

1917

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International."

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Three Days in August

Soviet Rubicon & the Left

In the weeks following the failed coup attempt of 19-21 August, the International Bolshevik Tendency was virtually alone among self-proclaimed Trotskyists in recognizing that this event marked the end of the Soviet workers state. Every major political development has since confirmed our view. A few days after the coup, Gorbachev, at Boris Yeltsin's instruction, proclaimed the dissolution of the Soviet Communist

Party. The Congress of Peoples' Deputies voted to self-destruct. In December Yeltsin announced the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the formation of the so-called Commonwealth of Independent States. He did this without even bothering to consult Gorbachev, whose subsequent attempts to maintain some semblance of all-union government were simply ignored. On Christmas Day Gorbachev resigned as Soviet presi-

dent. The Soviet flag was lowered over the Kremlin and replaced by the czarist emblem the same evening. Yeltsin moved into the Soviet president's office before Gorbachev could even pack his bags.

The major political institutions of the Soviet state could be dismantled without armed resistance because the fate of the USSR had already been decided. The post-coup developments were a mere epilogue to the three days in August when the demoralized defenders of the old Stalinist apparatus made and lost their last desperate gamble.

Yeltsin wasted no time in launching a full assault on the already disintegrating state economy. At the beginning of January he withdrew state subsidies for foodstuffs and many other items, raising most prices several fold. This was just the first of a series of measures designed to replace centralized planning with market anarchy. Stirrings of popular protest quickly followed. As Yeltsin toured the country to gauge public reaction, he was confronted by angry crowds. Food riots erupted in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent, claiming the lives of several students; workers, military men and members of the old party apparatus demonstrated against the new regime in Red Square on Revolution Day; 5,000 army officers gathered in the Kremlin to protest Yeltsin's plans to carve up the army along national lines. In February, 50,000 people poured into the streets of Moscow in the largest demonstration against the government to date. The anti-Yeltsin protests are extremely heterogeneous. While some demonstrators carried red flags and pictures of Lenin and Stalin, the ultra-rightist Liberal-Democratic Party and other monarchist and anti-Semitic elements were also prominent. As the Caucasus region is racked with communal slaughter, and Yeltsin continues to wrangle with the Ukraine's new nationalist regime over the Black Sea Fleet, it is clear that the road back to capitalism in the former Soviet Union will not be a smooth one.

Yeltsin's "price reforms" were introduced on the advice of Jeffrey Sachs, golden boy of the Harvard Business School, who spent the past few years acquainting Polish workers with free-market misery. The purpose of the reforms is to reduce the Russian state budget deficit and stabilize the ruble. Under the old planning system the prices of commodities were determined not by market forces, but by the social and economic decisions of state planners. The ruble functioned more as a labor ration ticket than as a measure of value. To establish a regime of generalized commodity production, and to open the economy of the ex-USSR to the world market, it is first necessary, according to the Harvard school, to have some sort of universal equivalent that establishes the ratios in which various goods can be traded.

On what terms will Russia and the other republics join the imperialist "family of nations"? The productivity of Soviet labor has always lagged far behind that of advanced capitalist countries. The products of Soviet industry simply can't compete in price or quality with Western goods. Western capitalists are reluctant to invest even in Poland and the former DDR, whose industrial plant is more advanced than Russia's. Russian

and Ukrainian industries are even less likely to find foreign buyers. Aspiring Russian "entrepreneurs" cannot simply take over existing state industries and start making money. To become competitive internationally, most Soviet enterprises would require massive retooling and upgrading, and that can only be financed from abroad. The imperialist giants, locked in ever intensifying economic rivalries with one another, are not about to underwrite the development of a major new competitor. The total "aid" earmarked for the former Soviet Union so far is only a fraction of what the imperialists spent each year preparing to wage war on the "evil empire." The assistance they are providing is only enough to help Yeltsin keep a lid on his unruly population. There will be no latter-day Marshall Plan.

The lands that once made up the USSR are not without value to the predators of Wall Street and the Frankfurt bourse. The former Soviet Union was the world's number-one producer of oil and timber, and its territories are also rich in minerals, metals and grain. The population is well educated even by Western standards, and is thus a huge potential market and reserve of exploitable labor. But the imperialists see the former Soviet Union chiefly as a producer of raw materials and agricultural products and a consumer of the finished goods of the U.S., Europe and Japan. The deindustrialization which will accompany capitalist restoration will lock the various republics into a pattern of economic dependency and backwardness more typical of third-world countries than the developed capitalist world.

