnepropetrovsk (Borisov). This latter demand was linked to the restitution of links with Russia through the medium of the CIS and for the removal of tariff barriers affecting trade. The demand for Russian to be recognised as a second state language in eastern Ukraine was also raised. It was, however, emphasised that these were not demands for the creation of a federal Ukrainian state.

The nature of the demands reflected a growing dissatisfaction with the predicament of independent Ukraine. The nationalism of workers in the east was of a different character to that of workers in the west, and can be summed up in the expression "kolbasnyi natsionalizm" - a reflection of a preoccupation with the potential material benefits accompanying independence rather than an identification with the trappings of Ukrainianness: language, culture and the differences with Russia. Initially, Kravchuk stressed the territorial character of independent Ukraine, encompassing a variety of ethnic groups, but has more recently shifted, as his political base has shifted, to a Ukrainianisation of public life. In addition, the hyperinflation accompanying Ukraine's "shock therapy" (considerable shock and little therapy) had been associated with Pynzenyk from Lviv and former first vice-premier, Igor Yukhnovskii, also from western Ukraine.

Organisation

The June strikes bore a number of similarities to 1989, in particular the use of continuous mass meetings in the central squares of the main regional cities to convey the extent of the support for the actions and as a means for gaining immediate feedback on government concessions. It seems, however, that five years on, mass meetings played a less important role in the exercise of rank-and-file control over the strike leadership, although the initial strike committee was elected from representatives of the pits present in October Square in Donetsk, and were more of a mechanism for legitimising the actions of an already existing leadership drawn from the NPG and the Donetsk City Strike Committee (which had its origins in the 1989 strike). In some pit towns, strike committees were slow to get off the ground and had to be "jumpstarted" mainly by NPG (Borisov). Attendance in the squares was also more orchestrated, delegations from various workplaces being organised and transported on the instructions of enterprise directors.

Mass meetings have an important role to play in the running of strikes provided that those participating genuinely exercise control over both the election of the strike committee and any negotiations with other bodies. In 1989, mass meetings provided the first forums for workers outside of the control of the official unions and enterprise management and were thus a symbol of workers' independence. The aftermath of that strike led to the next stage in the development of an independent workers' movement: the establishment of permanent organisations outside of the official unions, in particular the Independent Miners' Union (NPG). The June strike therefore lacked the elemental democracy of 1989 and was controlled by the already existing organisations such as NPG and the Donetsk Strike Committee. This is not to suggest that a high level of organisation did not exist. An inter-regional inter-branch coordinating council was established bringing together representatives from striking enterprises from the four regions affected. This council appears to have continued its existence after the end of the strike.

Responses

Trade Unions: FPU quickly offered its support to the strikers, calling

a day of action on 16 June, which involved a lobby of the Supreme Council. FPU were more supportive of the economic demands, concentrating on the need to raise the minimum wage. In an interview in *Trud*, FPU leader Aleksandr Stoyan said the responsibility for the crisis lay with the Supreme Council, which had "become a brake on the road to the stabilisation of society", thus distancing FPU from criticisms of Kravchuk and that "the basic demands from the localities are economic and concern primarily the resignation of Parliament in its present form". In addition, Stoyan indicated that FPU supported Kravchuk's proposal for simultaneous elections to the Supreme Council and a referendum of confidence in the President and that he also supported Kuchma's request for extraordinary powers to deal with the emergency economic situation (*Trud* 17/6/93).

The major impact of the strike in the unions was the de facto split which occurred within NPG. While the Donbass miners emphasised the political character of their demands, NPG leader in Kiev, Aleksandr Mril', issued an ultimatum which argued that "in order to stabilise the situation in the Donbass" it was necessary "to resolve the economic demands of the striking miners immediately." It would only be in the event of the government's continued failure to grant these demands that political demands would be advanced and an all-Ukrainian political strike called *(Pravda* 11/6/93). NPG leaders in Donetsk were furious at this misinterpretation of their key demands and also at Mril's failure to acquaint himself with the real situation by visiting Donbass (see *Novosti i Sobytiya* 24, July 1993, p.2).

Unions associated with the nationalist movement, Rukh, were even less supportive. The All-Ukrainian Association of Workers' Solidarity (VOST), in a rather tendentious interpretation of the word "solidarity", argued that the strikes could not be supported as they were the work of pro-Russian remnants of the old Communist regime and were thus subversive of Ukraine's independence.

President, prime minister and supreme council: The strike served to exacerbate the tensions between the various branches of power which had made a major contribution to the economic and political crisis to which the strike was a response.

Kravchuk made his first major pronouncement in respect of the

strike in a television broadcast on Thursday 10 June. His message offered no real concessions and appealed to strikers to return to work for the sake of the economy. His only positive move was to appoint Zvyagilskii to the post of first deputy premier with responsibility for ending the dispute. Zvyagilskii replaced Pynzenyk as head of the government negotiating team.

As the strike widened, the prospect of a resolution seemed no nearer and economic losses mounted, Kravchuk realised that the demand for a referendum had to be accepted. After suggesting a compromise, involving simultaneous new elections to the Supreme Council and a referendum of confidence in himself, which was rejected by the Supreme Council, he set about convincing the Supreme Council that calling the two referenda was essential to end the strike. In any event, the result of the referenda would not be constitutionally binding. Faced with an ultimatum from Donetsk that a campaign of civil disobedience would commence on 17 June if the political demands were not satisfied, the Supreme Council finally bowed to the pressure on 16 June and agreed to the two referenda being held on 26 September.

The resolution of that particular issue led to a major rift between Kravchuk and prime minister Kuchma as the former attempted to create a special economic committee to be headed by Kuchma but which seemed to strip him of many of his prime ministerial powers, which would be assumed by Kravchuk. Kuchma, not for the first time, threatened to resign. Kravchuk responded by withdrawing the decree establishing the committee when he realised that he was, in effect, assuming full responsibility for Ukraine's dire economic plight (Portnikov).

Outcome of strike

According to strike committee reports, the strike at its peak encompassed 238 Donbass mines, 44 mine construction offices, 16 ore dressing works and 400 other enterprises in various branches of the economy (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* 19/6/93). In a televised address Kravchuk reported that losses from the strikes amounted to 6bn coupons and 3.414mn tonnes of coal (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* 26/6/93).

The end of the strike was in itself rather messy with a number of mines and other enterprises refusing to return to work until they were assured that all demands had been met and recriminations over the conduct of the negotiations between different groups of workers.

As a result of negotiations between the government commission headed by Zvyagilskii and the interbranch inter-regional co-ordinating council a protocol was signed late in the evening of 18 June and a return to work called for 19 June. However, on the morning of 19 June, miners from Zasyad'ko, Krasnaya Zvezda and Lidievka mines assembled as usual in October Square and condemned the co-ordinating council for putting their names to an agreement and calling for a return to work before all its provisions had been ratified by the Supreme Council. The co-ordinating council did however maintain a pre-strike stance pending the adoption of the documents (Eremenko).

Criticism of the co-ordinating council continued at a conference of mine representatives held in Donetsk on 23 June on the initiative of both NPG and PRUP, where a resolution was adopted condemning the strike co-ordinating committee for "betraying the interests of the miners' movement" and proposed that the strike continue (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* 26/6/93). According to *Interfax*, 80 mines were still on strike in Donbass on 24 June. Striking miners in the western Donbass city of Pavlograd expressed dissatisfaction with the government's implementation of 15 regional demands they had put forward.

The strike seems to have petered out, however, once it became clear that the main economic demands around regional autonomy had been granted. Apart from agreeing to the referenda, the other major concessions involved the government promising a package of measures worth 13 trillion coupons - roughly half of Ukraine's expected tax revenue for 1993 (Freeland 1993). The minimum wage was raised to 20,900kar. and miners received the biggest wage rise to a guaranteed salary of between 290,000 and 350,000 coupons with underground workers receiving an additional 40,000 coupons. Ivan Illin, deputy minister of finance, said that "agreeing with the miners' demands will lead to a 15-fold increase in consumer prices. This is hyperinflation" (quoted in Freeland 1993).

The big gainers were, however, the enterprise directors who

saw their debts eliminated and fines, imposed for overspending on wages, wiped out.

Aftermath

The political and economic crisis in Ukraine continued to rumble on unabated. In September, Kuchma finally and definitively resigned as prime minister to be replaced temporarily by Zvyagilskii. The referenda agreed for 26 September also disappeared after the Supreme Council agreed to hold elections both to the Supreme Council itself in March 1994 and for the presidency in June 1994. Despite much union sabre-rattling and threatened national strikes, no action was taken over this abrogation of what had been the strikers' main demand in June.

The question of workers' independence was again raised in August with the conclusion of a "programmatic agreement" between the Donetsk Workers (Strike) Committee and Igor Markulov's Liberal Party of Ukraine (LPU), whose main cadres were once leading members of Donetsk Komsomol. The essence of the agreement was that LPU guaranteed to attract Western investment to Donbass coalmines and to ensure that resources were made available for workers made redundant from the closure of unviable pits to be retrained without any loss of wages or benefits. The centrepieces of the new Donbass economy would be a car industry centred on Donetsk and Kharkiv (financed by $200m), and a revamped agricultural sector. The agreement, which appeared to place no obligations on the Strike Committee, was subsequently strongly defended in the pages of its weekly newspaper (see *Novosti i Sobytiya* nos. 28 and 29) as purely an economic and not a political arrangement. This seems an extraordinarily naive standpoint, in a system in which politics and economics continue to be so intimately linked, and reveals the desperation of certain sections of the trade unions to associate themselves with anyone who offers a way out of the crisis, even though the evidence that they are actually capable of doing anything to remedy the situation is flimsy to say the least. For their part, LPU gained considerable publicity and were seen to be developing their base in the run-up to the forthcoming elections.

In November, a number of small "independent" trade unions

under the leadership of NPGU formed a confederation of free trade unions (VPU). Both VPU and FPU argued the need for setting a realistic minimum wage and social security level and for indexation of wages which had been removed earlier in the year. In the absence of a decision by the government to introduce such measures, VPU demanded the government's resignation and called an all-Ukrainian strike for 18 January 1994. Faced with the threat of a renewal of the June strikes, and with elections looming, the government capitulated, reducing a number of food prices from 1 January, allowing banks to extend credit to enterprises to pay wages and promising to index pay.

VPU, however, pressed ahead with its strike call, demanding the government's resignation and the appointment of a prime minister with power to implement all necessary market reforms. VPU's call was not, however, supported by VPU or by VOST in western Ukraine, which, along with Rukh, increasingly saw Kravchuk as the protector of the Ukrainian state, whose position had to be safeguarded at all costs. In the event, the strike was poorly supported and swiftly ended.

March 1994 elections

Following the passing of a new electoral law in November 1993, a French-style electoral system was introduced with two rounds of voting. The main winners were undoubtedly the Communist Party (CPU), the Socialist Party (SPU), and their rural counterpart, the Agrarian Party, all of which retained strong ties with the old nomenklatura and now constitute the largest bloc in the new Supreme Council, albeit without an overall majority.

The CPU's resurrection as the major electoral force seems truly remarkable, given that its re-foundation congress only took place in Donetsk in June 1993. It is perhaps less remarkable if the following factors are taken into account: first, the old Soviet economic system, in which workers and enterprise directors shared a common interest in extorting resources from the centre, continues to exist almost unaltered, in conditions which demand even greater pressure for central support; second, the pressing economic need for a restoration of links with Russia, coupled with ethnic identity, has produced a strong movement of support for parties advocating a return to some form of USSR and the creation of a federal Ukrainian state; third, in

the CPU's case, the first two factors were also linked to a high degree of support from the local nomenklatura (Arel and Wilson 1994a p.14). The CPU seems to have taken a great deal of support away from SPU, which won only three seats in Donbass.

The new electoral law, which has no party list element, limits parties' ability to promote candidates and nationalist parties. Rukh in particular seem to have suffered from the strict rules governing voter turnout, which stipulates a 50 per cent minimum for a result to be valid. As a result of this, only 338 out of 450 seats were filled after the second round of voting and it seems unlikely that the remainder will be filled because of low turnout in by-elections.

Even before the presidential election, the Supreme Council acted quickly to install Vitalii Masol as prime minister. Masol was the last prime minister before independence and, as a representative of the old nomenklatura, was not inclined towards a radical programme of reform.

June 1994 presidential election

The presidential election resulted in the narrowest of victories for Leonid Kuchma over Kravchuk. Results indicated that the country is split down the middle along the historical fault line of the Dnieper river - the left bank, under Russian control since 1654 showing heavy support for Kuchma, and the right bank including western Ukraine showing equally heavy support for Kravchuk (see Arel and Wilson 1994b).

Since Kuchma's election, the trade union movement has itself been affected by the east-west split. At the Third Congress of FPU, held at the end of June, delegates from the western oblasts of Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk walked out in protest at a decision to join the Moscow-based General Confederation of Trade Unions (VKP), the successor to the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS) which controlled the trade unions in the former Soviet Union. West Ukrainian delegates held out the possibility of secession from FPU.

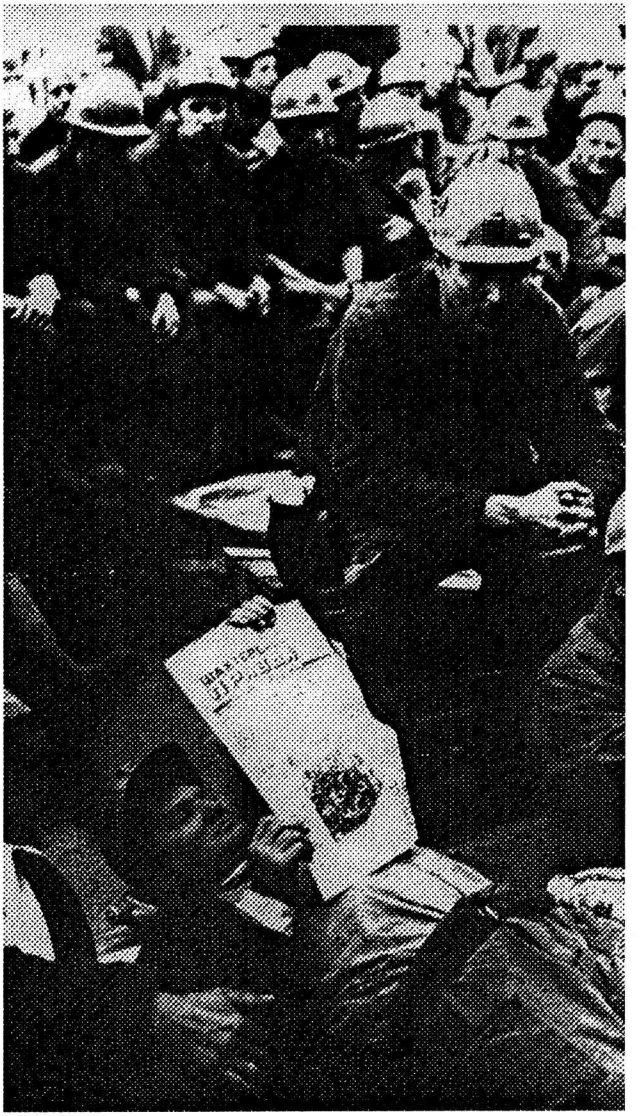
Conclusion

The apparent success of the workers' movement in forcing the Ukrainian president and parliament to accept political demands is

deceptive. Almost immediately after the strike had begun, enterprise directors were playing a major role in manipulating its direction and its demands. This is particularly apparent in the case of Zvyagilskii, who seems to have provided strike leaders with a list of demands around questions of regional autonomy which had been discussed some time before; the strike merely presented an opportunity for these demands to be presented to Kiev with some industrial muscle to back them up.

The demands of strikers and directors in this instance seem to have coincided, highlighting a real problem in the development of an independent workers' movement in the former USSR - precisely that of independence. The trade unions that emerged in the aftermath of the 1989 strike called themselves "independent", in order to emphasise that they were not an arm of the state, and to distinguish themselves from the "official" unions. However, while organisationally independent, the new unions have, in the main, been unable to devise any strategy independent from other social forces in society. In Russia, the NPG has been, at least until recently, Yeltsin's main industrial prop. The continuing existence of the old relations of production in the enterprises, and their continued role as providers of a whole range of social benefits, to a large extent reinforced by the weakness of the centre, has made it difficult for unions to break away from their old role and has strengthened the hand of many enterprise directors. In addition, the collapse of any form of socialist ideology has created a vacuum into which a variety of political currents has flowed vying for workers' support. This has been exemplified in the Ukrainian case by the agreement between LPU and the Donetsk Strike Committee.