The former Soviet Union, however, is no third-world country. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 tore the former czarist empire out of the imperialist orbit and

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German Reunification Fuels Fascist Terror

The continuing fascist attacks on immigrants in Germany have been front page news around the world. In an orgy of bloody terror, gangs of fascist thugs armed with iron bars, clubs, pellet guns, chains and flare pistols have been attacking "foreigners" wherever they find them. The assaults occur at every hour of the day in train stations, streetcars, subways, city squares and on street corners. Several Spanish and Turkish restaurants have been burned down. Hundreds of the victims have been badly injured, many permanently, and some have been killed.

The nightmarish scenes of broken glass, burning buildings and bleeding victims recall the Hitlerite terror of the 1930s. It seems to many as if history is repeating itself. Some German leftists have begun speculating that the fascists' next target could be the organized workers movement.

Official government sources record more than 2,300 organized attacks against immigrants in 1991. Besides the widespread gang attacks on random individuals, there have also been large-scale pre-planned attacks on immigrant residential centers. In Greifswald, in the former German Democratic Republic (DDR), several hundred skinheads and fascists launched a coordinated attack on immigrants in order to drive them away. In Hoyerswerda, a coal-mining region in Saxony, several dozen fascists attacked two immigrant hostels for *seven consecutive days!* Many German residents in the area openly solidarized with the pogromists. In this case, as in most of the other large-scale assaults, the police stood on the sidelines, and finally intervened only to transport the targeted victims out of the city.

In a four-page statement issued on 6 November 1991, at the height of the fascist attacks, Gruppe Spartakus (the German section of the International Bolshevik Tendency) noted:

"Even when the police and courts occasionally arrest fascist murderers, they are usually soon released to continue their dirty work. The state organs are, as always, blind in their right eye. Their main attacks are directed against demonstrators and anti-fascists who try to confront the murderous gangs."

In recent months the large-scale assaults have eased, but the climate of terror still grips Germany. Attacks by small groups of fascists continue daily, but the media pays little attention and most incidents go unreported.

For the first few weeks there was no organized resistance. Then some liberals and clerics sponsored pacifist vigils (*Mahnwachen*) where citizens gathered in front of asylum centers to show their sympathy with the victims. While those who participated in this activity were certainly well-intentioned, this passive moral witnessing probably did little to deter the fascists. The large-scale attacks were apparently suspended as a result of



Nazis celebrate war criminal Rudolf Hess

GAD ROSS—JB PICTURES

pressure from a broad section of the bourgeoisie concerned about Germany's image abroad.

Who is Responsible?

There is overwhelming evidence that the terror campaign against immigrants was organized on a national scale. Yet the German government continues to deny that the attacks are politically inspired by fascist organizations. German officials continue to insist that the fascists pose no real danger. The Interior Ministry and the Federal Criminal Office dismiss the murderous assaults on immigrants as the "spontaneous actions" of a few "crazy" youths. The truth is that while they often need to be restrained, the fascists have a certain utility for big capital. The racist terror against the "*Untermenschen*" is a direct product of the resurgence of German imperialism, as the Gruppe Spartakus statement pointed out:

"The ideological basis for the racist mood is the growth of German nationalism. The government used the capitalist reunification to promote a national sense of euphoria over the strengthening of Germany. Having regained its international economic centrality, German imperialism intends to begin throwing its weight around. The ruling class would prefer to send *Bundeswehr* soldiers to intervene in the Yugoslav civil war today, disguised as European or UN 'peacekeepers,' ...in the Baltics all agencies of the [German] state ministries are actively helping to reestablish capitalist misery with 'German order.' And their antennae are pointing in the direction of the 'former Eastern regions': 'German claims' on Poland, Kaliningrad and Czechoslovakia are discussed daily in the bourgeois press. German capital



Kohl visits (Polish) Silesia, 1989:
"Even the stones speak German"

already sets the tone in Europe—and the planned 'EC 92' will further consolidate Germany's position."

Since the summer of 1991 the governing capitalist parties and the opposition Social Democrats have been hotly debating Germany's asylum policy. Germany has a fairly liberal law written into its constitution that grants extensive procedural and appeal rights to asylum seekers. Most of the quarter million asylum seekers who arrived in 1991 came from Yugoslavia, Turkey, Rumania and Bulgaria. They include many Roma and Sinti (people often referred to as "gypsies") and Kurds fleeing persecution. Very few (6.7 percent in 1991) of those who seek asylum can meet the stringent requirements necessary to become permanent residents. Many of those ruled ineligible for asylum are deported to their place of origin to face prison, torture or to fall victim to pogromists.

Germany has no legal provision for granting citizenship to immigrants. Very few of the four million so-called "guest workers," or even their German-born children, are eligible for German citizenship. The few immigrants who are accepted usually cannot retain their former citizenship. Since Germany ceased its "guest worker" program in 1972, the government has consistently sought to pressure those from outside the EC to leave.

German immigration law includes a constitutional "right of return" for people of "German ancestry" living within Germany's 1937 boundaries (i.e., the former German Democratic Republic and parts of Poland and the former USSR). This "right of return" has been extended to those whose ancestors were German, such as the Volga Germans who settled in the Ukraine during the reign of Catherine the Great. So far some two million *Aussiedler* (as they are called) have migrated to West Germany since 1989. These "real Germans" receive special treatment: automatic German citizenship, full pension eligibility and special assistance in housing, employment and German language instruction.

But even these "ethnic Germans" are increasingly confronted with German nationalism. Oscar Lafon-

taine, Social Democratic Party (SPD) candidate for chancellor in 1990, wants to halt the flood of *Aussiedler* into Germany. This position is shared by a large section of the German bourgeoisie, who would prefer that the "ethnic Germans" of the East remain in Poland and the former USSR as a bridgehead for German imperialism.

The wrangle over the asylum policy in the *Bundestag* (German parliament) is over how best to stop the tens of thousands of asylum seekers currently entering Germany every month. All parties agree that people seeking asylum should be held in isolated camps. The ruling Christian Democratic and Christian Social Union parties want a constitutional amendment so that potential immigrants can be stopped at the border or immediately deported. The Liberal members of the governing coalition and the Social Democrats of the opposition propose instead to speed up processing so that asylum seekers can be expelled more rapidly. Social Democratic state governments have threatened asylum seekers with deportation if they leave their assigned place of residence for *any* reason—even to escape fascist firebomb attacks.

The upsurge of nationalism touched off by capitalist reunification has produced a significant shift to the right on the immigrant question by the Social Democrats. The SPD's campaign in the state elections in Bremen last year was full of nationalist-racist rhetoric. Last summer the SPD state government flatly refused to accept any more Romanian or Polish asylum seekers. The SPD mayor of Bremen called for a limit to the number of *Armutsfuechtlinge* (so-called "poverty refugees") allowed into Germany. In spite of their attempts to adapt to the growing racist-nationalist mood among many voters, both the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats are losing ground to the far-right Republikaner Party and the racist DVU (German Peoples Union).

The April state elections in Schleswig-Holstein and Baden-Wuerttemberg catapulted far-right parties into both parliaments. In Schleswig-Holstein, where 6.3 percent of the electorate voted for the xenophobic DVU, 30,000 former SPD voters, mostly from urban working-class districts suffering from high unemployment and severe housing shortages, went over to the far right. In Baden-Wuerttemberg, the Republikaner captured 10.9 percent of the vote. These results have accelerated the other parties' movement to the right.

The Greens, who belong to the governing coalitions in four states, no longer campaign for immigrants to have local voting rights. The Green Party in the West and the Buendnis 90-Greens in the East (who have deputies in parliament) have both signaled their willingness to limit the number of asylum seekers allowed into Germany. The Party of Democratic Socialism (the social-democratic descendant of the DDR's former Stalinist ruling party) calls for more cops and "better training" to protect immigrants from attack.

The bourgeois media is constantly blaming immigrants for the explosion of racist violence. To secure "social peace," they say, immigrants should become less visible or consider leaving Germany. The governing conservative parties as well as the Social Democrats

try to assign blame for the current pogroms on the totalitarian mind-set instilled by the DDR. This is a well-worn anti-communist theme—the supposed “unity” of the ends of the political spectrum. The bourgeois politicians who push this anti-communism cannot explain why there have been proportionally more attacks on individual immigrants in the old Federal Republic than in the five eastern states. The Gruppe Spartakus leaflet pointed to the connection between the upsurge in racist terror in the former DDR and capitalist restoration:

“The collapse of production and resulting unemployment is atomizing and demoralizing the working class. The reactionary yellow press tries to find a scapegoat for the results of this capitalist initiative: immigrants are blamed for all ‘social evils’—drugs, crime and unemployment.”

How Strong are the Fascists?

There is a tendency among German leftists to see a direct parallel between the current pogroms and the Nazi terror during the Weimar Republic. Terms like “Fourth Reich,” “continuity of fascism,” “daily fascism” and “sneaking fascism” are widely used in the left press. The anarchoid *Autonomen* use the term “fascism” more indiscriminately than the rest because they never acknowledged the difference between bourgeois democracy and fascism in the first place.