Following the parliamentary and presidential elections, Ukraine is split down the middle. The "party of power", the sections of the old nomenklatura which coalesced around Kravchuk, is also split and decisively weakened. Whatever Kuchma, Masol, and the new Supreme Council do, half the country will be dissatisfied, cranking the political crisis up yet another notch. This, added to the crisis over the status of Crimea, places a large question mark over the future existence of Ukraine in its present form. From a socialist perspective, despite the space which now exists for workers to take action and to promote political demands, the emergence of a genuinely independent workers'



movement, which can unite workers across Ukraine, still seems a long way off.

(I would like to thank Vadim Borisov for clarifying some of the points made in this article.)

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The Social and Labour Situation in Russia 1993: Report of the Ministry of Labour of the Russian Federation.

Translated and annotated by ***David Mandel***

This is a slightly abridged report made public in early 1994 by the press service of the Russian Ministry of Labour. It gives a somewhat muted, but on the whole honest picture of the damage wreaked upon the working population in 1993, the second year of "shock therapy". And 1994 is turning out no better than 1993. At the same time, the report offers a glimpse of the contradictions within the Russian government, in the face of continued economic decline, between those who want to hold to the IMF-prescribed course and those calling for a more Keynesian and "socially oriented" transition to capitalism. Even the same government officials have issued contradictory statements in both directions. Although the Ministry of Labour appears here as belonging to the second camp, in 1993 it acted more as an anti-labour ministry, doing almost nothing to enforce existing labour legislation and systematically blocking sectoral accords between unions and management judged too generous to workers (these require the ministry's signature, even if the sector has been effectively privatised).

Despite the measures adopted in 1993 to strengthen the social orientation of the reforms, the social and labour situation remains difficult. Labour motivation and incentives have been weakened; work

organisation and health and safety have deteriorated; violations of labour rights have become more frequent; hidden unemployment is reaching dangerous levels; the system for retraining and skill improvement for industrial workers has practically ceased to function.

The drop in industrial output and the need to support different branches of the economy has caused a decline in the financial resources allocated to the social sphere and to support the living standards of the most vulnerable social groups. As a result, the level of social guarantees has declined, and the indexation of incomes lags behind the growth of consumer prices.

These negative tendencies ... together with a series of long-term factors have resulted in a significant deterioration of the demographic situation. The net decline in population that began at the end of 1991 is characteristic of an ever-increasing number or regions in Russia... Preliminary estimates put life expectancy in 1983 at 65.8 years, as opposed to 69.3 in 1986. [1]

Living standards and incomes

Money incomes, including those from entrepreneurial activity, increased eleven-fold compared to 1992. Taking into account the index of consumer prices (a 9.4-fold rise), incomes grew by 9 per cent. But if one excludes entrepreneurial income, real monetary incomes declined.

Differentiation of the population into rich and poor is proceeding apace. At present the total income of the best-off 10 per cent of the population is eleven times the income of the worst-off 10 per cent. In 1992 the correlation was 7.5 or 8 to one, and in 1991, 4.5 to one. In reality, however, differentiation is even greater, since budget studies miss a significant part of income from commercial and illegal activity.

A significant part of the population is in serious material difficulty. Seventy-seven per cent had incomes less than two times the subsistence minimum, and 30 per cent were below the minimum itself. The proportion of people with such incomes is not declining. Thirteen

1. For men alone, it is down to 59 years.

per cent (19.3 million) had incomes below the minimum food basket. These are mainly families with many children and mono-parental families, families with many dependants and wages close to the minimum, pensioners and invalids living alone... In 1991 the average pension was 69 per cent of the average wage; in 1993 it fell to 30 per cent.

The appearance of the so-called "new poor" should also be noted, that is, able-bodied citizens whose incomes are below the subsistence minimum. These are especially the unemployed (over one million),[2] workers in unprofitable enterprises, people working less than full days (about 4 million), and youth (over 10 per cent of secondary school graduates are unemployed; over 70 per cent of graduates of elementary technical school; over 60 per cent of graduates of secondary technical school; and almost 50 per cent of graduates of institutes of higher learning).

Regional differentiation in incomes is also growing... though it is somewhat offset by consumer price differentials.

There were no major changes in the structure of consumer spending in 1993: food accounted for 48 per cent (as against 47 per cent in 1992), non-food items, 44 per cent (41 per cent in 1992), services, 7.5 per cent (7.7 in 1992). The percentage accounted for by food is an important indicator of well-being. It rose from 32 per cent at the start of 1992, when prices were liberalised, to 47 per cent by the end of that year. But the tendency stopped in 1993... Nevertheless, the quality of nutrition is a matter of grave concern among health specialists.

Wages

Wages are the main source of monetary income of the active population. The average wage in 1993 rose 9.9-fold, about the same as consumer prices. But in December 1993, compared to December 1992, the average wage rose eight-fold as compered to a rise in consumer prices of almost ten-fold.

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2. This figure grossly underestimates the real number of unemployed. See G. Standing, "Employment Restructuring in Rissian Industry", *World Development*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1994, pp. 253-260.

Public sector[3] wages continue to lag considerably behind industrial wages. In 1993 wages in the social and cultural sectors were only 40 to 80 per cent of the average wage in industry. In regions with significant primary and heavy-industrial sectors, where wages grew faster than prices, the gap with social sector wages gave rise to conflicts. Delayed payment and delayed adjustment of wages by the central government has become habitual.

Employment

In 1993 there were 71 million employed people or 48 per cent of the total population of Russia. The non-state sector, which now employs 40 per cent of those working, is beginning to play an ever-increasing role.

Compared to 1992, the number of employed people declined by 3.9 per cent. At the same time, the number of vacancies in enterprises rose sharply at the beginning of 1993 (three-fold compared to the last quarter of 1992) and remained stable in the last half of the year. If enterprises in the first quarter of the year planned to create 222,300 jobs, in the third quarter this figure was four times lower. This is directly linked to the tendency for investment activity to decline.

Growing "hidden" unemployment is another negative aspect of the current labour market. It takes such forms as the reduced workday or week and forced unpaid vacations.

In a number of regions unemployment has already become a reality. This is especially the case... in towns and settlements where virtually the entire population is employed in one or two enterprises. In the republics of Mariyi-El, Dagestan, Chuvashiya, Adygea, Mordoviya and in Pskov, Yaroslavl and Ivanovo regions, unemployment is high and job possibilities limited. In the labour exchanges of these areas, between eleven and thirty-three people compete for every vacancy.

In 1992 about 15 million people left their places of work for various reasons (about 21 per cent of the employed population) and 13 million were hired by institutions and enterprises (18 per cent).

Three economic sectors stand out in relation to changes in the

3. Workers paid directly from state budgets - mainly health, education, and cultural workers.

structure of employment that occurred last year:
1. The fuel and energy sectors, where despite the decline in output (7 to 20 per cent), there was growth in employment (7 to 10 per cent).
2. Machine-building, light industry, chemicals, in which there was a decline in output (15 to 30 per cent) and a decline in employment (3 to 10 per cent).
3. Food and ferrous metallurgy, in which there was a significant decline in output (from 9 to 14 per cent) while employment changed insignificantly.

The different employment dynamics in the various sectors are linked not so much to changes in output levels as to changes in wage levels. Thus, there was a growth of employment in credit and in insurance institutions, in tax offices, notarial and legal offices, that is, where wages are significantly above average.[4] In the science and construction sectors there was a particularly steep decline in employment.

The number of people without work and actively seeking it, or working in partial employment regimes, was 7.8 million or 10 per cent of the active population at the end of 1993. Only 800,000 or 1.8 per cent of the active population are officially recognised as unemployed.

Labour relations

Last year, serious difficulties, linked to the lack of correspondence between labour legislation and the new economic conditions[5], and to the absence of an effective system of protection of the labour rights of hired workers, arose in the relations between employers and hired workers. The broadening of the rights of employers and the limiting of state intervention in the sphere of labour relations did not reduce tensions between workers and employers. The practice of sending workers on leave without their consent and without payment became more frequent, as did the introduction of a shorter working day

4. This is in sharp contrast to the situation only a few years before, when these employees were among the lowest paid.
5. In other words, workers tried to make use of the very broad rights they had inherited (at least on paper) from the old, non-capitalist system.

without a corresponding reduction in wages.

In recent years, contractual forms of labour relations based on the principles of social partnership in practice replaced administrative forms of labour regulation[6]... In 1993, 62 sectoral agreements were concluded between union federations, employers, and government... Overall, it was possible to reach agreement on indexation of wages at 80 per cent of the growth of consumer prices. Seventy-one territorial agreements were also concluded... However, in a series of republics, territories, and regions, associations of employers are forming very slowly, and one can observe a decline in union influence, as well as stratification and division among workers.

The Ministry of Labour has found serious shortcomings in the area of collective agreements. About a third of the enterprises investigated had no collective agreements. Thirty-five per cent of the workers surveyed said that collective agreements only partially guaranteed the protection of the personal interests of workers, and about 32 per cent said they offer no guarantees at all.

In 1993, of the 3340 registered conflicts, only 263 or 7.8 per cent led to strikes. The rest were regulated through conciliation, the conclusion of collective agreements, and sectoral accords.

Work conditions and social insurance

A significant number of people worked in harmful and dangerous jobs. An economic mechanism that would motivate employers to improve work conditions has not been created. About 30 people are killed daily at work and more than 50 become invalids. About 400,000 accidents occur annually in industry. The level of trauma is two to four times

6. "Social partnership" refers to the regulation of wages and work conditions through tripartite negotiations between representatives of the state, employers (that is, directors), and unions. The tripartite negotiations set minimum conditions and wages on a national, sectoral and regional basis. Local collective agreements are supposed to improve on these settlements. In practice, however, unions have nothing approaching the power of the other negotiating "partners". In the enterprises themselves, they often remain subordinate to management. The state has been notoriously recalcitrant in living up to its commitments in these agreements. Moreover, these agreements are not even legally binding on employers, who generally do not belong to any employers' association that might be a signatory.

higher than in the developed countries of Europe.

Enterprises are cutting back (and in the private sector they often spend nothing at all) on spending on job safety. Overall in the Russian Federation, about 3.5 million people are in unsafe jobs and over 5 million work in conditions that expose them to harmful production factors. Of special concern is the question of compensation for workers for accidents, work-related illnesses, and other health problems related to work. Despite the constant growth in fatal accidents (something that is very hard to conceal), the quantity of newly awarded pensions for work accidents has shown a tendency to decline. This indicates concealment of work-related accidents and illnesses.

The reason for this is the absence of legislation and legal regulation of relations in the area of social insurance in general and in the area of payment of government social insurance allocations and in insurance for work accidents and diseases in particular. In these areas, decisions were for a long time taken on an individual and ad hoc basis.

Job training in industry

The supply to industry of qualified personnel was another area of difficulty. The adopted laws on education and employment do not create a sufficient basis for personnel training for the enterprises... In a series of enterprises, educational institutions are being closed or re-profiled, and educational equipment is being removed. The number of people studying in the system of skill enhancement has sharply declined - more than three-fold for managerial and professional and more than four-fold for workers. The number of workers who completed training and retraining courses was down two-fold.

Studies show the absence of intention among management to spend money on personnel development and skill improvement, and the absence among workers of a desire to continue to study: 35 per cent had no intention of studying further; over 20 per cent had no desire to raise their professional skills, and over 17 per cent did not wish to change professions.

Workers are ceasing to value professional skills; they are not prepared to change professions or jobs; and they fear the labour

market. Up to 40 per cent of students graduate from school without having chosen a profession; 45 per cent of the students of technical school are not sure they made the right choice; and a third are dissatisfied with their profession. Young people rate work fourteenth on a general scale of life priorities (this compares with second or third place in developed countries).

At the same time, one should note signs, as compared to 1992, of an increase in interest among enterprises in improving the system of management and organisation of production and labour. In 1993, for the first time, enterprises turned to professional orientation centres for help in resolving problems relating to the management of personnel. Local government administrations are also showing interest in the analysis of the labour market.

Conclusions

As a result of measures taken to review wages and pensions and other social allocations and to organise aid to needy families, the drastic decline in living standards that began in 1992 was halted in 1993. In essence, economic reform is occurring at a relatively low level of unemployment.

At the same time, the tactics adopted in 1993 of waiting for economic results have not helped to solve social problems, among which the most important are the limitation and reduction of poverty, support for employment, protection of the work rights of citizens. Practice shows that positive social change occurs much more slowly when left to spontaneous developments... But the state has no social targets or instruments for controlling the situation. To continue to "follow the economy" endangers the achievement of economic and social goals and will become a significant brake on reform.

To resolve these problems, economic reform must be given a more social orientation, and in particular it must:

1. strictly observe a fixed ratio of social spending to gross domestic product.
2. orient the entire system of social partnership towards more active participation in formulating socio-economic policy.
3. resolve the employment problem in the state sector that is without state regulation. In the post-war years, many industrially developed

countries took upon themselves functions of control and regulation of demand, using monetary, credit, and budget policies to support a specific volume of production and level of employment. It is clear that such an approach in relation to a limited state sector, orientated to the production of goods needed by the population and country, is justified. Along with a balanced stand on the part of the unions, this will prevent the development of mass unemployment. If it is impossible to prevent unemployment (beyond a permissible level) through economic methods, then administrative measures should not be ruled out.

4. use forms of government wage regulation to suppress inflation, stabilise the volume of production and eliminate unfairness in the correlation between workers' wages and managers' salaries.[7]

5. adopt a complex approach to the limitation and reduction of poverty, including one based on raising labour productivity and its remuneration. Attempts to resolve this problem mainly through social support of the needy are not succeeding.

6. eliminate the consequences of the prolonged period of government inaction in the area of protection of the work rights of citizens of the Russian Federation. There are frequent cases of enterprises liquidating health and safety departments and training centres. The on-time payment of wages and the conditions of collective agreements are being systematically violated.

It is important to put an end to the influence of such factors as the loss of confidence in tomorrow among certain strata of the population and to the all-permissiveness and impunity of the state bureaucracy. Slowness in tackling these problems will lead to increased social tension, a real source of danger for the economy itself.

The time has come for the state, in accordance with the new constitution, to take upon itself the function of defence of the rights of citizens and assure that order prevails in this sphere. ■

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7. The gap has grown very rapidly over the past two years, reaching an average of one to thirty; the recommended norm is one to five. (*Rabochaya Tribuna*, 15 March 1994)

The Workers and the Union in a Russian Defence Plant

*Interview with **Nikolai Prostov**, Union President at Arsenal, St Petersburg*

*Interviewed by **David Mandel.***

Nikolai Prostov: I'm chairman of the union committee of the Arsenal Production Association. This is a defence plant that successfully met its production targets until 1990. Actually, output began to decline a bit earlier, already under Gorbachev.

David Mandel: *What did you make here.*

Our production used to be strictly secret. We made unique mountings for artillery. Even more secret was our space production for the army.

How many workers have you lost since 1990?

About 40 per cent. But these people were not formally laid off - they left "of their own accord", since wages had become so small. Wages fell because the state cut the plant's finances, orders were cut back Our problem boils down to the fact that there has been no conversion to speak of. As I understand it, conversion means that plants shift to new types of production, to civilian goods. But that's hard for us to do since our equipment is very specialised and can't produce anything

but military goods.

We make huge metal bodies for satellites. Our equipment can produce to a very high degree of accuracy. These metal bodies sit in vast hangars and require special berths that can't be used for anything else, not even for aircraft. Of course the economy still needs satellites. In the communications sector they would just love to order them, but they have no money. That's the situation: we can make them; they are needed; but there's no money.

On the other hand, we can't make space in the factory for other equipment, since we still get some state orders, and they are mandatory; we can't refuse them. If there were no defence orders at all, we'd know for sure that we have to re-equip the shops. So we work at a fraction of our capacity, and people stand around idle.

If there were some sort of conversion plan, we could decide what to do. Actually, we have worked out detailed plans for civilian production. We had a lot of plans. You can't say the administration was napping. For example, there were plans to make equipment for large-scale food freezing for the fishing fleet. We also had plans for equipment for the food industry that is not currently produced in Russia. But it always comes down to the same problem: we can make it, but those who need it can't pay.

It's also hard to sell our goods when the price of energy has risen so steeply. We aren't competitive on the world market because of these energy costs and also, in part, because of our high overhead - our administrative apparatus is still too big. Our prices have already reached world levels, but our quality hasn't. It takes big investments to produce at world standards.

The situation is analogous in all defence plants. And as I said, the state provides no clarity on the fate of the defence industry. To all our questions, they only shrug their shoulders. In the meantime, the workers collectives dispersed, and those that stayed are not the most skilled. They are generally people waiting for their pensions and afraid to leave. There are also many women, since they tend to be less mobile. If for some reason we were suddenly told to make something that we could easily have produced just a few years ago, we'd have a lot of trouble.

But undoubtedly the main thing was that the government had no military policy that could serve as a basis for determining defence production needs. Lately, they seem at last to have adopted something, and there are some slight changes for the better. But one thing is sure, we'll not return to the old volume of orders. Of course, we definitely needed a drastic cut in defence spending. But, again, that requires a conversion plan. That would help to reduce the pain. Instead, they merely tossed out a slogan. They provided no financing for restructuring or retraining. What they gave was a joke.