In the past several years the Spartakist Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SpAD—German followers of James Robertson’s Spartacist League/U.S.) has also begun talking about a “Fourth Reich.” When challenged, SpAD supporters argue that their use of the term “Fourth Reich” to describe Germany after the absorption of the DDR is merely a matter of numerical sequence. Yet in Germany, and internationally, the term “Fourth Reich” is invariably associated with fascist rule. It is used by leftists precisely because of this connotation. But such terms only have the effect of confusing people who take them seriously. The Gruppe Spartakus leaflet addressed the notion that Germany is again on the brink of fascism:

“Despite the obvious racist consensus in the bourgeois camp, it would be a mistake to think that the German bourgeoisie today needs to play the fascist card to preserve its class rule. The existing fascist gangs are not yet mass movements based upon an impoverished and desperate petty bourgeoisie (comparable to that of the Weimar Republic). Today, smashing bourgeois democracy is not on the agenda.

“Today the ruling class is worried about ‘Germany’s image’ in the world. German imperialism aspires to a more important role in the imperialist ‘New World Order.’ The imperialist rulers fear that further growth of the fascist terrorists could pose an obstacle to their plans, and that the image of the ‘ugly German’ could scare away valuable allies.”

Pacifism—A Dangerous Illusion

If the German bourgeoisie has no need to turn to Nazi thugs for salvation, it also recognizes that the



“Dear Foreigners, please don’t leave us alone with *those* Germans!”

DER SPIEGEL

fascist formations represent a valuable auxiliary to the state’s official bodies of armed men. The Gruppe Spartakus has warned against the dangerous illusions peddled by liberals, pacifists and reformist utopians who call on the capitalist state to “outlaw the fascists:”

“The bourgeoisie uses these gangs for their own purposes, sometimes more, sometimes less. For example, today the fascists do the dirty work by frightening away potential asylum seekers and by helping to drive ‘unwanted’ immigrants out of the country. This heated nationalist climate makes it much easier for the capitalists to divert attention from their attacks on the working class—wage cuts, firings, etc.”

Since the ebbing of the revolutionary tide that swept Germany after World War I, the bourgeoisie, with the complicity of the Social Democracy, has kept the workers totally disarmed. This is codified in strict national gun control laws. The Social-Democratic bureaucracy supports a bourgeois monopoly of force and actively discourages workers from defending picket lines.

The SPD and the trade-union leadership, singing along in the nationalist chorus, have made no serious effort to resist the racist attacks. Their only “activity” has been to issue a few limp calls for passive “defense” of immigrant living quarters, while vigorously condemning physical resistance to the fascists as “provocative.”

Whenever the German fascists have tried to march or demonstrate in the last few decades, groups of young militants have attempted to confront them. In almost every case massive police formations have defended the fascists and attacked the protesters. During the past few months, as the emboldened fascists have begun to march in greater numbers, chanting “foreigners out” and “kill the reds,” police armed with water cannons, tear gas, and batons have routinely attacked anyone trying to stop the pogromists. Immigrants who have picked up the jagged pieces of concrete hurled through their windows and thrown them back at their tormentors are denounced by the

cops and the gutter press for violently disrupting “civil peace”!

The German government has not to date released an official tally of the number of immigrants murdered by fascists in 1991, but there were probably about twenty. During the same period only two fascists have fallen. One Nazi was killed while leading an attack on a sex shop in Dresden. In Berlin, a member of the far-right Republikaner Party was killed by a Turkish immigrant who chose to defend himself. The Turkish youth was promptly charged with murder, but after standing trial was eventually acquitted. This is probably because of angry demonstrations by immigrants and anti-fascists demanding his release as well as the possibility of a negative international reaction.

The *Bleiberecht* Dodge

At officially sponsored trade-union demonstrations, the demand for *Bleiberecht* (the legal right to remain) dominates the banners and speeches. Many left groups capitulate to the union bureaucrats’ at best half-hearted defense of immigrants by uncritically taking up this slogan. As Gruppe Spartakus wrote:

“The DGB leadership has for years refused to demand the full integration of immigrants into society. They hide their nationalist prejudices and political cowardice behind demands for *Bleiberecht*. It would doubtless be better if asylum seekers had a legal right to remain, rather than simply being deported as they are today. But it is wrong to limit oneself to a demand that is only aimed at preventing deportations. Limiting oneself to *Bleiberecht* implicitly accepts second and third-class status for immigrants and also denies their democratic rights: [including] the right to work, the right to choose a place of residence, the right to social benefits and the right to vote.

“Many reactionaries can accept immigrants if they are granted no more than *Bleiberecht*—as long as they work for low wages and take the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs.”

The German left tends to accept the liberal, petty-bourgeois notion that social, national and racial prejudice can be overcome under capitalism if only decent people would stand up for human rights. One radical-sounding expression of this sentiment is the call for “open borders,” which is endorsed by a variety of groups, including Gruppe Arbeitermacht, the German co-thinkers of Workers Power. The petty-bourgeois anarchist *Autonomen*, who also raise the “open borders” demand, are more straightforward about their motivations than the ostensibly Trotskyist Gruppe Arbeitermacht. The *Autonomen* argue that because the German working class is bought off, only mass immigration can furnish a basis for struggle and social change.