On the other hand, this was occurring at a time when the enterprises were gaining their autonomy from central state control. The directors became much freer in their disposal of government funds and resources. And there were many abuses. Even the tiny sums that were allocated for conversion were often spent on other things. Of course, it's hard to prove that; it would take special inquiries. But I can say that the money never reached the collectives for which it was destined.

For example, our director set up on the enterprise's territory what might, at first glance, look like a useful private business - it makes mass consumer goods: kettles, samovars, pans, etc. This factory starts up and makes money. Then the state allocates some money for conversion and the director gives the money to his business. As I see it, that money should have been used to convert the defence plant to civilian production. Instead, it went to a new plant already producing kettles and making money. To put it simply, money is simply being pumped out of the state sector into private pockets through these private companies set up by managers of state plants.

The director doesn't own the building or the land but he has the power to rent them out and decide the terms. The documents show that he has rented out the enterprise buildings to big private firms for a song. Obviously these firms have found a way to reward the director for his generosity.

Here's another example. We had a training centre, a beautiful historic building dating back to the last century. The director rents it to a bank. The bank pays rent ahead for twenty-five years at the ridiculous price of 186 roubles per square metre per year. This is at a time when similar space is going for up to 100,000 roubles per

square metre. Obviously the director has some personal interest here.

It's up to the investigating agencies to prove this. But even though abuses are everywhere, inquiries are rarely conducted, since they inevitably lead to politics. As soon as the state attorney begins to dig for abuses - and they most often occur on the hazy line separating state and private property - shouts immediately ring out: "You're blocking the privatisation process, the political course of the government!"

Are you saying that the Attorney General is covering up abuses?

Not quite. Say I'm an investigator who has dug up some material on some director and I pass it on to higher authorities. Say it reached the Attorney General's office. They discuss what to do. If they try to move on it, open a criminal file, then a powerful state agency called the State Committee for Property, headed by a certain Chubais, will inevitably intervene. And Chubais usually covers for these directors. He has the support of Yeltsin. His is probably the most powerful state administration today, since it manages all the property in the country. He is so powerful because this property can make enormous money. I'm not quite prepared to say that Chubais is directly the author of the abuses but he definitely protects those who are. And the Attorney General can do nothing against him.

In any case, one gets the clear impression that our director is not very interested in conversion any more, in the sense of wanting to restructure production. On the other hand, you can very clearly see his interest in using our enterprise for private commerce. Arsenal was founded by Peter the Great to make cannons. It was the very first factory built in the city. One can say that the city really began with this factory. For centuries Arsenal was a state factory. Now our director has decided to make it private. There's a very strong campaign to privatise it in some form, and in this campaign the director has the backing of political forces. I assume that these political forces will be among the new owners of the enterprise.

But the question arises: why do they need a factory that is going through such hard times and whose future seems so uncertain? There are almost no profits. Why does the plant interest them? These,

of course, are my own ideas, but I think that the people in charge of policy at the highest levels are consciously making it difficult for enterprises to survive. They do this basically through their tax policy that leaves almost no profit with the enterprises. But they also have a policy of slowing down transfers among enterprises through the banks. A plant on the verge can be bought for a song. Once privatisation is completed, tax policy will change, and the newly privatised enterprises will then start to make profit. That's my view on the policies of the State Committee for Property. I could be wrong, but this is my strong impression from the experience of my plant and of those around me.

Is the situation different in non-defence plants?

As far as privatisation is concerned, the situation is very different, since the privatisation of most defence plants is not moving forward well. The worker collectives understand that the acquisition of their factory by some unknown private owner can turn out to be worse for them. Moreover, our legislation gives the work collectives many rights, especially for self-management, in state plants. These rights exist when at least 51 per cent of the plant belongs to the state. In privatised enterprises these rights are lost. As a result, the basic mass of workers oppose privatisation. But our director is marching at the head of the process. I assume that this is because he has good connections with various political agencies.

Has he been director for long?

Relatively long. But it's only in the past two or three years that he has become close with certain functionaries in the State Committee for Property. Together, they have decided to make a run for the property.

So he is not one of the still "red" directors?

Hardly.

And are the directors of other plants "redder"?

Nowadays, I divide directors into two groups: directors that are, as you put it, "red", that is, who are interested in the development of production. These are by no means always people acting out of communist conviction. Their soul simply feels for the factory. They grew up with the factory, and it depresses them to see it in such a terrible state, losing its people and its productive capacity. Such directors try to fight for the survival of their enterprise out of their own life's conviction. These people are not so much interested in property as in the factory itself.

But there are directors who have no interest at all in the factory, except as property that can be privatised and then resold at a profit. The idea is to buy cheap today, resell tomorrow at a profit and secure one's future and that of one's descendants. Directors behave according to one of these two interests.

And how does the situation at Arsenal compare to that of other defence plants?

I can't really say as far as the question of property is concerned, but generally the situation is more or less the same everywhere - all defence plants are in the same trouble and many are not working at all. Their workers are at home, getting a miserable allowance, sometimes nothing at all. About 20-30 per cent of the work force in the defence sector is idle each month. This is hidden unemployment.

Let's talk about the role of the unions in this situation. You were elected as a reformer.

Definitely. That was in 1990 on the wave of popular activism, when people felt that they can change a lot in the life of our country.

At the time, the plant was working normally?

Yes, this wave of activism was based upon purely political issues. These were the electoral campaigns for the first Congresses of

People's Deputies. It was basically a democratic, anti-bureaucratic wave. That was when I got involved in politics in the Leningrad Popular Front. In the context of these first democratic elections, it was decided also to conduct trade union elections in a new way. Traditionally, a small group of delegates chosen in the shops elected the union committee at the delegates conference and the union committee then elected the chairperson. We wanted direct universal suffrage for the union committee and chair.

What was your job at the time?

I was a robot-technology engineer. I began in the plant as a mechanic, then worked as an adjuster on the rather complex machinery. I also attended evening classes at the Military Mechanical Institute and finally graduated as an engineer.

Why did you decide to run for chair of the union committee?

Actually, I had no intention of running. My goal was simply to have democratic elections. With much effort, we forced the union to conduct a poll on how the workers wanted the elections. They opted for the direct voting, and the call went out for candidates. But the candidates that presented themselves were mainly the director's people. We couldn't find any alternatives from among our ranks.

What do you mean by "our ranks"?

We had formed an initiative group. There were simply a lot of people who wanted to change things for the better. These were basically technical and engineering staff but there were also some workers. It's hard for me to remember now how it was formed. It probably happened through the Popular Front. There may have been leaflets inviting people to join the Front, and its members from our plant formed the core of the activists. So when we saw that there were no candidates to our liking, they suggested that I run. I won in a field of seven.

What was your programme?

The basic task was to defend the rank-and-file personnel from abuse by management. That was supported by the collective. There were many points, but that was the basic orientation.

Did you come under much pressure from the administration?

Of course. But it got much worse after I became union chairman. There were terrible intrigues, attempts to get rid of me. But I managed to hold on.

But it would be impossible to repeat all that today. At the time, yes, people were active. Today they have lost faith in the possibility of changing things for the better. And, unfortunately, this loss of faith doesn't allow us to develop broadly our union work. We don't always feel the support of the rank and file, even when our initiatives are good ones.

But perhaps an even more serious problem is that the basic group of activists has left, the people that originally surrounded me. These were active people, the most conscious ones, and they simply found other ways to make a living. They saw that in our enterprise, in conditions of "conversion", they couldn't make a living. And they left. I tried to gather another group of activists, but that is extremely hard to do today, since people have become disillusioned with everything. There are few active people. And workers who are close to retirement are more afraid of speaking out.

The low level of consciousness also plays a role. The workers don't understand that the profits of this enterprise were really used for the work collective, that they benefited from them in their wages, all sorts of subsidies for cheap meals, summer camps for their kids, cheap vacation trips. All that is coming to an end. People are getting absolutely no benefits from their enterprises other than their money wages. They are also offered vague promises of some sort of dividends from the profits, when they become stock holders. But experience shows that these dividends are pitiful, practically worthless.

What concretely has your union committee tried to do?

We tried somehow to form a self-management group so that the work collective could participate in decisions on the use of profits. But it failed, since we couldn't find activists. So today it is the director, along with his own circle of people, who decide what to do with the profits, and no one else can even get close. People are afraid to enter into conflict with the administration. As a result, there is simply no control over how the profits are used.

Of course, if we became a (private) joint-stock company, there would be some advantages. The stock holders would include people from outside the plant, presumably independent people who would insist on some control over the administration. But the workers would end up with less money. That's already clear. That wouldn't bother me so much if we at least had the guarantee of a living minimum wage. But in December 1993 the minimum consumer basket of goods and services stood at 130,000 roubles or about $90. The average wage in December was maybe $50-$60, a miserable sum. With that money, there is no kind of decent life. In other industrial sectors wages are better. We are among the lowest paid.

So I can't really say our union is very active as a union. It's really just myself and a small, very small, group of people. We are in constant battle with our management that is actively grabbing up our plant's property. Only a solidary collective could oppose that, and that doesn't exist today. People don't understand what they are losing. They never really felt it was their plant.

(This interview also appears in the current issue of the Montreal and Moscow-based journal, *Socialist Alternatives,* vol 3, no 1, 1994.)

Socialist Alternatives Альтернативы

In the current issue:

Ethnicity and Nationalism: A View From the Left
Ralph Miliband
National-Liberalism and Great Power Chauvinism in Russia
Alexander Buzgalin
The Meaning of the "Zhirinovsky Phenomenon"
V. Mezhuyev
Reflections on a Sacred Cow: Collective Property
Boris Kagarlitsky
Economic Equality and Poverty in Russia
N. M. Rimashevskaya

The Russian edition of *Socialist Alternatives* is now appearing quarterly. The English edition will appear as an annual each autumn. The cost of the English edition will be $20.00 (soft cover), $38.00 (hard cover). Make cheques payable in Canadian or US funds to Quebec Institute for International Research and Education. Outside of North America, make payment by international money order. Add $10.00 for airmail. All money received for subscriptions to the English edition will go to help support the Russian edition.

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Renfrey Clarke

The Left at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Conference Report

Some years after the "old left" Communist Party regimes collapsed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the international results are clear: not peace and an expansion of democracy, but a licence for the forces of capital to go on a worldwide offensive against the rights and living standards of workers. Fighting back against this offensive requires the creation of a new left.

In the Hungarian capital on 16-18 September the task of building this movement took a step forward, as more than 60 people from countries as distant as Argentina, Australia and the US assembled for an international conference. With the title "Social and Political Restructuring and Perspectives: the Left at the Dawn of the 21st Century", the gathering was hosted by the Hungarian group Left Alternative, and followed a similar conference in 1991. Left Alternative is a political current descended from a group of dissident Hungarian socialists who came together in 1988.

The latest conference began with a session aimed at defining the present dynamics of the world political system, and the prospects for socialist and working class forces on the historical level. Speakers returned repeatedly to these themes during the days that followed. German scholar and member of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), **Judith Dellheim**, sought to pinpoint the essence of socialism in the concept of indivisible human rights. In charting a future course for the left, she maintained it was necessary to focus on the goal of the emancipation of every human being, while retaining the analytical methods developed by Marx and Engels. The "really existing socialism" that expired around the beginning of the 1990s, Dellheim argued, should be considered as a "socialist experiment, to be analysed but

not recreated".

For Russian economist **Alexander Buzgalin**, the post-capitalist societies of the twentieth century needed to be seen as the first distorted beginnings of socialism, distorted by immature material conditions and by an overwhelmingly hostile international environment. The failure of these attempts to create durable post-market economies, Buzgalin argued, by no means amounted to the "end of history" proclaimed by liberal ideologues. Drawing a series of bold historical analogies, Buzgalin observed that the rise of the first market economies at the end of the middle ages had also been a complex process marked by defeats and setbacks, including the overthrow of early efforts to create states based on the new economic principles.

In the view of Polish philosopher, **Adam Schaff**, technological revolution has brought profound changes to the tasks of the modern-day left. Mass unemployment is now a permanent feature of capitalism; faced with the waning of labour in the traditional meaning of the word, socialists according to Schaff need to set themselves the goal of creating a civilisation not of full employment, but of full "wage-earning occupation". Meanwhile, other challenges confront the left movement: dealing with the continuing threat of nuclear holocaust; with environmental degradation; and with the unequal and unjust relations between North and South. To meet these challenges, Schaff told the conference, the left needs to forge new alliances with forces such as the environmental, women's and youth movements.

Peter Szigeti of the Political Science Institute in Budapest, a member of Left Alternative, discussed the theoretical challenges faced by the left in Eastern Europe as a result of the dominant socially and culturally conservative ideology that accompanies the restoration of capitalism in these countries. **György Wiener**, also from Left Alternative, presented a paper which attempted to situate the systemic change in Eastern Europe in the context of the dynamics of the present world capitalist system.

Various speakers addressed the shortcomings of existing new left groups. Berlin scholar, **Michael Heinrich**, noted theoretical deficiencies that included a failure to develop an adequate analysis of Soviet-type socialism; unclarity about the forces that should fight for socialism; and programmatic vagueness that reduced many leftists to

campaigning around "a set of nice desires". Hungarian scholar **Tamás Krausz** spoke of "sectarianism, abstract doctrinaire theoreticism, over-ideologisation, and endless repetition of the final goals." **Robin Blackburn,** editor of the British left journal, *New Left Review,* warned of puritanical attitudes within the left movement; lively debate followed his insistence on the need to "raise the banner of socialist consumerism."

Especially from the second day, the conference participants focused increasingly on concrete issues of contemporary society, and on the particular strategies needed to revive and strengthen the left. Vienna socialists **Hannes Hofbauer** and **Andrea Komlosy**, and Left Alternative member, **Susan Zimmermann**, discussed models of catching-up industrialisation and the question of "delinking", that is, the process of cordoning off a particular territory from the distorting mechanisms of the world market in order to pursue a rational program of economic development. Other speakers described the impact of neo-liberal policies in specific national settings.

Moscow economist **Andrei Kolganov** and sociologist **Boris Kagarlitsky** analysed the collapse provoked by "reform" in Russia; Kagarlitsky made a strong impression when he insisted on the need for a strategically powerful sector of state property. French socialist **Catherine Samary** described the situation in the former Yugoslavia, pointing to the effects of neo-liberal "stabilisation" policies in fracturing social solidarity and fuelling ethnic conflicts. **Roman Viorel** of the University of Bremen detailed the catastrophe brought about by monetarist policies in Romania. Even where "reform" has been relatively successful, as in the Czech Republic and Slovenia, the costs have been borne above all by workers and other traditionally oppressed layers.

Prague socialist **Adam Novak** described the anti-labour campaigns waged by the Czech government, and the country's repressive labour code. Addressing the question of "What a New Left Social Policy Could Be", Slovenian scholar **Sonja Lockar** outlined the deterioration of working-class living standards in her country since the late 1980s, and the gutting of social welfare programs. **Hugo Radice**, from the University of Leeds in Britain and a leading representative of the Conference of Socialist Economists, spoke on the constraints

facing the policy-makers in Eastern Europe today. It would be impossible for them to implement the basic minimum of investment and welfare policies, he argued, without the re-nationalisation of some of the leading financial and industrial sectors.

Jaime Pastor from the Marxist Studies Foundation in Madrid and a member of the United Left in the Spanish State presented a paper on the importance of the new social movements for the future of the left. Fundamentally left and anti-authoritarian in their orientation, focused on the defence of "public goods" and citizens' rights, the new social movements have confronted the state, the institutions and logic of the capitalist world market, and the forces of the new right and, in so doing, had created a public space within which people not only could defend and expand their rights but also discuss alternatives for the future. Events in the Spanish State have demonstrated, however, that the workers movement, although weakened internationally and on the defensive, is still the social force that can most decisively challenge the despotism of the market. What is decisive for future left strategy is the confluence of these movements around a new pluralist radicalism. **Kate Hudson** from the South Bank University in London and from the British journal, *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, gave an interesting and informative talk on the recent history of the Communist movement in Britain. The British Labour MEP, **Christine Oddy,** gave a likewise interesting account of the structure of the European Parliament and the difficulties facing socialists who want to advance the cause of the labour movement in that institution.

The third and final day of the conference was devoted largely to summaries of the debate during earlier sessions, and to the adopting of a general *Declaration*. The essence of new left politics, this declaration noted, lay not just in moving beyond hierarchic "state socialism", but also in pressing ahead with the political and intellectual struggle to overcome the capitalist world system, and in defending "the social, economic, ecological and cultural structures that are potential sources of resistance to world capitalism." An precondition for change was a rejection of sectarianism and dogmatism. The new left should work together with all democratic currents and movements opposing the logic of capitalism. ■

What follows are extracts from five of the papers presented to the International Left Conference in Budapest, 16-18 September 1994.