While the call for “open borders” is more radical than the union bureaucrats’ demand for *Bleiberecht*, it implies that the German bourgeoisie can be pressured into redressing the wrongs done to people victimized by imperialism by permitting unlimited immigration. Communists generally uphold the democratic right of individuals to live where they choose and oppose laws limiting immigration into imperialist countries. But we

do not attempt to transform liberal sentiments into a utopian/reformist answer to the gross inequities of the capitalist world order. In the face of the capitalists’ attempts to divide the proletariat, Gruppe Spartakus has raised the call for *full citizenship rights* for all immigrants and asylum seekers. They have also consistently attempted to link the struggle to ensure full democratic rights to the fight for working-class power and the establishment of a rational planned economy.

Labor/Immigrant Self-Defense Can Smash Fascist Terror!

In their statement the Gruppe Spartakus attempted to point to the necessary next step in the struggle against the fascist scourge:

“When we understand that we cannot expect the bourgeois democrats, their state or their police to really resist the fascists, it follows that defense has to be organized independently of, and even against, this state. The question of how and with whom this struggle is to be organized becomes more important every day.

“Trade unionists and the unorganized, both Germans and immigrants, must build self-defense groups together, based on the unions. Such groups could be a first step toward mobilizing the working class—politically and organizationally—to smash the fascist gangs.

“It would certainly be an illusion to expect such a thing of the social-democratic DGB [German trade-union federation] bureaucrats. Anti-fascist and leftist workers in the unions and the factories have to begin now to struggle against Nazi terror. It is possible to organize workers groups in the plants and trade unions to begin building integrated self-defense groups with immigrants—even without the agreement of the bureaucrats. It would only take a few actions in which fascist gangs were successfully physically confronted to show the effectiveness of such groups in defending immigrants.”

The participation of groups from the printers’ and teachers’ unions in the *Mahnwachen* showed that elements of the working class are alarmed by the spread of fascist terrorism. For decades German and immigrant workers in the unions have fought together against the bosses in coal mines, steel mills and auto factories around the country. The Gruppe Spartakus pointed out that this common experience can provide a starting point for building integrated worker-immigrant self defense groups.

For Class-Struggle Politics!

The “success” of class-collaborationist business unionism was due to German capitalism’s relative competitive advantage in the world market. The current global economic contraction and increased international competition, combined with the immense cost of absorbing the former DDR and the increased overhead occasioned by the economic integration of the European Community compel the German bourgeoisie to launch a major offensive against the working class. Capitalist “rationalization” has already closed many mines and steel mills, and tens of thousands more jobs

are scheduled for destruction as German corporations prepare to shift production to low-wage countries.

Last October a special government "Deregulation Commission" finally issued its long-awaited report. The report called for rolling back the legal rights of workers in order to make German capitalism more competitive. The Commission proposed that the employers or the state have the power to overrule industry-wide contracts and dictate lower wages, reduce benefits and impose substandard working conditions in "less competitive" businesses. Ex-DDR workers are already getting less than half West German wages, and the report suggested that workers from other European Community countries employed in Germany should be paid at the lesser wage rates prevailing in their country of origin.

A class-struggle leadership in the unions would seek to block attempts to split the working class by fighting to ensure that every worker doing a job gets paid at the highest union rate. The best way to oppose layoffs is through a national campaign to divide the work according to the number of workers—with no loss in pay.

A class-struggle orientation, which poses the problems of the masses in clear class terms and allows even the more backward elements among the exploited

to understand the situation and to identify their real enemies, can dramatically undercut the dangerous appeal of fascist demagogues. The recent electoral gains of the far right and the savage attacks on immigrants have been encouraged by the prostration of the pro-capitalist misleaders of the SPD and DGB.

The fascists are a useful lever for German capitalism as it prepares to intensify its class war on the proletariat. These depraved killers can and must be stopped. The Gruppe Spartakus statement concluded:

"The fascists must be driven off the streets now, before they gain a mass following. Self-defense groups based on the unions could patrol immigrant homes, streets and subways and drive the fascists back into their holes.

"The seizure of power by the fascists in 1933 was a world-historic defeat for the working class. The main responsibility rested on the Social Democratic Party. The Stalinist Communist Party of Germany, with its ultra-leftist politics (rejection of united fronts, for instance), was unable to break through the SPD leadership's loyalty to the capitalist system.

"The left and the workers movement must learn the lessons of this experience!

"No free speech for genocide!

"Full citizenship rights for immigrants!

"For self-defense groups based on the unions to smash the fascist murder gangs!"

'His Truth is Marching On'

On 16 October 1991 the John Brown Society held its first annual Awards Banquet at the historic Fraunces Tavern in New York City on the anniversary of John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry. Founded by Larry Lawrence, a sympathizer of the Bolshevik Tendency, the John Brown Society is the first organization in the history of the American left to present a major award for courage and sacrifice in the struggle for black liberation.

A gold medal was presented to Robert F. Williams, the leader of an armed black self-defense group which resisted Klan terror in Monroe, North Carolina in the early 1960s, and for many years an expatriate fugitive from legal persecution at the hands of the American ruling class. A gold medal was also given to Geronimo ji Jaga [Pratt], a former leader of the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles, who has spent 21 years in jail on a framed-up FBI murder charge. A protest telegram was sent by the John Brown Society to Governor Pete Wilson of California, calling for the former Panther's immediate release. A silver medal was also awarded to Edward Zwick, the driving force behind the movie "Glory." Also present at the banquet was Conrad Lynn, a famous black radical and civil-rights attorney.

Robert Williams came to New York to receive his award personally, accompanied by his wife, Mabel. Representatives of ji Jaga were present to accept the award on his behalf. In a moving acceptance speech, they said that the awarding of the medal would lift his spirits greatly. Geronimo ji Jaga wrote to express his thanks for the "special honor":



Robert F. Williams

1917 PHOTO

"I look forward to the day when the raw and real truths be finally and completely disclosed regarding the many sacrifices and full greatness of John Brown and his gallant efforts for the betterment of all Humanity."

In his remarks, Lawrence explained the purpose of the activities of the John Brown Society:

"We are here tonight to rejoice in great lives lived for great causes. Revolutionary fighters for justice...are the most important people in the world, and it is past time that these men and women should be honored."

Soviet Rubicon...

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laid the foundations for transforming it from a backward, largely peasant nation into a major industrial power. At the time of the revolution, over 80 percent of the Soviet population lived in the countryside; today, more than 60 percent are city dwellers.

The reintegration of the Soviet Union into the international capitalist division of labor will mean the ruin of entire economic sectors: steel, machinery, military hardware and consumer goods and the destitution of many of the tens of millions of workers whose livelihoods depend upon industry.

The states emerging from the breakup of the USSR are not likely to be reduced to third-world status without explosions of popular anger. As mass indignation at free-market "shock therapy" continues to mount, Yeltsin could easily fall. He has already been forced to modify some of the harsher aspects of his economic package. Yet none of Yeltsin's would-be successors is any less committed than he to capitalist restoration; they differ only over tactics and timing.

For Workers Revolution To Smash Counterrevolution!

The one force that can turn back the tide—the working class—is confused and demoralized by years of Stalinist betrayal. Yeltsin's regime remains extremely fragile and vulnerable to an upsurge from below. Revolutionists in the former USSR must attempt to turn popular hostility to price-gougers and food speculators into a weapon against the whole privatization scheme. By forming representative committees in each workplace and working-class neighborhood, workers could come together to recreate the soviets of 1905 and 1917. Such organs of popular power could ensure that the necessary food supplies are fairly distributed. They could also block the wholesale looting and theft of publicly-owned enterprises and counter layoffs with a campaign for a sliding scale of wages and hours, and constitute the organizational framework for a reborn workers state.

Mass hostility to Yeltsin's austerity measures is being exploited by a host of right-wing nationalist demagogues and anti-Semitic descendants of the Black Hundreds. The demonstrations against Yeltsin in recent months have brought together "patriotic" Stalinists with Russian-nationalist fascists. Capitalist restoration has unleashed an explosion of reactionary nationalist bloodletting throughout the Caucasus region, in Moldavia and elsewhere in the former USSR. Marxists uphold the right of all nations to self-determination and oppose the Great Russian chauvinism of Yeltsin's Kremlin. At the same time, socialists champion the voluntary union of the peoples of the former USSR in a renewed socialist federation.

To avert disaster, the working class urgently requires revolutionary leadership. A revolutionary party