Tamás Krausz: The Hungarian New Left

The Left Alternative in Hungary was formed in September 1988 in opposition to the old state party. Its programme was radical; it wanted to turn "state socialism" in an anti-statist and anti-capitalist direction. Its basic goal, a democratic socialism in which society genuinely governs itself, was not realised anywhere in Eastern Europe. Conservative, nationalist regimes were established everywhere, bringing with them forms of primitive (wild) capitalism unknown to today's generation.

Remnants of the old state parties reorganised themselves under Social Democratic or Communist banners as a left-wing opposition to the new regimes. The "New Left", however, which we represent, was unable to establish itself as a major influence anywhere in the region. An independent left-wing Party of Labour was established in Russia, and a small group similar to our own exists in Prague. We have made contact with Polish and (East) German organisations with similar programmes to our own but so far we have made no such contacts in Romania or the Yugoslav successor states.

Our contact with New Left groups in the West, however, is good. Our goal is a more systematic and organised form of international cooperation with all such groups in a spirit of social self-organisation, feminism, environmental protection, anti-racism and struggle against all forms of exclusion and oppression. It is necessary for us to reflect on long-term political strategy and this is part of the agenda of our present conference...

Since the change of system in these countries, the elite in the capitalist metropolitan countries, with the cooperation of the new elites in the "post-Communist" countries, are isolating millions of eastern European workers, driving them to the periphery. In this

situation, traditional Social Democracy has been unable to offer any solutions. In fact, it is in danger of dissolving into liberalism. Some conservative sections of the old Communist Parties, rather than attempting to renew socialist ideology, have degenerated into parties of the unemployed and poor, simply to retain a presence in political life. Others have become a sect, looking nostalgically to the past. With such a nationally defined framework there is no future for the left.

Our task is to find the operational weak spots within the world system and within the system in Eastern Europe, to assist in the political self-organisation of the workers and the rest of society with fresh, new ideas and political strategies. In this respect, there are certain elements of the situation which are important for us:

1. Privatisation, which is being carried out in the interests of the new elite, lacks legitimacy in the whole of society;
2. The destruction of all forms of economic democracy is, historically speaking, a step backwards...;
3. The new elite, struggling to establish itself, is tempted to move in an authoritarian direction;
4. The new regimes in Eastern Europe tolerate and even encourage racism, discrimination against women and minorities, and the continued destruction of the environment;
5. Important sections of the international left support this "re-marketising" of Eastern Europe.

We see our weakness at this moment as a temporary phenomenon. We are therefore not pessimistic. One of the reasons for this optimism is that nowhere in Eastern Europe do the new systems offer a social and economic alternative for the majority of the people which is better than what went before. We welcome the broadening of political democracy. We will make use of this and we look forward to the end of this millennium, which is also the beginning of a new cycle in the world economy, and we are confident that new mass movements will struggle to take their fate into their own hands. In this struggle for self-direction, the radical left can help to inspire the formation of alternative structures of power...

Adam Schaff: A New Left is Needed

The new industrial revolution is leading spontaneously and inevitably towards a great civilisational transformation. Labour, in its traditional meaning, is in decline as a result of progressive robotisation. The result is increasing and mass-scale structural unemployment. The social system will have to change as a result with a new division of social income and the introduction of a collectivist economy... This raises the question of the social forces capable of carrying out such a transformation...

What tasks do we have in mind? In the first place, we are concerned with a transition, as painless as possible, from a civilisation of wage-earning labour to one of wage-earning occupations. Can the parties of the old left, the Communists and Social Democrats, achieve this? Theoretically, yes, but in practice, no. There are two reasons for this. The point of struggle and organisational form of these parties is changing; the socialist movement of old concentrated on the exploitation of labour, the task of the new socialist movement will be the organisation of a new type of labour occupation. Traditional labour-for-wages will have to become labour-occupation, socially necessary and paid for by society, like present-day school teachers, university professors, civil servants, etc. This is not something entirely new, but it will be on a much greater scale. The trade unions or party apparatuses cannot resolve how this will work. This is an intellectual, scholarly task.

The left is important in this because this transition will involve a political struggle, albeit different from the one we are witnessing at present. There will be a struggle for the new division of social income, without which the social transformation won't happen. This conflict will resemble class conflict, but the protagonists will not be the same. New social forces will be involved and the organisational form and manner of functioning of the left will have to change.

This New Left, thoroughly modified, will have to confront the four (at the very least) horsemen of the apocalypse. One of these, already mentioned, is massive structural unemployment... We have

become so accustomed to the horsemen, these big menacing threats, that we begin to take them for granted. They are the danger of nuclear holocaust, the ecological destruction of the planet and its ecosphere, the demographic explosion, relations between the North and South, including the starvation and death of millions of people in the South... To deal with these major issues the New Left must possess at least these three characteristics:

1. A combination of the merits of each of the preceding forms of socialist movement (Social Democratic and Communist);
2. An understanding that the entire capitalist system will have to be changed - we have to move to a post-capitalist society which will certainly be a new form of socialism;
3. The New Left must unite new social forces (ecological, women, youth movements alongside the traditional movements and parties). This doesn't have to be a single new party, but some form of coalition or federation. The precise form would depend on the history and tradition in each country.

Peter Szigeti: What Strategy for Forces to the Left of Social Democracy?

The basic question is, what kind of socialism has suffered a historic defeat? The answer given by the ideological apparatuses of the international bourgeoisie is: all kinds of socialism attempted by Communists. That's why we are in a "post-Communist society". The period between 1917 and 1991 did not bequeath any positive experience, only the bad memory of totalitarian dictatorships. With few exceptions, the Western left also doesn't appear to have much understanding of what has actually happened.

In reality, there was not just one experiment; there were three political experiments and two experiments with economic-social forms between 1917 and 1991.

1. In the Soviet Union, the Stalinist model crystallised by the late

1930s. In this model the centrally planned and directed economy was linked as closely as possible with the party monopoly of political power. This model continued to exist in Romania and Cuba even in the 1970s and 1980s. From the late 1950s, but especially in the 1960s, two reform processes were launched.

2. The first was the technocratic, cybernetic reform of economic organisation, the prototype of which was represented by the GDR ("cybernetic socialism"). Economic law replaced civil law and the needs of the population were meant to be satisfied at a higher level by better planning and a better distribution of resources. There was a moderate democratisation at local level. This type of reform was adopted by Czechoslovakia and, to a lesser extent, by the Soviet Union under Brezhnev from the 1970s...

3. The other reform model moved away qualitatively from the Stalinist model: this was the Hungarian and Yugoslav reform, later the Chinese reform, where commodity production was combined with a still dominant public ownership and macro-economic direction. Significant economic successes, mass consumption, rising living standards, differentiated forms of individual incentive, and a free cultural atmosphere evolved in this "socialism with a human face". All of this also civilised the exercise of power by the one-party system...

In this process, however, private ownership and a latent political pluralism necessarily make their appearance. This transitional society sooner or later reaches a crossroads: either it eliminates the socialist elements of the system by gradual liberalisation, as has actually happened, or it accepts the transitional nature of the anti-capitalist experiments that have been developed in these conditions of relative backwardness and it attempts to evolve new forms, in the conflict of old and new principles, controlling the undesirable but inevitable effects by means of institutions of popular power.

In Hungary this was not done under Kadarism. They consistently eliminated "Stalinism" but wrongly identified every form of leftism with it. They didn't want and were unable to orient themselves towards a renaissance of Marxism: to democratise political life rather than liberalise it, to socialise state property rather than to privatise it...

Our conclusion is that there hasn't been just one form of rough political socialism and not all of them have proved to be uncompetitive. The third model mentioned above left behind many positive experiences...

Contrary to the pre-1918 assumptions of Weber and others, it has been demonstrated that it is possible to run competitive economies on the basis of public ownership. Their ability to support the population and their level of employment and social security are higher than those of capitalist private-property economies at a similar level of development. They are also able to guarantee higher levels of social equality than the capitalist commodity economies...

It has also been demonstrated, in terms of world history, that it is not possible to overtake the leading economies on the basis of a medium level of development: socialism is only possible as the act of dominant peoples and that too simultaneously... This gives support, however, to the class-based Social Democratic theorists of the twenties and thirties and not to the present-day, populist Social Democracy that is integrated into the centre of world capitalism.

Boris Kagarlitsky: No Liberal Solution to Neo-liberalism

... Growing pressure had effectively paralysed the neo-liberal project in the East by the end of 1993. Capitalist modernization had collapsed. Although its initiators had been far from posing for themselves the goal of raising the peoples of the former Communist world to the level of Western "affluence", they had at least hoped to create in the East a significant-sized, stable minority capable of guaranteeing further capitalist development. This was achieved only to an insignificant degree in the "Latin Americanized" countries – Slovenia, Poland, Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. In Russia, it was not achieved at all.

What happened in Russia was similar to what occurred in

Mexico. While journalists told the public success stories about structural reforms in Mexico, in the state of Chiapas a peasant revolt was brewing. When thousands of desperate people took up arms, the well-meaning American public were incapable of understanding why these people were dissatisfied. Russia will neither be part of the Western world, nor a banana republic.

The reasons are not to be sought in the mysterious "Russian soul", but in the fact that the social and economic problems of this vast country simply cannot be solved through the recipes of the International Monetary Fund and on the basis of free entrepreneurship. Democratic development is possible only on the basis of respect for personal interests and through taking into account of established social and economic structures, accumulated experience, and the existing culture. Ultimately, citizens of Russia have reasons to take pride in their past, including the Soviet past. But any attempts to force Russia into the framework of the global Western project will sooner or later rebound on those in the West who have fed such illusions.

While it is the Russian people that have to deal with the consequences of the reforms, the Russian experience is as always quite significant for the world left. And the main lesson we could and should draw from it is on the impossibility of "liberal socialism" as a strategic alternative to neo-liberalism.

Co-ops and workers participation in property which were supported by the Russian left in 1990-91 as a "soft" alternative to privatisation, never worked. And they cannot work unless the key sectors of the economy become owned and formed by the state. A "democratically organised mixed economy" doesn't differ much from what we call "free market capitalism". Co-ops will not change the nature of the economy and never will work without the state property being the dominant element in the system.

It looks like a very traditional socialist approach. And this is the approach now supported by a growing number of people in the former Soviet Union, because this is the only realistic approach. That is why neo-liberals don't care much about co-ops but they do everything to destroy the state sector even in Western countries.

The only way to break the power of private monopolies is to nationalise them. That was something which enabled the Soviet

system, in its best period, to grow extremely fast and develop modern technologies. Why are we afraid to discuss the real merits and advantages of the old Communist system?

The question for socialists in the light of the recent Russian experience is clear: the only important and real difference between the radical reformist left and traditional Social Democracy is our determination to nationalise (or re-nationalise) important sectors of the economy.

Strategic planning is possible only by and through the state. And is meaningless without state ownership. Even indirect state regulation is very weak and inefficient without public ownership. In Russia, we supported more co-ops within the state-owned and planned economy, but not instead of it. The main problem with state property is that we must say what kind of state we want to have. The nature of state property will depend on it.

If we don't recognize that and don't support nationalisation and expansion of the state sector, we take a position to the right of Social Democracy. At least in England in 1945 they nationalized a lot, even in Sweden there was some expansion of public enterprise. It is clear that without state enterprise there will never be a welfare state. We need to change the state, we need to democratise public enterprise, but we have to stand firm against post-modernist theories of "stateless socialism".

And that means that we need to reform traditional Marxism but not to reject it. Every day of capitalist restoration in Russia or Eastern Europe proves that Marx and Lenin were right on capitalism and on the centrality of state property for any socialist project.

We have to be proud of our traditions and of our achievements as socialists and/or Communists. A lot was said on reforming Marxism, but up to now all real challenges to capitalism were presented only by unreformed socialists and Marxists.

Russian Communism failed, it is true, but the French Revolution also failed, the Renaissance failed. We reject Communism as well as we reject Jacobinism, but we shouldn't forget how important was their role in changing the world.

Susan Zimmermann: Against the Catching-Up Perspective

My contribution tries to outline how different left traditions have dealt with one particular but very basic issue, namely "delinking". What is meant by delinking and why is it such a basic concept of left discourse? Delinking means the use of state-guided policies to exclude (as much as possible) the forces of the world market and the mechanisms of the world economy from a geographically circumscribed area. The intention is to promote a "catching-up" development, to build a basis for growth and for modernisation of the national economy in order to break from previous underdevelopment or continuing peripheralisation. Delinking has been used to achieve three aims, all of them closely linked with the central problem of the transformation of the capitalist world system. These three aims were:
1. to create the preconditions for promoting non-capitalist relations of production;
2. to make catching-up development possible, because this was seen as the basic precondition for survival in the inter-state system;
3. to come closer to the level of development of productive forces which classical Marxism regarded as a precondition for the realisation of a non-capitalist utopia, the "realm of freedom".

It is important here to note that, with respect to the latter two, it was not delinking which was the central question but catching-up industrialisation. Delinking was merely a means to achieve that aim...

In terms of economic parameters, the catching-up pattern of development seemed to be quite successful in Eastern Europe for a long time. It was because of this success story in the catching-up strategy that the left focused its attention on the lack of democracy. Delinking itself was not part of the debate on the left...

From the 1960s, however, delinking became part of the debate in Eastern Europe. What was at stake was the reform of "really existing socialism". There were three different strands that developed:
1. There were those who, disregarding the growing socio-economic problems, insisted on the primacy of delinking from the outside world at any cost. This meant, explicitly or implicitly, tolerating the totality

of the state internally, i.e. Stalinism. A central element of their conception was their fear that any kind of substantial economic reform (for instance, the 1968 reforms in Hungary) would open the door to the return of the forces of the market.

2. Another current, the "reformers", saw the central issue as the course of economic development that Eastern Europe should follow within the framework of the world capitalist economy. The most important question was not capitalism or socialism or any other, as they called it, "ideological" framework. The central issue was catching up with the capitalist economies... The reformers soon began to openly challenge the classical state-socialist strategy of delinking as the best way to catch up. The new technologies, the new forms of organisation of production, the new patterns of growth in the West were the key to growth in the East... The state should retreat and set the stage free for a new civil society. The road from this thinking about reform to open economic liberalism as an alternative to delinking is well known.

3. The third current favoured a radical left utopia. The project was radical "socialist democratisation" and the watchwords were self-management and self-determination. This current didn't really address the problem of delinking; they implicitly accepted the need for catching up. At the same time, the openness of the concepts of self-management and self-determination means that it is possible to go beyond thinking in terms of catching up. The self-determination strategy is meant to shift the shaping of our relationship with the world market into the hands of the producers, the hands of society itself. And catching up has never been in the immediate and comprehensive interest of the majority of the producers.

Catching up, something that states may be pressured into adopting, is a dead end. Catching up and self-determination of the producers are mutually exclusive. Catching up means exploitation, marginalisation, destruction of whole regions and of forms of survival. Social self-management and self-determination go together with the possibility of a different kind of anti-statist delinking. This is something needing much greater theoretical and practical attention.

Jaime Pastor: Social Movements and the Left

... The old model of integration of the "have-nots" through work is coming to an end within the capitalist framework. This makes social rights appear more formal than real for an important part of the population.

The social question recurs at a time when it is more difficult to envisage the central role of the working class, the organised workers movement, as a force capable of challenging the tendencies I have described and putting a socialist alternative back on the agenda. Between the institutionalisation of the main parties and trade unions and the marginalisation of the more critical sectors of capitalism, the old workers movement has lost one of its principal weapons, international solidarity.

It was in this context, from the start of the 1970s, that the so called new social movements began to appear. Their relative novelty was to be, among other things, that they didn't act specifically in the interests of a particular class or particular group in society, but in the defence of what's normally called "public goods" (the environment, peace, etc) or new rights (abortion, anti-racism, etc).

Within these movements there are very diverse currents and organisations and they are not a homogenous reality. But they are a catalyst of popular discontent in the face of actually existing capitalism, the party system, and the parties themselves. This is why it is worth wondering what their contribution will be to the reformulation of the ideas of civil and personal liberties.

Firstly, their proven ability to challenge important political decisions taken in institutional areas puts them in a privileged position to question the old asymmetric relation of governors to governed, to raise the question of the struggle for an active citizenry and new public spaces around new values and problems...

Control from below, the right to popular legislative initiative and referendums at all levels (backed by the facilities offered by the new technologies), civil disobedience, conscientious objection and non-submission, the drive for positive discrimination (affirmative

action), citizen rights for immigrants, measures to de-professionalise political life, reduction of the coercive state apparatus - these are just a few of the examples of what these new movements have put into practice in different places, with more or less success.