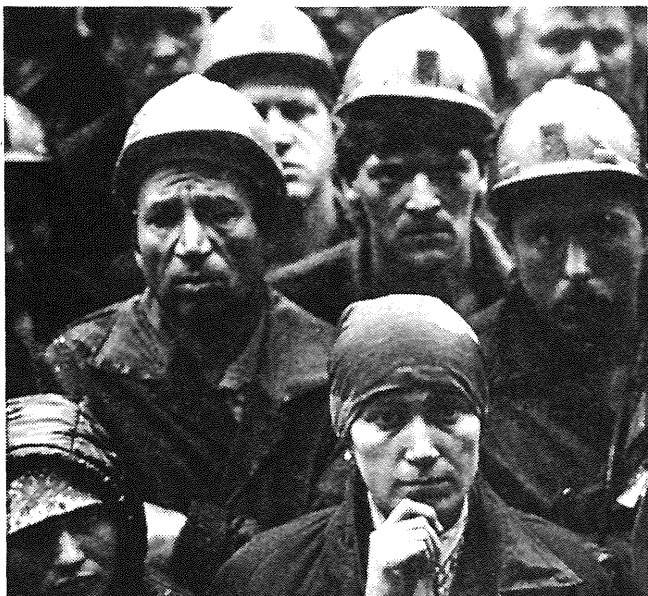
would seek to mobilize the proletariat to drive Yeltsin and other nationalist potentates from power, reverse privatization programs and return the birthplace of the world's first workers state to the revolutionary internationalist road of Lenin and Trotsky.

Any group aspiring to revolutionary leadership must be able to recognize reality and tell the truth. Political reality today is shaped by the fact that the victory of the counterrevolution in August 1991 destroyed the Soviet workers state. Most of the economy is still formally the property of the state, as in Poland, Czechoslovakia and the rest of Eastern Europe. But those wielding the monopoly of force in society are committed to dismantling, not maintaining, state ownership of the means of production. The class that brought collectivized property into being and had the greatest interest in its survival—the proletariat—was excluded from direct political power with the rise of Stalin in the 1920s. Yet the Stalinist bureaucracy, for all its crimes against the working class, derived its social power from its role as administrator of the state-owned economy. It was episodically compelled to defend workers property forms from capitalist restoration and to repress pro-capitalist elements within its own ranks in order to safeguard its privileges. With the failure of the August coup, the deeply divided and thoroughly demoralized Stalinist apparatus collapsed, as forces openly pledged to destroy the economic foundations laid by the October Revolution seized power.

The success of the coup plotters would have represented an obstacle, however temporary and insubstantial, to the victory of the restorationists now in power. It was therefore the duty of those who defended the Soviet Union against capitalist restoration to side with the coup leaders against Yeltsin, without offering them any political support. Yet, to our knowledge, every other tendency purporting to be Trotskyist failed this last test of Soviet defensism. Most sided with the forces gathered around Yeltsin in the name of democracy. Others were neutral. To excuse their failure, many of these groups now find it expedient to play down the significance of Yeltsin's August victory. We shall examine the responses to the coup by three pseudo-Trotskyist organizations: the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, Workers Power and the Spartacists.

USec: "Nobody Here But Us Democrats"

For the past forty years, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec), led by Ernest Mandel, has specialized in distorting and abridging Trotsky's revolutionary program to adapt to the latest leftist political fad. Their search for a cheap ticket to "mass influence" has led them from support to insurrectionary Stalinists like Castro and Ho Chi Minh in the late 1960s, to unstinted praise for the anti-communists of Poland's Solidarnosc a decade later. As the prevailing political winds shifted rightward during the past decade and a half, the USec has been trying to find a niche on the fringes of social democracy. It is hardly



Soviet coal miners

WHITE-SYGMA

surprising, then, that during the August coup Mandel and his followers sided with the few thousand capitalist-restorationist liberals and black-marketeers who rallied to Yeltsin's White House. Along with the entire international bourgeoisie, the USec applauded the Russian president's victory over the Emergency Committee as a triumph for "democracy." One American USec affiliate, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, wrote, "The defeat of the coup was a genuine victory for the Soviet peoples" (*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, October 1991). Another American USec outfit saw in the Yeltsinite crowds a "popular uprising" with "few precedents since the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917, led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky" (*Socialist Action*, September 1991). Mandel himself wrote:

"The...putschists wanted to severely limit or even suppress the democratic liberties that existed in reality....This is why the putsch had to be opposed by all means available. And this is why the failure of the putsch should be hailed."

—*International Viewpoint*, 3 February

Like every good Kautskyite, Mandel's highest criterion is abstract "democracy." The counterrevolutionaries in the Kremlin and their international backers in the IMF are not so worried about such "liberties." The brutal austerity measures required for capitalist restoration will be imposed on the Soviet masses with bayonets, not stump speeches or election-day handshakes.

Marxists know that bourgeois democracy has a class content. The real social inequality between bourgeois and proletarians, between the homeless beggar and the president of General Motors, is not eliminated, but rather concealed, by formal equality of rights. Parliamentary institutions play an important part in legitimating the rule of the bourgeoisie by concealing the class policies of capitalist governments behind a facade of popular consent. The working class must defend

democratic liberties in capitalist society against all attempts to curtail or suspend them. Yet, the conquests of the October Revolution weighed far heavier than bourgeois democracy in the scales of human progress. The abolition of private property over one sixth of the earth's surface and the replacement of market anarchy by economic planning were social foundations upon which democracy could become real for the millions who do not own factories, banks or media empires. The hypocritical "democratic" imperialists hated the Stalinists not because they disenfranchised the Soviet workers, but because their rule depended on the survival of the gains won by the Russian proletariat in 1917. In Trotsky's words:

"We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR..."