Secondly, the fundamental channel for trying out new ideas and practices produced by these movements has been the public space of non-institutional political and social life... It is in these spaces that the debate about democracy and civil freedoms finds its most attractive home for those who share the values of the movements. The explosion of 1968 could be interpreted from this angle and it wasn't be chance that the "autogalaxy" was developed then: autonomy, autogestion, etc.

These new movements ... establish a conflictive relation with the state (including the political parties), with the actors of the market (including transnational corporations) and with the "countermovements" of the new social political right. Their purpose is to construct a "minipopulus", a body of critical opinion, a lever of support in the creation of a social bloc, capable of drawing up programmes of social transformation in which democracy and civil and personal liberties are expanded and not reduced...

It is not by chance that the new parties that have arisen around these social movements have been defined by the political sociologists as "libertarian left". Left, because of their adhesion to the values of social equality and anticapitalism, libertarian because of their link with anti-authoritarianism, anti-bureaucracy, and the practice of participatory democracy...

What is the relation between these new social movements and the workers' movement? ... The social question is moving back into the foreground. But this is happening in conditions that are very different from those of the last century when there was an ascendent workers movement with the hope of revolution on the horizon. Now this movement is on the defensive; it is structurally, socially, nd politically weakened and "nation state-ised". The capitalist solution to the crisis is also causing an organisational fragmentation of the working class and deep divisions in its ranks.

And yet, in places like the Spanish State, we've had proof that this movement is still the only force capable of paralysing production

and services and recreating frameworks of solidarity in struggle with excluded social groups. As a result of the general strike of January 1994, the debate about double legitimacy has reappeared: the legitimacy derived from victory at the polls and the legitimacy expressed in the workplace and in the streets. The "socialist government" had no option but to play one off against the other, demonstrating its complete rejection of any form of democracy other than the purely procedural.

The workers movement, in spite of everything, is still the social force that, in the long term, may more decisively challenge the despotism of the market controlled by the transnational companies, fighting for democracy to be spread to the economy and to the workplace, and fighting for an alternative to the false dilemma between the "free market" and the "state bureaucratic model"...

Only a confluence of the workers and new social movements, and not the subordination of some by others, will create an alternative social bloc with new models of democracy and new political formations which, in their programmes and functioning, respect the autonomy of these movements.

The Far Right in Eastern Europe

The emergence or extremist right-wing parties and groups in Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union in recent years has given rise to concern and discussion, including in the pages of this journal, about the nature of this phenomenon. Is there a fascist threat in Eastern Europe or have those fears been exaggerated? Branka Magas, in a recent article in the American magazine, ***Against the Current*** *(October 1994), describes present-day Serbia as a fascist state, and recent articles in the Moscow-based magazine,* ***Russian Labour Review*** *(Summer 1994), have described the growth of fascist groups in the Russian working class.*

The following three articles are a contribution to this discussion. They are translated from a special issue of the Austrian journal, ***Ost-West Gegeninformationen,*** *(No.2 1994) on the theme "Is the East Becoming Brown?". Nenad Zakosek describes the far right in Croatia, in particular the Party of the Right (HSP), but concludes that the greatest threat comes from the right wing of the ruling party of President Tudjman, the Croatian Democratic Party (HDZ). Stepan Steiger gives an account of the far-right Republican Party in the Czech Republic and Helmut Konrad assesses the rise of neo-fascism in both Eastern and Western Europe. Conditions are quite different now, he argues, from those that produced the fascism of the 1930s. The world economic situation has altered significantly and, above all, there is no potential revolutionary threat to the capitalist order from the working class, an essential precondition for the rise of fascism in the 1930s.*

Nenad Zakosek

The Far Right in Croatia

In Croatia, as in the rest of Eastern and Central Europe after the collapse of Communism, radical right-wing forces are making an appearance. These forces are different in each individual country, influenced by different historical origins and by the specificities of the political and social circumstances in each country. We have to be cautious therefore in making comparisons with the countries of Western Europe, where there are greater similarities among the far-right parties and groups.

The far right in Croatia is also characterised by a particular mixture of political and ideological elements derived from the traditions of the Croatian nationalist movement, national revolutionary romanticism, and a specific set of right-wing extremist ideas. It is determined by the specific situation in Croatia, past and present: the late and difficult integration of the Croat nation, the historical delay in the formation of a Croatian state, the feeling of inferiority in the confrontation with the nationalisms of its neighbours (Hungary and Serbia ed.) as well as with Croatian anti-fascism. The historical determination of the Croatian far right makes a brief account of this history necessary.

The right-wing tradition

The modern Croatian far right appeals to the tradition of the Croatian Party of the Right, founded by Ante Starcevich in 1861. Starcevich himself was the first ideologue of an integral Croatian nationalism. He defended unconditionally an independent Croatian state, opposing, on the one side, Austrophile and Hungarophile forces and, on the other

side, Yugoslavism, the idea of Southern Slav unity that emerged first in Croatia. Starcevich is regarded today by all Croatian nationalist parties and groups as the "father of the nation".

Starcevic's ideology, however, was not initially ethno-nationalist. He attempted, rather, to base the Croatian nation on the tradition of Croatian feudal law and its institutions. He defended the idea of a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic Croatian nation. But as time passed, and especially under his successors, the Croatian nation became increasingly defined as ethnically exclusive. Parallel to this development, there was a growing resentment against the Serbian minority in Croatia.

In the first Yugoslav state (1918-1941), which was dominated by Serbia, Croatian nationalism of the type espoused by the Croatian Party of the Right played only a marginal role; it was the Croatian Peasant Party, led by Stjepan Radic and later by Vlatko Macek, that provided the leadership for the Croatian national movement in its opposition to the repressive policies of the Yugoslav state. In the 1930s, at the time of the monarchic dictatorship in Yugoslavia, the tradition of radical Croatian nationalism was revived in the form of the terrorist Ustashi movement, founded by Ante Pavelic.

The collapse of the Yugoslav state in 1941, following the invasion and occupation by German and Italian forces, provided Pavelic and the Ustashi with the opportunity to establish the so-called Independent State of Croatia (NDH), on the present-day territory of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This authoritarian fascist state, under German and Italian protection, became part of the fascist "new order" in Europe. The Ustashi carried out systematic genocide, through the expulsion and murder of Jews and Serbs; they also carried out a campaign of terror against political opponents, especially against Communists. In response to this rule of terror, there developed in Croatia a strong Communist-led anti-fascist movement which included both Serbs and Croats and which was part of the liberation movement in Yugoslavia. Although it was hostile to extreme Croatian nationalism, the anti-fascist movement favoured the creation of a Croatian Republic within the Yugoslav Federation; it defined this republic as the common state of Croats and Serbs in Croatia.

Following the defeat of fascism in 1945, a number of the

functionaries and supporters of the Ustashi fled into exile where, up to the present day, they and their successors constitute a significant far-right segment of the Croatian emigration. Croatian right-wing radicalism in exile has remained firmly in the tradition of the NDH (the fascist state of the war period). After the collapse of the Communist regime in 1990, and the victory of the Croatian national movement, represented by the Croatian Democratic Party (HDZ), the influence of this tradition has made itself felt once again in Croatia.

The Croatian far right exists today in a series of different political parties and groups, the most important of which are the Croatian Party of the Right (HSP) and the far-right wing of the of the ruling HDZ. There are a large number of splinter parties and organisations which have little support among the electorate but still play an important role in the political dynamic of the right.

The Croatian Party of the Right (HSP)

The HSP was established in February 1990, before the elections on April/May of that year. Its founder was Dobroslav Paraga and the party explicitly links itself to the tradition of the historical HSP and to the Ustashi. The party didn't participate in the first election in 1990.

The main points in the HSP programme are the fight for an independent Croatian state on the model of the wartime fascist NDH, the political rehabilitation of the NDH, a clear break with the Communist past, and the cleansing of all ex-Communists from state institutions. It accuses the ruling HDZ of not having broken with the Communist past, in spite of its verbal anti-Communism, and of providing shelter and political influence to ex-Communists in its own ranks.

The violent uprising of the Serbs in Croatia in the summer of 1990, and especially the open war of the Yugoslav army and the Serbian minority against Croatian independence (proclaimed in June 1991) led to an increasing radicalisation of the HSP and to a growth in its influence. From the summer of 1991, the HSP began to organise armed volunteer units, the Croatian Defence Force (HOS), which then took part in the war, alongside official government troops, against the Yugoslav army and against the rebellious Serb minority. The HOS was financed mainly by contributions from the Croatian far-right in the

emigration. It also had a small number of volunteers from far-right organisations in other European countries.

Following the truce in Croatia, the HOS transferred most of its military activities in the spring of 1992 to Bosnia-Herzegovina. The existence of parallel HOS armies in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina soon led to political and military tensions: the HOS "general", Blaz Kraljevic, was shot in an ambush in Bosnia in the summer of 1992. These tensions were brought to an end later in 1992 through the dissolution of the HOS in Croatia, and its incorporation into the Croatian defence force in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the HVO.

The Party of the Right took part in the elections to the first chamber of the Croatian parliament in August 1992. The party won 186,000 votes, 6.91 per cent of the popular vote, and took five of the 138 seats in the Croatian parliament. This relative success for the HSP was a result of popular support from the radical segment of the Croatian population for the HSP's military role in the war against Serbia and for its radical nationalist programme. According to sociological surveys, the majority of HSP voters are young people.

The political influence of the HSP seems to have declined since the election although opinion polls continue to put its support around 7 per cent. This decline was largely the result of internal conflicts in the party, but state repressive measures directed against the party as well as its failure to participate in the elections to the second chamber of parliament in February 1993 also played a role.

In the autumn of 1993, while Paraga was on a visit to the United States, his closest collaborator in the party, Anto Djapic, organised a party putsch against him. At an extraordinary congress of the HSP, Djapic had himself elected president of the party. Paraga contested the legality of the congress and accused Djapic of acting in the interests of the ruling party. Paraga failed to win this battle inside the HSP and Djapic's position was later confirmed by a Croatian court.

Parallel to this internal battle in the HSP, there was also the trial of Paraga and others of his followers before a military tribunal: the charge was that, in establishing their own military, the HOS, they were seeking to overthrow the constitutional order in Croatia. The military tribunal found them not guilty.

A stabilisation of the HSP and a settlement of its internal battles

still seems a long way off, in spite of Djapic's attempts to bring other far-right splinter groups into the party. In the medium term, it seems that the HSP will retain its place in the Croatian political scene as a populist protest party for the younger generation.

Other far-right groups

Alongside the HSP there are a series of small far-right parties and organisations, among which we can distinguish two types: organisations established by existing far-right groups and organisations in the Croatian emigration and those established around different führer-personalities in Croatia itself.

Among the first, the most important are the Croatian Republican Party (HRS) and the Movement for the Formation of a Croatian State (HDP). The HRS is the organisation of the Croatian far right in Latin America, while the HDP is found mainly in the North American, European, and Australian emigration. A similar grouping is the Croatian Liberation Movement (HOP). The HRS and the HDP don't appear to have direct political ambitions in Croatia itself other than to secure strong links between the exile organisations and the Croatian political scene. They both took part in the 1992 elections: the HRS won 0.29 per cent and the HDP 0.26 per cent, which means that neither group is represented in parliament. Although they support the moves to unite all the far-right parties and groups that appeal to the Starcevic tradition, these two parties want to maintain their own independence.

Among the second of the above-mentioned groups are the Croatian Party of the Right (HDSP) around Kresimir Pavelic, the Croatian National Democratic League (HNDL) around Rosiljko Misatic and Ivan Vekic, and the Croatian Pure Party of the Right (HCSP) around Ivan Gabelica. These parties were formed at various times in the recent past (the HCSP in 1993) and none of them have taken part in elections. Their political influence is extremely small, although the media sometimes pay attention to the leaders. They don't even appear in opinion polls. The HSP under Djapic has been trying to bring these parties together into the HSP fold but it is unlikely that such a move would significantly alter the deep split inside the HSP.

The right wing of the ruling HDZ

A politically much more important expression of far-right politics in Croatia today is the extreme right wing of the ruling party itself. This is not a formally organised group; it is more of an ideological political current that can be seen in the various alliances that are formed in inner-party conflicts. There are two types of politicians in this ideological current: firstly, figures like Vladimir Seks (deputy prime minister in the Croatian government) and Branimir Glavas (head of the region of Osijek), who have their own specific regional base of support and who use this to create a power base for themselves inside the party and, secondly, politicians like Vice Vukojevic (member of parliament) and Gojko Susak (Croatian defence minister) who represent the Croatian emigration in the party and who, because of their backgrounds, have strong links with the HDZ leadership in Herzegovina.

What the whole far-right wing in the ruling HDZ has in common are the following set of policies:

(1) support for an authoritarian state, with a strong role for the armed forces as a political instrument, and neglect of democratic controls and procedures;

(2) the creation of opaque power structures in segments of the state apparatus (especially in the army), in public enterprises, and at local and regional level;

(3) political control of the media, especially television;

(4) the use of appointments to directly influence the courts and the legal process (this is now being done by a parliamentary committee led by Vukojevic, although it is against the constitution);

(5) a symbolic or camouflaged rehabilitation of the Ustashi state (for instance, by the choice of name for the new Croatian currency), with the simultaneous destruction of the anti-fascist tradition;

(6) support for the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina and for an extremist policy against the Moslems;

(7) a preference for Croatian isolationism and hostility to the integration of Croatia into the Western democratic community.

The representatives of the far right in the party have tried to have their policies implemented either by means of direct control of the relevant political mechanisms and centres of power or by means

of influence on the political line of the party or on Tudjman himself. Although opinion polls show that they don't have much support in the population at large, the HSP far right have a lot of control over the inner mechanisms of the party and are in a position where they could concentrate a lot of political power in their own hands.

Far-right influence in the media

There are no important or influential media that are directly controlled by far-right parties or organisations. Far-right publications that appeal directly to the Ustashi tradition (for instance, *Hrvatsko pravo* or the *Nezavisna drzava Hrvatska,* published in Canada and distributed in Croatia) or which openly defend chauvinist and fascist positions (for instance, the weekly *Hrvatski vjesnik*) have only a small circulation of a few thousand.

Of much greater importance is what might be described as "the feuilleton far right". Where the far right makes its presence very strongly felt is in the mass media in the form of commentaries, feuilleton contributions, letters, talk-shows on television and on radio. These far-right personalities and commentators have a profound influence on popular perception of what is "reality". The main thrust of this far-right media offensive is the continuous insistence on the rehabilitation of the Ustashi movement and of the Ustashi state (the NDH), as well as an aggressive dissemination of anti-Serbian and anti-Semitic sentiments.

A particular example of this offensive promotion of far-right ideology in the media is Hrvoje Sosic, a radical nationalist who spent some time in prison under the previous Communist Party regime and was appointed by Tudjman to the second chamber of the Croatian parliament. Sosic's main function is the radicalisation of public discourse in Croatia. He does this in his parliamentary speeches, in his media appearances, in his nurturing of an irrational führer-cult around Tudjman, and through his defamation of the left and liberal-centrist opposition as national enemies and traitors.

Ideology of the Croatian Right

In spite of the differences among the various groups, there is a common ideology which is characteristic for all of them and which

could be summarised as follows:

(1) The fundamental characteristic of the Croatian far right is its absolutising of Croatian state independence, disregarding the question of the inner constitution of this state. Authoritarian state forms are preferred and there is a strong hostility to liberal democracy. This political option is best incorporated in the Ustashi state of the fascist period. Hence the battle to rehabilitate the NDH tradition and the rhetoric in favour of a strong Croatian state and the postponement of democratisation.

(2) The glorification of an authoritarian Croatian state is often accompanied by support for Croatian territorial expansion. The ideological discourse around Croatia's "historical and natural borders" covers a variety of territorial ambitions. In its minimal version, it envisages the annexation of those areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina with a Croatian majority or a restoration of the borders of the "Croatian *banovina*" of 1939 (an agreement between the Croatian national movement and the royal government in Belgrade which created a larger and single Croatian *banovina* from the two existing Croatian *banovine* and sections of four others. A *banovina* was an administrative unit and there were nine such *banovine* created in 1929, two with Croatian majorities. ed.) The maximum territorial ambition would include not only the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina but also parts of Serbia and Montenegro. Whatever the scale of this territorial appetite, all such expansionist strategies presuppose a militarisation of Croatian society.

(3) A further element of this right-wing radicalism is the chauvinist and xenophobic ideology of the "natural enemy". Anti-Semitism forms only a small part of this racial hatred, its main object is the Serbian nation. A political consequence of this is the denial of any special rights for the Serbian minority in Croatia. In its more radical version, it presents itself as the demand for the "ethnic cleansing" of Serbs from Croatia.

(4) In addition to these three basis elements of Croatian far-right ideology, there are two others that feature prominently: firstly, the glorification of the special historical-cultural nature of the Croatian nation, linked with anti-Western sentiment, anti-liberalism, and cultural isolationism; secondly, the promotion of a patriarchal-traditionalist model of culture which manifests itself in reactionary views on the

role of women and the family, as well as a general hostility to modernism in art and in general culture.

Prospects

Looked at historically, the record of the Croatian radical right has been a catastrophe for Croatia. There is a real contradiction between its ideological claims and its historical achievements. The unconditional glorification of an authoritarian Croatian state and the denial of the interests of ethnic minorities, especially those of the Serbs in Croatia, weakened and, on a number of occasions, led to the failure of its state-building project.

There were also a number of about-turns in the history of the radical right in Croatia: in 1918 a number of politicians from the Party of the Right supported the formation of the Yugoslav state even though it was clear that this new state would be under Serbian hegemony. During the Second World War, the Ustashi sometimes collaborated with the arch-enemy, the Serbian Chetniks. At the same time, it was Croatian anti-fascism in the Second World War that created the preconditions for the formation of a modern Croatian state. This is recognised in the Croatian constitution.

The growth of the radical right in Croatia today would have results similar to those that have already occurred in history: international isolation, war, and defeat. The Croatian far right does not enjoy mass support among the electorate but their political power does not depend on that. It is only under the conditions of an ongoing war and relative isolation that the far right would prosper politically. Its political influence, therefore, will depend on whether or not there is a peaceful solution to the conflict in the whole of ex-Yugoslavia. In the meantime, the far right are dangerously close to the powers that are running the state. ■

Stepan Steiger

The Far Right in the Czech Republic

Skinheads in the Czech Republic attack Roma and foreigners with a different skin colour. The far-right Republican Party agitates against minorities. The nationalist and racist prejudices of the Republicans have met with a certain response in Czech society, al the more so since they also portray themselves as the party that responds to the economic anxieties of the lower and middle social layers.

In the party spectrum of the Czech Republic, to describe yourself as "conservative" or "right-wing" wins you immediate political respectability. The newest political party in the Czech Republic, registered in March 1994, named itself the Democratic Union. According to its own account of itself, it wants to stand "further to the right" of the governing party of prime minister Klaus, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS).

In addition to these conservative right-wing parties, there are a number of reactionary right-wing organisations that don't function as parties. The Republican Party is an exception; it is represented in the Czech parliament. It was formed before the break-up of Czechoslovakia and demanded, at the time, the return to the Czechoslovak federation of the territory in the Carpathians that was given to Russia in 1945.

Unlike the other political parties, the Republicans cannot look back to an older tradition in the Czech Republic. They are a completely new party. A number of the mainstream political parties

in the Czech Republic today, for instance, the Christian Democratic Union or the Czech Socialists, survived the Communist period as formal organisations. They were members of the National Front and gave the appearance of political pluralism to Communist Party rule. These parties now appeal to their pre-Communist traditions, to the period of the First Republic (1918-1938) and to the early years after the war before the Communist seizure of power. Other parties, established after 1989, have attempted to discover their historical "precursors". They appeal to names that still mean something in popular consciousness, for instance, such names as Masaryk and Benes. Or they identify with important figures in the First Republic, for instance, the finance minister, Alois Rasin, whose name is linked with the successful currency reform.

The party without a past

The Republican Party, however, has searched for no historical precursor. And this is not simply because they weren't established as a party until December 1989. The Republicans are a Führer party and, apart from their nationalism and general right-wing ideology, are not really a continuation of the far-right parties of the pre-war period.

At this point, I will say a few words about pre-war right-wing extremism in Czechoslovakia, more precisely, in Bohemia and Moravia. In the proper sense of the term, there was at this time only one openly right-wing extremist party, the Narodni Obes Fasisticka (NOF, National Fascist Party), led by the ex-General Radola Gajda.

Gajda, a top military leader in the 1920s, was later dismissed from the army for his participation in the preparation of a putsch. In elections in 1929, he won only 0.9 per cent of votes, in 1935 only 2 per cent. Gajda's NOF was modelled more on Italian than on German fascism. The NOF remained a splinter group.

To the right of the NOF were the supporters of the Vlajka movement. This movement began in 1925 as an organisation of the radical right among students. Until 1928 it had loose connections with the NOF. Its monthly publication was the most anti-democratic, anti-semitic, and anti-Marxist of all the right-wing publications of the period. In the early 1930s it dropped its hostility to Nazi Germany and,

from that time, became a fellow-traveller of Hitler's NSDAP. In 1938 the Czech police established that Vlajka was financed by German and Italian fascism and its press was banned. During the war the organisation was renamed as the "Czech National Socialist Camp Vlajka" and it collaborated enthusiastically with the German occupation. In 1942, however, the organisation was dissolved; the Nazis preferred to deal directly with the protectorate government. In 1945, three of the Vlajka leaders were tried and executed.

The history of the NOF and Vlajka doesn't offer much for the Republican Party to identify with. In the first free elections of 1990, the Republicans shared a common list with the now extinct Popular Democratic Party. Describing itself as a "right-wing association for entrepreneurs and traders", the Republicans presented an electoral programme which stated:

"The Republicans are not burdened by a history of collaboration with the Communist Party. They are therefore the only guarantee of freedom and democracy and can genuinely represent the interests of the voters. The Republicans demand at this time the immediate withdrawal of the Soviet occupation troops (in the summer of 1990 there were still Soviet troops in the CSFR. ed) and the punishment of traitors. The damages caused by decades of occupation have to be compensated for. In addition, the Republicans demand:

* a maximal respect for the rights of the individual;
* minimal intervention by the state in the economy and in the lives of citizens;
* complete freedom for entrepreneurs and for private property;
* consistent legal protection for private property, without limitations;
* environmental protection;
* neutrality, a restructuring of our military force, a shortening of military service to 12 months, to 6 months for graduates."

The programme also stated that:

"As an unequivocally democratic force, the Republicans reject every form of dictatorship, whether it be Communist, Nazi, or fascist. They will oppose every attempt to return to dictatorship and they demand that all parties whose goal is

dictatorship should be banned."

I have quoted from the programme to demonstrate how its right-wing extremist character was well hidden in the way the party presented itself after its formation in 1989.

Populist programme

One of the interesting facts about the Republicans is that they don't have a programme in the proper sense of the term. What they have published is "Theses for the Drafting of a Long-Term Programme". This undated document is signed by the chairman of the party, so one must assume he is the author. It is a very short document, just three pages, and just a few rather mundane sentences are devoted to each topic. It is more a wish-list than a programme that sets out to deal with the problems of the country. The topics dealt with in this brief fashion include (order as in the original document): the economy, enterprises, agriculture, social sector, education, science, culture, sport and gymnastics, security, the army, politics, local politics, and ecology.

We get some idea of he general tenor of the document from the following quotation:

"Where will the money come from for our proposals? ... There is enough money in our country. All we need to do is:

* stop wasting money in support of bankrupt international organisations such as the UN, UNESCO (potential savings: 10 billion crowns).
* cut down the state bureaucracy and dissolve 12 ministries (potential savings: 3 billion crowns).
* cut back on the massive salaries of members of parliament and state officials from section chief upwards (potential savings: 3 billion crowns).
* cut the money spent on arms (potential savings: 13 billion crowns).
* release part of currency reserves, making an additional 30 billion crowns available for spending.
* issue state bonds, not to cover the deficit created by this incompetent government, but to renew the country's infrastructure."

This quotation requires some comment. These demands seem

reasonable to the average citizen. The general tone of the document is nationalistic. One of its demands is to "stop the sale of national treasures". It calls for "customs duties to protect our producers". It appeals to Czech "patriots" with the following demand: "Refuse any negotiations with the Sudeten Germans and declare as traitors any politicians who want to negotiate."

The racial tone is set with such demands as the following, under the heading of "Security": "The solution to the problem of the ethnic minorities' failure to integrate has to be carried through to the end by, among other things, the reintroduction of the right of residence..."

A major element in their programme is the emphasis on social need. Their demands include a six-year maternal leave, indexation of wages and pensions, and free education at all levels.

Strength of the Republicans

The party leader is Miroslav Sladek. Officially, we know very little about him. He was born in 1950 and during the last years of the Communist regime had a not unimportant post in the official censorship authority. In all probability, therefore, he was a member of the Communist Party. Sladek is the only publicly visible leader of the party.

The party isn't very forthcoming about the size of its membership; the last reliable figures, from 1992, put the number of members at around 40,000. Membership figures don't mean a great deal, however, in the present-day Czech Republic. The biggest party in the country, the ODS, has fewer members than the weakest coalition partner, the Christian Democratic Union.

Much more important is the party's electoral support. In 1992, the last elections before the break-up of the federation, the Republicans got over 400,000 votes in the Czech-Moravian part of the country (420,000 for the People's Assembly, 413,459 votes for the Chamber of Nations). This was between 6 per cent and 7 per cent of the popular vote. Although the party stood candidates in the whole of the CSFR, it received only 11,000 votes in Slovakia, 0.36 per cent of the popular vote.

The party won 387,026 votes (5.98 per cent) in elections to the

present parliament. It originally had fourteen MPs but five have since left their parliamentary group, two going independent and three to other parties.

Regionally, the party is weak in Prague and in southern Bohemia and somewhat stronger in northern Bohemia where there are ethnically motivated conflicts with the Roma population. They are also reasonably strong in southern Moravia.

From a study of Czech political parties carried out by the Prague polling organisation, STEN, in June 1993, we get some idea of the social-demographic profile of the Republican electorate. The proportion of males among its supporters is higher than for any other party, at 68 per cent. It also has the highest proportion of voters that are unskilled and with only elementary education (32 per cent). It is the party with the smallest proportion of voters with secondary education (4.5 per cent). Its main attraction is among youth: 41 per cent of its supporters are between 18 and 29 years. They are thus the "youngest" party in the Czech Republic. Its support in the major cities is very small: less than 5 per cent in Prague. Around 50 per cent of its supporters live in communities of less than 5,000 and 31 per cent live in towns of less than 100,000 inhabitants.

Their support is also relatively stable. The study of 1993 found that 68 per cent of those who supported the party in 1992 would still vote for it today. Most of its newer supporters tend to come from the governing ODS; some also come from the Communist Party. The overall party profile has remained the same - overwhelmingly male and uneducated.

A recent report prepared for the leadership of the Social Democrats suggests that 2 per cent of Republican supporters might be won over by the Social Democrats. According to this report:

> "Both parties have a similarly radical opposition to the present government establishment. Whether a section of the Republican supporters go over to the Social Democracy will depend on whether they prefer the Republican leader, Sladek, who is willing to confront the government but is socially isolated to the Social Democratic leader, Zeman, who is also willing to confront the government but is more socially acceptable."

In spite of the Republican Party's right-wing character, it

doesn't fit easily into the traditional right-left schema. Its stress on the social question, for instance, is more typical of the left. For its supporters, this is a real advantage. The world, as Dr. Sladek describes it, is simple and transparent: the guilty ones are visible and well known, mistakes and deficiencies could easily be overcome if the Republicans were in charge of the government.

The party publishes an eight-page weekly. The party secretary, Jan Vik, who recently attended a congress of the far-right Polish Popular Front in Warsaw, used the opportunity to invite Zhirinovsky to Prague. According to Vik:

> "Our basic work, since we founded the party in December 1989, has been to travel patiently around the towns and villages. We set up four meetings every day with Miroslav Sladek. That way we inform the citizens about our programme and our intentions. We are preparing for local elections as well as elections to the Senate."

People often point out, with reference to people like Schönhuber (leader of the German far-right Republicans) or Zhirinovsky, that Hitler also started off small. In the case of the Czech Republican Party and its leader, Miroslav Sladek, I don't really believe that this party is a serious threat to the political order. It is clear from the polls that the party is not gaining support; in fact, it appears to be losing some of its support. If there is a threat to parliamentary democracy in this country, it is much more likely to come from the established conservative parties, which could all too easily shift towards authoritarianism as their power increases. ■

A Fascist Threat in Europe?

Interview with Helmut Konrad

What is your assessment of the rise of neo-fascism in Western Europe and in the countries of Eastern Europe?

What I found remarkable in the recent state elections in eastern Germany (elections in the east German *Länder* during 1994) was the fact that the right-wing extremist Republicans did so badly. I thought Eastern Europe, of which the GDR was a part, would be much more open to nationalist influence. I'm not so certain that we can regard all the ex-Comecon states in the same way. There is a growth in nationalist currents, in chauvinist and ethno-centric currents on the right, but there are also tendencies in the other direction. I have recently heard voices in Slovakia, for instance, that have made very reasonable proposals for dealing with the Hungarian minority and with other minorities in that country. At the same time, the Roma and Sinti are really treated badly, in the Czech Republic as well, in spite of the fact that the latter is a more highly developed country. The ex-Yugoslav countries are an extreme example. The conflict between Hungary and Romania has by no means been resolved and, the closer one gets to the ex-Soviet Union, the more dramatic are the problems. Perhaps our fear of right-wing development recently has been an exaggerated one, and the situation is quite different from one country to another. But nonetheless, if we look at Eastern Europe as a whole, these problems do get worse as one moves eastwards or southwards.

The people of Eastern Europe had very high hopes for the market economy and parliamentary democracy. These hopes have not been realised. Aren't these people particularly susceptible to authoritarian thinking?

If we look back over the history of Europe we find the same phenomenon, namely, that scapegoat theories become very powerful during modernisation crises. Germany and Austria experienced this in the 1930s and this is an experience that can severely destabilise a young democracy. Democratic models of conflict resolution don't have much of a tradition in the countries of Eastern Europe. The democratic regimes in these countries are new and they haven't been able to improve the social situation, compared to what it was before the revolutions of 1989/90. With the new freedoms of expression that now exist in these countries, scapegoat theories can be extremely attractive, leading to extremist, populist, and racist politics.

Of course, history doesn't repeat itself so simply. These countries aren't quite in the situation that we (in Germany and Austria) were in during the inter-war period. A lot has happened since then and the economic possibilities are greater. There are certain similarities, however, and these are cause for concern. I must add, however, that the nationalism that we are seeing today in Eastern Europe isn't just a product of modernisation crisis. That would be too simple an explanation and it ignores what we might describe as society's cultural and historical memory. This is an important factor in Eastern Europe, where states are reaching back to their pre-Communist, pre-Stalinist structures, quite independently of whether or not there is a serious crisis. The Czech Republic is an example of this. Czech nationalism can't be simply interpreted as the product of some crisis.

How can you explain the synchronous growth of extremist right-wing parties and propaganda in both Eastern and Western Europe? The participation of Fascists in the Italian government of Berlusconi is not a repetition of the 1930s, but it is a fact. Given the high living standards in Italy, where the social question is not so urgent, how do you explain this?

I believe the synchrony of events is more accidental; it is not because they have the same roots. The new nationalism, the chauvinist and nationalist-racist overtones that one hears in Eastern Europe have arisen in a different causal context than that which exists in the West. In Western Europe there are two tendencies visible in all countries. The first is the decline in solidarity within the major social groups (or classes) as a result of the third industrial revolution. These social groups are becoming less homogenous, their common interests are no longer so clearly visible, and society has thus become less solidary. In such a society, in which individual interests predominate, threats are always perceived as threats to the individual and can only be dealt with by individuals.

If into this concretely individualised situation you bring the waves of migration that are happening all over Europe, then it is very easy to channel the anxieties, that have built up in this society, against the aliens that allegedly threaten one's individual happiness, one's individual welfare, the flat, the social security, the freedom from criminality. Some years ago the responses to such problems, for instance immigration or social-political crises, although not always pleasant, were more social, more identified with social layers or classes as a whole. They were class-specific responses. But in a strongly individualised or atomised society such as exists now in the West, these anxieties are more muffled; they are not mediated through social groups or classes in the same way and hence they find their expression precisely in these populist currents which are quite strong in Italy, for instance, but are also present in Austria among the supporters of Haider (leader of the far-right Freedom Party). What is being aired here, in Italy and elsewhere, is not really a socio-economic threat to society as such but an individually felt sense of anxiety.

In Eastern Europe, however, the situation is much more like it was in Europe between the wars. People are losing their social reference point and the system of social security is collapsing. They experienced the collapse of an entire social system which previously saw itself as delivering holistic solutions. In other words, these people lived previously in a condition of security, however one wants to describe it, a security that was both economic and moral/cultural. Stalinism gave clear answers. Then the double collapse, the collapse

of the economic system and the collapse of the holistic world view of Communism, confronted them with a dual threat: a real threat to their economic living standards and uncertainty in their intellectual/ cultural orientation. People who for 40 years or more were not encouraged to think independently and who were presented with monolithic answers to everything, now are looking for an adequate model in terms of which they can understand the world they live in. The radical right, the nationalists and populists can do this much more easily than the liberals and democrats, whose world views are much more complex and whose explanations are not so monocausal.

Is there such a crisis of meaning or existential crisis in Western society, in spite of the high standards of living?

A crisis of meaning or purpose is not something that manifests itself at the pan-social level. A crisis of meaning is something strongly individualistic. It is not just in Eastern Europe, and not just because of the collapse of Communism, that global world views have become shaky. In Western Europe, at the present time, (and one can see this especially in the political parties) there are no longer any grand designs. What Fukuyama called the end of history is really the end of utopias, the end of the great ideas and of the teleological social vision. The collapse of the "big tasks" that the different social groups and classes addressed themselves to during the past century, combined with the earlier collapse of the religious world view, leaves us with a kind of administered society.

This creates, if you wish, a kind of crisis of purpose or meaning. But I very much doubt that we can describe this as a social crisis. Because this crisis is experienced only at the individual level. The questions: "What am I living for?" "Is it worth bringing children into this world?" "What kind of life will the coming generation have?" can't be so easily answered in today's administered society as they were in Catholic or socialist communities that knew what their life goals were. I think that the concept of a crisis of meaning is one that we can work with but only when applied to the individual expressions of a collective phenomenon.

This dilemma is also reflected in the programs of the Social Democratic and Christian parties in the West that no longer have any positive perspective for the future and whose only goal is to administer the system for a few years. There is also an ideological crisis: what is worth supporting or fighting for now?

This is correct and it is certainly true of the Social Democracy. In the previous period, let's say the Kreisky era in Austria, the Social Democrats saw themselves as the builders of the future. Slogans like "With Us for a New Future" today appear hopelessly archaic. An awful lot has changed in the past fifteen years. This belief in the future, the belief that better social conditions could be achieved by means of common effort, has given way, in the industrial world, to a mood which we could sum up in the following way: All of that is finished; the most that we can do now, with the available resources, is to bring a little more fairness into the distribution system and a little less suffering. There are no more grand political programmes. If you look at all the political programmes today, what you find is this: there is no longer a future perspective apart from the narrowly nationalist one; it is an exclusionary perspective which says: if there's going to be a battle over distribution, then let's secure our own advantage, where "our own" is defined in terms of race, colour, language, or whatever.

This is a very sad by-product of what you could call loss of ideology. Not every loss of ideology is bad, but what is unfortunate today is the fact that this yearning for a sense of belonging, in a future that is secure, is responded to only by undemocratic forces, forces of the right. The democratic parties are no longer capable of mediating this form of "us-feeling", this belief in common goals. This is true of the parties in both Eastern and Western Europe. Either they consist of technocrats who insist on modernisation at any price, or they are parties that want to mend in some small ways the massive rips that have appeared in the social fabric, but without any major strategic plans for the future - unless, of course, they are nationalistic.

History doesn't repeat itself, but the similarities with the 1930s are striking. Today, as then, capitalism is attempting to solve the problem of economic and social crises by means of a strong state and fascist

exercise of power.

I think that the crisis of 1929 and of the years that followed was a product of the fact that the liberal economic system of the late 19th century came to an end in the First World War. Markets became more restricted and the protectionist walls went up. They really didn't understand enough about world economic relations to be able to recognise this danger. Keynes was an exception, with his General Theory, which proposed solutions for this kind of crisis. National Socialism, although in a perverted manner, used similar mechanisms of crisis resolution.

But the crisis of 1929 and the crisis of the 1930s had political as well as economic causes. Its economic causes were the restricted markets and protectionism. Its political cause was the great fear of the left: the fear of Communism was so great that the decisive economic forces of the individual countries were prepared to opt for nationalist or fascist solutions rather than run the risk of expropriation, of having their property socialised or nationalised. But this political threat, a threat from the left, does not exist today. No one could argue that, in Croatia or in the Czech Republic, there is a genuine threat that the Communists will return and reverse the privatisations.

It's true that this threat doesn't exist. But does fascism really need this threat?

In the new states of Eastern Europe, that are searching for their own past, their is a need to have their own independent history. History is only really relevant when it delivers arguments that are useful in the present. There was a brief article on this theme by Eric Hobsbawm recently in the German weekly, *Die Zeit.* In such situations as we have today in Eastern Europe, history is like bombs in the hands of a terrorist. The national independence that is now being legitimated by an appeal to history was, in the past, quite often linked to fascism. And it is this past that is now being contrasted, in a positive light, to Communism. In a sense, Communism once again is the enemy against which one defines a great national past. And the arguments

being delivered for the present are not ideally the best ones.

It remains nonetheless true, that the crisis of the 1930s had its roots, on the one hand, in a quite different world economy, and, on the other hand, in the threat of a social change that was then on the horizon, a challenge from the "fourth estate", from the working class as a whole, from the left Social Democrats and from the Communists, who wanted to change the system. Today what we have is quite the opposite - a world market that is expanding, that is winning back positions lost earlier in the century, and a collapse of the Communist threat. The crisis of the 1990s is quite different from the crisis of the 1930s. A lot has been learned since 1929: no state today would manage without a certain amount of Keynesianism in its crisis-management strategy. The threat of Communism can still be instrumentalised politically as it was in 1929. But I am firmly convinced that, in twenty years time, when we look back on the crisis of the 1980s and early 1990s, we will still see it in the framework of the cyclical crises of the 19th and 20th centuries, but we will see that it had quite different causes and effects from the crisis of 1929.

Is there not some kind of parallel in the influence of the media: one Volk, one Reich, one Television? We have Kirch in Germany, Berlusconi in Italy, and similar figures now in Eastern Europe. The potential for mass manipulation was evident during the Gulf War. Isn't it easier today, in this age of pluralism and parliamentary democracy, for authoritarian figures to manipulate the masses, especially during periods of crisis?

Yes, this is a very real threat. Of course, in the 1930s, when the people were not yet so accustomed to the mass media, the propaganda machine was much more effective. The Nazis proved very adept at using the media and the people didn't have enough experience of this to be able to relativise it. They took the bait very easily. To be effective today, the media have to much more subtle. But the media have become so important today that they can play with democracy. For instance, the American president, with just one television appearance, was able to alter public support for the invasion of Haiti by as much as 25 per cent... In this respect, I think that the influence of the Western media played a significant role in the events that

happened in Eastern Europe five years ago.

I have seen a study of the GDR with the title: "How Marx disappeared from the minds of GDR youth". The conclusion of this study was that the influence of Marxism on young people, mediated by the schools and the whole education system, shrank from 60 per cent to 15 per cent in the first half of the 1980s, as a result of the spread of the media, and this was during the fully functioning Honecker period. We may regard this as a positive development for that period. But when we look at the state landscape of Eastern Europe today, we have to recognise that there is indeed a real form of media power at work here.

These youth who lost their "belief in Marx", are they not the same youth who are today expressing their dissatisfaction with the new situation through extremist right-wing violence?

Yes, and this is the crisis that we described earlier as a crisis of meaning. For economically uprooted people, people who have fallen down the social ladder, there are holistic and simple answers: "we're badly off because...", and then comes the one-dimensional answer: "We have no flats because of the foreigners". The potential for extremist violence comes from this situation and expresses itself in attacks on the homes of asylum-seekers and so on...

What are the possible counter-strategies to the emerging neo-fascist forces? The interior minister in Brandenburg has suggested that the banning of extremist right-wing organisations would be one way to fight neo-fascist tendencies in Germany.

It would be nice if we could say, with a clear conscience, that democracy has the best answers so we will defend ourselves against the fascists democratically. Unfortunately, it doesn't work like that. A democratic society has to use the instrumentarium of law against the fascists. A clear set of laws, which don't have to be brutal but which have to be sufficiently preventative, is a better strategy than reliance on argument alone. For instance, the biological explanatory models of the extreme right (racial superiority claims) are not appeals to the

understanding, they appeal to the gut, to the feelings and emotions. Rational counter-arguments are not enough because the threat doesn't come from the intellect... Democracy has the better arguments but the question whether fascism will win the upper hand will not be settled by arguments. Democracy, to survive, has to defend itself against its enemies.

I also think that the achievements of representative democracy should not be lightly dismissed by means of populist slogans. We want more direct participation and more forms of direct action for the winning of certain demands. But one also has to recognise that there has been such a thing as a "success story" for representative democracy. And this has to be defended against any Third Reich style of alternative.

What about the social forces that could oppose the threat from the right? Is the working class still a pole in the fight against fascism or is the working class itself susceptible to fascist arguments? The extreme right have been winning lots of votes among workers.

That is absolutely right. I wouldn't be surprised if the proportion of workers among the voters for the (Austrian far right) Freedom Party was greater than that among Social Democratic voters. The working class today is no longer a homogenous class, a class "for itself", pursuing a collective goal. The individualisation process that we talked about earlier has affected the workers as much as any other social class. The workers see themselves as individuals in society, not as members of a social class. They are just as much open to fascist-style arguments as any other class. I am happy that the Social Democratic movement still has people in it that work against this influence from the right. But the Social Democratic movement is also a very heterogenous movement and there are people in this movement who are no longer reliable as guarantees against right-wing influence. The intellectual elite within Social Democracy is certainly a counter-pole to the fascist tendency, but I'm not so sure about the situation in the ranks of the labour movement.

***Helmut Konrad** was interviewed by **Johann Schögler**.*

Catherine Samary

Other Voices from Bosnia

For the Yugoslav Contact Group (USA, Canada, France, Britain, and Russia), the precondition for their peace plan is that Belgrade should turn the screws on the Bosnian Serbs led by Karadzic and Mladic. The real obstacles to peace, however, are two other. Firstly, the Greater Serbia project has to be defeated and, secondly, the concept of ethnically pure states has to be rejected. The peace plan, however, has no solution to these two problems. On the contrary, its project is the ethnic division of Bosnia.

It is well known that none of the official parties in Bosnia accept the international "peace plan", even though the representatives of the Bosnian Croats have officially approved it. When Karadzic rejected the plan, the Bosnian Croats saw an opportunity to present themselves to the international negotiators as the reasonable party.

Likewise, the Bosnian military leadership wants a war to seize back conquered territories. Although they have promised an amnesty for the break-away Moslem leader in the north, F. Abdic, they yet have to undertake any measures to win the confidence of the Bosnian Serbs and undermine the base of support for Karadzic. They could, for instance, make it clear to the overwhelmingly rural Serb population that they would be able to retain their land in a Bosnian state.

Of course, if Serbia were to withhold support, this would weaken the Serbian nationalist forces in Croatia and Bosnia. There are recognisable tensions between Belgrade and the so called Serbian Republic in Bosnia. It could be that what we are witnessing is the beginning of the end of the power of Karadzic and Mladic, the

architects of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.

This split between Karadzic and Milosevic follows the earlier split between Milosevic and his former ally on the nationalist right, Seselj. Seselj was the most adamant defender of the Greater Serbian project. Milosevic is a master manipulator of nationalist sentiment and he has been adept at leaving a lot of the less savoury work to allies like Karadzic and Seselj. Milosevic gave a free hand to the ethnic cleansers without officially recognising the "Serbian Republic".

Milosevic will do whatever he thinks necessary to have the international sanctions lifted and his Yugoslav Federation recognised internationally. To achieve his goal he will have to accept an internationally agreed peace plan. But this plan will satisfy nobody, neither the nationalist nor the progressive forces in Bosnia.

On the one hand, the plan maintains the fiction of a Bosnian state with unalterable borders. However this may be nuanced, it effectively prevents the Bosnian Serbs from being integrated into a Greater Serbia. On the other hand, the plan also offers no solution for the Bosnian Serbs who reject ethnic cleansing and want to go on living in a multi-ethnic Bosnia. An alternative to the ethnic division of Bosnia would be a democratic and egalitarian transformation of the Bosnian-Croatian Federation into a state which gave equal status to all its national groups.

Civic Council of Bosnian Serbs

Up until now, the Bosnian parliament has refused to consider the constitutional amendments proposed by the Civic Council of Bosnian Serbs. On 27 March this year 500 Serbs, representing 200,000 Serbs living in Bosnia, established this Civic Council and demonstrated that not all Bosnian Serbs go along with Karadzic's plans. These Bosnian Serbs pleaded for a Congress of Reconciliation for all Bosnian groups, which would discuss and decide the future of their country. They called for the punishment of war criminals and for equal rights for all the citizens and ethnic/national groups in Bosnia. They demanded that their Civic Council be represented at all negotiations and listened to. According to their Declaration:

> "No political goal justifies the suffering of innocent people, genocide, or ethnic cleansing, to which all people in Bosnia

have been subjected but especially the Bosnian Moslems. No political goal justifies the destruction of an invaluable cultural and material heritage."

They were publicly supported by Vuk Draskovic, one of the most important leaders of the democratic opposition in Serbia. The Bosnian Serb Civic Council is a crucial element in the fight against the Greater Serbia project and is also an important element in the battle against reactionary tendencies in the Bosnian-Croatian camp.

Bosnia is still officially a state of Croats and Bosnian Moslems. The Bosnian parliament, like the Contact Group and other international bodies, have ignored the recommendations of the Civic Council and continue to insist on a three-fold ethnic division of the country.

The Circle 99

They have also ignored the proposals of another Bosnian group, the Sarajevo Circle 99. The Circle 99 is a recent initiative of independent intellectuals which grew out of the independent radio studio 99 in Sarajevo. Above all it is a movement for freedom of expression and for a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina. It has proposed a draft Magna Charta for Bosnia similar to the declaration of the Civic Council of Bosnian Serbs. Circle 99 rejects the policies of the nationalist parties and rejects the creation of ethnically pure areas.

According to its Platform:

"No territory in the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina can be regarded as the territory of a single national group... Bosnia-Herzegovina is a secular state and no law can be passed to institute a state religion. No law can forbid the freedom of religious practice, the freedom of expression, or the freedom of the press. No law can limit the people's right of assembly, their right to bring forward demands."

The Platform also underlines an important socio-economic factor for future cooperation:

"We are convinced that civic and political rights, in their universality, can not be separated from economic, social, and cultural rights and that social justice is an unavoidable precondition for human dignity and for a harmonious social development." ■

*The following **Declaration**, initiated by Circle 99 and the City Assembly in Sarajevo, has received over 200,000 signatures in the city. It has the support of civic and democratic organisations throughout Bosnia, and demonstrates the attachment of the citizens of the Bosnian capital to the multi-cultural and democratic traditions of that city.*

Declaration
For a Free and United Sarajevo

1. We are irrevocably commited to a free, open and undivided Sarajevo. We will permit no one to partition our city for any reason, especialy at a time when the entire civilized world is tending toward greater inter-cultural collaboration and integration.
2. We are firmly convinced that our life of diversity and tolerance is a priceless inheritance from our past, and the only secure foundation for a peaceful and happy future for all citizens of Sarajevo and Bosnia-Herzegovina.
3. We demand the just and timely punishment of all war criminals, and the safe return of all exiles and refugees. Both measures are essential for the restoration of normal life and the renewal of our tradition of multi-ethnic harmony.
4. We unreservedly accept the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the basis for our actions, and as a criteria of justice in social relationships. We call upon the international community for help in determining the future of Sarajevo and Bosnia-Herzegovina on the basis of these principles. We are convinced that only a democratically structured policy can guarantee the dignity, preserve the freedom and protect the interests of all our citizens.

At this critical moment, all of us - citizens of the world community as well as the citizens of Sarajevo - bear responsibility for the fate of these civilized values.

The Citizens of Sarajevo

Angela Klein

The PDS goes West

Support for the PDS in the recent German election

André Brie, election campaign leader for the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) in the recent German election, was asked by a reporter for *Neues Deutschland* on 27 August this year: 'What will happen if the PDS is not elected to the *Bundestag* (German parliament)?' He replied: "That would be very dangerous for the PDS. Firstly it wouldn't have a presence in the big public debates at federal German level. As a socialist, left alternative party, we can't go on forever being a regional party. The specifically East German aspect will decline in the next five to eight years."

The election results of 16 October 1994 now give the PDS the opportunity to establish itself as a party in what was West Germany, as a visible and active political presence. "The PDS will win the next election in the West or it won't win at all", was Gregor Gysi's assessment, in a speech to the party leadership body shortly after the election. The party has to begin now to prepare itself for the fact that the next election in 1998 will have an entirely different character. The specific electoral strategy which allowed the party to enter the federal parliament this year, the election of four first-past-the-post candidates in the East, would probably not work in 1998.

The great leap forward

The big turnout for the October 1994 election didn't have any negative effect on the PDS's share of the votes. It had been argued after the elections to the European Parliament, in which the PDS won 4.7 per

cent, that such a large share was due to the low turnout in that election. But it was after the European elections that the support for the PDS grew. In the 1990 elections the PDS won 1,129,290 votes in all of Germany (2,9 per cent in an election turnout of 77.8 per cent). In the European elections the party won a slightly larger number of voters - 1,459,261 (4.7 per cent in an election turnout of 63 per cent). The federal election of October 1994, however, represented a great leap forward for the party. It won 2,067,387 votes, over half a million more that in the European elections, which gave it 4.4 per cent in an election turnout of 79.1 per cent. Support for the PDS grew significantly after the European election, in both east and west.

The PDS won around twice as many votes this year as it did in 1990. Its support in the east increased by a factor of 1.65 and in the west by a factor of 3.4. In the ex-GDR in the October election, 1,698,349 people voted for the PDS, almost back to the level of support it had at the time of the elections to the East German Parliament (Volkskammer) in March 1990.

In East Berlin, the party won four of the five constituencies. In spite of the massive propaganda against the PDS, especially on the part of the SPD, the voters of East Berlin clearly chose to have the PDS represented in parliament. The party also came a very close second in Berlin-Köpenick and in Rostock on the Baltic coast. The writer Stefan Heym won for the PDS in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg.

A strategy of entering parliament in 1998 by again winning the required number of constituencies in the east would be a very insecure strategy. Its support in the west this time (369,038 votes) gives the party reason to hope that, if it pursues a clear opposition politics in the next four years, it will win the necessary 5 per cent of the popular vote.

The party's best results in the west were in the Kreuzberg-Schöneberg constituency of West Berlin (5.4 per cent). In Kreuzberg alone it won 7.5 per cent. Other centres of strong support in the west were Hamburg-Centre (3.4), Hamburg-Altona (2.8), Bremen-West (3.5), and Bremen-East (3.0 per cent). In constituencies in Cologne and Frankfurt the party won between 2 and 2.6 per cent.

But its success in urban centres like Berlin and Hamburg doesn't fully account for the PDS's improved showing in this election.


PDS
VERGANGEN
HEIT

The results show that it was able to pick up support over the whole country, even in small towns where it didn't have a campaigning presence. An important element in explaining this widespread support was the attractiveness of its electoral list. Many people on the list were independent well-known personalities, like the novelists Heym and Zwerenz. The party's "open list" policy, its openness to non-party members, proved an electoral asset. Another element was the party's public affirmation of its oppositional role: its election slogan: "Change Begins with Opposition". Eight hundred new members joined the party in Berlin during the election campaign and probably an equal number joined in the west. They are mostly young people who had not been members of any other party before. They clearly see the PDS as offering a new hope for the renewal of the German left.

Who voted PDS?

The PDS was elected by young people. The old myth that the PDS is elected by old SED members has been finally laid to rest in this election. Around 20 per cent of young first-time voters in the east voted PDS. Those over 60 in the east voted overwhelmingly for the conservatives, the CDU.

The PDS took 200,000 votes from the Social Democratic Party (SPD). A large number of erstwhile Green Party voters in the west also voted PDS. This was particularly true of feminists, who no longer feel themselves represented by the Greens. A large number of labour movement activists in the unions and workplaces also "secretly" voted for the PDS. ■

	% 1990	% 1994	seats 1990	seats 1994
CDU/CSU	43.8	41.5	319	294
SPD	33.5	36.4	239	252
FDP	11.0	6.9	79	47
Greens	5.1	7..3	8	49
PDS	2.4	4.4	17	30
Republicans	2.1	1.9		
Others	2.1	1.6		

Review

D. S. Bell (ed), *Western European Communists and the Collapse of Communism*, Berg 1993, 202pp, £29.95.

Since the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Communist Parties and former Communist Parties of Western Europe have pursued a wide variety of political alternatives. A number of different factors have determined which course each individual party has chosen to take, but the choices have overwhelmingly been based on the national experiences of each party and its relationship to the balance of political forces in its own country, rather than a consideration of international factors.

In fact, this had largely been the case for some time; perceptions of the international Communist Movement as a monolithic structure are superficial readings of a complex situation. This diversity applied not only to the parties of Western Europe, but also increasingly to those of Eastern Europe. Since the homogeneity of the Communist Movement was largely a veneer, it is very difficult to talk of the Communist Movement in collective or even in regional or geographical terms.

Western European Communists and the Collapse of Communism runs into some structural problems here. This is a very interesting collection of essays by experts on the different Western European Communist Parties. Each essay is useful in itself and provides an enormous amount of detailed information on the different national parties and their recent ideological and organisational developments, and some provide well-balanced political analyses of these changes.

A harder task than a single case study, however, has been attempted by the editor: to try and weave together an introductory chapter, outlining the post-war record of Western European Communist Parties and their relationship to the Soviet Union. Because of the difficulty of dealing with such a range of diversity, this is perhaps the least successful part of the book, resulting occasionally in almost journalistic commonplace; it seems difficult, even for academics, to

avoid purple prose like "the setting of the sun on the Soviet empire". Strange also, is the sentence: "Although the failure of totalitarian communism to reform itself should not have been unexpected..." This statement avoids the debate about the relevance of the totalitarian thesis, given the demonstrated ability of the Communists to change and be peacefully removed; would the editor describe Kadar's Hungary or Gorbachev's Soviet Union as "totalitarian"?

A serious understanding of the experience of Communism as a system of government requires an objective and detailed assessment of the conditions in each country. Without such a nuanced appreciation it will be impossible to understand why large sections of the populations in Eastern Europe are now turning to support former supposedly "totalitarian" Communist Parties. The introduction is also not helped by at least one factual inaccuracy, and an enormous number of typographical errors. This latter problem also occurs in some of the essays, though not all; also on occasions, there are a variety of different spellings of the same names, and sometimes sub-headings bear no relationship to the material attached to them.

These problems aside, however, the collection does provide a range of useful information, and gives a clear account of how the responses of each national party to the collapse in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were determined mainly by the political conditions in their own countries. Two contrasting examples are the CPs in Portugal and Great Britain. Whereas the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) resisted the trend towards fragmentation within the Communist Movement after 1989, with its leadership maintaining a relatively orthodox perspective and the party as a whole sustaining a basic consensus about its role in Portuguese society, the Communist Party of Great Britain had, for at least a decade prior to 1989, questioned traditional Communist approaches to class and society, and by the late 1980s, dominant trends in the leadership renounced a class analysis altogether.

Patricio and Stoleroff provide an informative backdrop to the PCP's present position by describing the party's development and its involvement in Portuguese politics during and since the dictatorship. The PCP emerged as a leading force in the Portuguese working class in the 1940s and maintained that position throughout the dictatorship.

The party's role during these years provided it with a significant base in Portuguese society.

The PCP did not play a direct role in the coup which overthrew the regime in April 1974, but the authors argue that it had influenced the army captains who led it. After the coup, the PCP played a leading, and sometimes determining role in the revolution. Following the consolidation of parliamentary democracy, the Communist Party, although excluded from government, managed to establish a distinctive role for itself in Portuguese politics.

A significant aspect of the PCP's role was its defence of Portugal's constitution. The original constitution of 1976 made specific references to Portugal's "path to socialism" and the establishment of a classless society, and also stated that the nationalised enterprises could not be privatised. Even after the 1980 revision of the constitution, which overturned the rule against privatisation, the PCP has maintained that its objective of "advanced democracy" can still be fought for and won within the context of the revised constitution.

While the PCP regards the consolidation of liberal democracy in Portugal as a counter-revolution, nevertheless it regards the fundamental victories of 25 April 1974 to be intact; so although it accepts that socialist transformation is not on the agenda, the new programme of "advanced democracy" combined sufficient continuity with the previous programme to sustain it in the political arena and in the working class. In the period since 1989, the PCP leadership has struggled to maintain this continuity, although it has faced a certain amount of dissent within its ranks. The leadership ascribes the problems of the socialist bloc to deviations from Leninism.

The authors suggest that reassertion of the "Communist ideal" hindered the disillusionment of party activists and allowed the leadership to mobilise against internal dissidents who attempted to campaign for reform. Furthermore, although the coup in the Soviet Union in 1991 contributed to a decline in the support of the PCP in the elections later that year, Patricio and Stoleroff conclude that, if the PCP can manage its relationship with its traditional base, "it has little to lose from maintaining what it considers to be positions of principle."

In many respects this conclusion is echoed by John Callaghan

in his study of the British Communist Party (CPGB). Callaghan traces its crisis to 1968, and finds that the "Gorbachev phenomenon and the collapse of the Eastern bloc merely sealed its fate". It was their role in national politics, rather than the changes in the Soviet Union which determined the fate of the CPGB. But why was the PCP able to retain its base? There are obvious differences in their national experiences - the revolutionary changes in Portugal being the most apparent; but Patricio and Stoleroff stress the continuity of the PCP as a factor in its survival and Callaghan points to the theoretical dislocation of the CPGB as a major factor in its decline. After the revival of radical politics in 1968, the CP in Britain failed to keep pace, not only with theoretical developments in Marxism, but also with the upsurge in political activism in the new social movements. Although the CPGB attempted in the late 1970s to address these developments in the revision of its programem, *The British Road to Socialism*, it was clear that its understanding of these movements was flawed; the CPGB saw itself, through its concept of a broad democratic alliance, as the natural political home for the new social forces, but the loss of its base in heavy industry, and its eventual repudiation of the class nature of its politics, were not compensated by new recruits from the social movements it attempted to woo.

Callaghan correctly stresses the role of *Marxism Today* in the decline of the party. While revisionists within the CPGB rediscovered democracy and pluralism, and attempted to develop a critique of the Leninist tradition, by the mid-1980s the group in the party leadership around *Marxism Today* appeared to have little interest in renewing the CP as a party based on Marxism. As Callaghan observes:

> "...It was never part of *Marxism Today*'s publishing project under Martin Jacques' direction to encourage debate on the Communist tradition, or indeed to consider any history whatsoever. And there is every reason to suppose that in their zeal for "rethinking", the CPGB's modernisers had destroyed at least as much as they had created. With the party losing members every year, the CPGB's decline was as out of control, as was the journey of intellectual discovery of *Marxism Today*, which had less and less to say on anything which could identify the journal as Marxist, let alone Leninist."

The process of rethinking socialism which had begun in the 1970s, had by the late 1980s been overtaken by a trend which made no serious attempt to salvage anything either from Marxist theory or practice. It could be argued that it was this trend within the CPGB that was largely responsible for its demise. While the majority of party members were eager for change and intent on the removal of the negative aspects of the "Marxist-Leninist" tradition in the CPGB, they were unhappy about the rejection of the whole tradition; yet the manipulation of the final debate within the party by its overwhelmingly dissolutionist leadership left the membership without the possibility of opting for a democratic socialist renewal of the party.

The leadership polarised the final debate between their own "Democratic Left" option on the one hand, and on the other an orthodox "Marxist-Leninist" grouping that had remained within the CPGB, banging a quasi-Stalinist drum until the end. Such a polarisation did not allow a Marxist renewal perspective to be effectively articulated, and so ensured that the leadership's preferred position would prevail.

Once the CPGB had been separated from its traditional base, had alienated much of its working class membership, had rejected its class perspective, and cast aside all interest in the renewal of the Marxist tradition, what conceivable purpose could it have? What was its role in the political arena? In voting with their feet, the vast majority of members who left the party, clearly indicated that it had ceased to have one. Thus Callaghan's observation in his conclusion can be wholeheartedly endorsed: "...the loss of members during the 1980s is attributable to demoralisation resulting from this failure to identify a positive and distinctive Marxist role for the party as well as to expulsions, splits and forces beyond the organisation's control."

A reading of the full range of essays in this collection is recommended, in order to fully assess both the reasons for the decline and in some instances demise of the Western European Communist Parties, and the validity of their political options. Only when a comprehensive and objective assessment is made will it be possible to effectively rebuild a Marxist left. This book is a contribution towards that assessment.

Kate Hudson

In Memory

Ralph Miliband, 1924 - 1994

Ralph Miliband was a socialist intellectual of great integrity. He belonged to a generation of socialists formed by the Russian Revolution and the Second World War.

His father, a leather craftsman in Warsaw, was a member of the Jewish Bund, an organisation of socialist workers. Poland, after the First World War, was beset by chaos, disorder and, ultimately, a military dictatorship. There were large-scale migrations. One of Ralph's uncles had gone eastward and joined the Red Army, then under Trotsky's command. His parents had left Warsaw separately in 1922. They met in Brussels where they had both settled and were married a year later. Ralph was born in 1924.

Hitler's victory in Germany, followed a few years later by the Spanish Civil War, had polarised politics throughout the continent. It was not possible for an intellectually alert fifteen-year-old to remain unaffected. Ralph joined the lively Jewish-socialist youth organisation, Hashomer Hatzair (Young Guard), whose members later played a heroic role in the resistance. It was here that the young Miliband learned of capitalism as a system based on exploitation, where the rich lived off the harm they inflicted on others. One of his close friends, Maurice Tran, who was later hanged at Auschwitz, gave him a copy of the Communist Manifesto. Even though he was not yet fully aware of it, he had become enmeshed in the business of socialist politics.

In 1940, as the Germans were beginning to roll into Belgium, the Milibands, like thousands of others, prepared to flee to France. This proved impossible because of German bombardment. Ralph and his father walked to Ostend and boarded the last boat to Dover, which was packed with fleeing diplomats and officials. His mother and younger sister, Nan, had remained behind and survived the war with the help of the Resistance.

Ralph and his father arrived in London in May 1940. Both

worked for a time as furniture removers, helping to clear bombed buildings. His passion for the written word led him to the works of Harold J. Laski. He had read in one of these that Laski was at the London School of Economics. Laski became a mentor, never to be forgotten. In a recent review essay for the 200th issue of *New Left Review*, Ralph Miliband acknowledged his debt:

> I came to know Harold Laski as a student at the London School of Economics (then evacuated to Cambridge) between 1941 and 1943, and I was fairly close to him after I came back to the LSE in 1946. I was quite dazzled, as a seventeen-year-old student, by his scholarship, his wit, his extraordinary generosity to students, and his familiarity with the great and the mighty. I had a deep affection for him, which the passage of the years since his death in 1950 at the age of fifty-six has not dimmed.

The three missing years to which he refers were spent in service as a naval rating in the Belgian section of the Royal Navy. Aware of the fact that many of his Belgian comrades were engaged in the war against fascism, and traumatised by the absence of his mother and sister, he had volunteered, using Laski's influence to override the bureaucracy. He served on a number of destroyers and warships, helping to intercept German radio messages. He rose to the rank of Chief Petty Officer and was greatly amused on one occasion when his new commanding officer informed him how he had been rated by a viscount who had commanded the ship on which he had previously served: "Miliband is stupid, but always remains cheerful."

After the war he graduated from the London School of Economics with a Ph.D. and embarked on a long teaching career. He first taught at Roosevelt College in Chicago and later became a lecturer in Political Science at the London School of Economics and later still a Professor at Leeds. This was followed by long stints at Brandeis and New York University. Teaching for him was always a two-way process and for that reason it gave him great pleasure. It was an arena for lively debates and a genuine exchange of ideas.

In the late 60s and 70s Miliband was in great demand on campuses throughout Britain and North America. He winced at some of the excesses ("Why the hell do you have to wear these stupid combat jackets?" I remember him asking a group of us during a big

meeting on Vietnam in 1968), but he remained steadfast.

A Miliband speech was always a treat, alternately sarcastic and scholarly, witty and vicious, but never demagogic. Apart from a brief spell in the Labour Party, he belonged to no organisation. His fierce independence excluded the Communist Party; dislike of posturing and sterile dogma kept him from the far left sects.

This turned out to be his strength. He was unencumbered by any party line, which made his speeches refreshing. As a writer he combined a wide political culture and clarity of argument. Two of his books, *Parliamentary Socialism* (1969) and *The State in Capitalist Society* (1972) became classics during the 1970s.

As he lay dying in the hospital, what gave him great pleasure was physically to feel the proofs of his last work, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age,* to be published by Polity Press this autumn. His wife Marion and his two sons, David and Edward, had read the first draft of his book. He had not accepted all of their criticisms and suggestions, but the process had stimulated him. It had also made him very happy. He was proud of his family.

Marion and his sister had narrowly escaped the Judeocide in Nazi-occupied Poland. A paternal aunt had organised the escape route and Marion's mother had bribed the Poles who helped them escape. Marion, too, had ended up as a postgraduate student at the London School of Economics, where she first met Ralph in the early 1960s. Their home became a warm and friendly environment, where they entertained a great deal. Passions often ran high when world politics were being discussed, but the polemic was always punctuated by laughter.

Ralph Miliband had pledged his own intellect to the struggle for human emancipation. He was impatient of those who had begun to drift. The introverted argot of postmodernism depressed him. He had lost close friends and others whom he admired greatly. Raymond Williams, Edward Thompson, Isaac Deutscher, Marcel Liebman, C. Wright Mills, had all, like Ralph Miliband, been public intellectuals, dissidents in the capitalist West, who had enriched our political culture. His death has now left a gaping void in times which are bad for socialists everywhere.

Tariq Ali