—*In Defense of Marxism*

USEC on the Wrong Side of the Barricades

The barricades of August formed a dividing line between those bent on bringing back capitalism and those who wanted to slow down the market reforms and preserve, at least for a time, the social and economic status quo. Social democrats, liberals and all those who openly favored capitalist restoration had little difficulty in grasping the significance of the coup and its defeat. Pseudo-Trotskyists, however, must falsify reality to justify shirking Soviet defensism and prostrating themselves before left-liberal public opinion. It is therefore extremely important for the USec to "prove" that there were no fundamental differences between the coup plotters and the Yeltsinites. Nat Weinstein, writing in the September 1991 issue of *Socialist Action*, opined:

"To the extent there are divisions among those in governmental and state power—from Gorbachev, to the organizers of the coup, to Boris Yeltsin and Eduard Shevardnadze—it is *not* between those supporting a market-based capitalist democracy, on the one side, and 'hardline communists defending socialism,' on the other."

The coup leaders were certainly not "communists defending socialism;" they were Stalinist bureaucrats attempting to hang on to the power and prerogatives of the central apparatus, which depended on the existence of a *state-owned economy*, against forces that had openly declared for capitalism. If the coup did not pit restorationists against those resisting restoration, what, according to Weinstein, were the rival factions fighting about? He continues:

"All major currents in the state apparatus...support the reintroduction of capitalism.

"The fundamental difference between them was whether it was possible to continue the process of capitalist restoration by political means, or whether an iron-fisted dictatorship was necessary to impose the anti-working-class measures this policy requires."

It is not hard to see where this reasoning leads. If the Yeltsinites and the coup leaders were equally in favor



Bush & Yeltsin: counterrevolutionary axis

of capitalism, and differed only over the political means, the working class should favor the victory of the faction that sought to restore capitalism by less repressive methods. This, as we shall see, is the only logical argument offered by any of the so-called Trotskyists who refused to block with the coup leaders. Only its major premise—that the aims of the coupists and their adversaries were the same—is false.

Ernest Mandel agrees with Weinstein that Yeltsin represents a wing of the Soviet bureaucracy, but doubts that either the Russian president or the coup leaders would or could restore capitalism:

“The Soviet bureaucracy is too vast, its social networks too strong, the web of inertia, routine, obstruction and sabotage on which it rests too dense for it to be decisively weakened by actions from above.

“Yeltsin, just as much, if not more than Gorbachev, represents a faction in the top levels of the nomenklatura. Yeltsin, by his whole past and education, is a man of the apparatus. His gifts as a populist demagogue do not permit the modification of this judgement....

“People will say that, unlike Gorbachev, who continued in some vague fashion to call himself a socialist, Yeltsin has come out openly for the restoration of capitalism. This is true. But professions of faith are not enough for us to form an assessment of politicians. We have to look at what happens in practice and what social interests they serve.

“From this point of view, Yeltsin and his allies in the liquidation of the USSR...represent a faction of the nomenklatura distinct from the bourgeois forces properly so-called...although they can overlap at the margins.”

—*International Viewpoint*, 3 February

Thus Weinstein, on the one hand, argues that the *entire Soviet bureaucracy* was bent on restoring capitalism, while Mandel, on the other, is skeptical as to whether *any wing* of the bureaucracy, including its most rightist Yeltsinite elements, has the will or power to do so. These two assessments of the Soviet bureaucracy are diametrically opposed, and would give rise to heated contention in any organization that took such questions seriously. If, in fact, Weinstein and Mandel continue to live happily together under the same political tent, it is only because their apparent differences conceal a much more significant common denominator.

Mandel and Weinstein agree that the August coup and its denouement did not pose the question of the

survival of the Soviet workers state. They concur that Yeltsin's main political difference with the Emergency Committee was that he wanted to preserve democratic liberties. Thus, from opposite assumptions concerning the nature and direction of the Soviet bureaucracy, Weinstein and Mandel arrive at the same bottom line: support to the “democratic” Yeltsin camp. And by a happy coincidence, this practical conclusion situates the USec on the fair-weather side of liberal-left and social-democratic opinion. For opportunists, analysis of objective reality functions not as a guide to action, but as a rationale for cutting programmatic corners. Which rationale one chooses is a minor matter as long as the cash value is the same.

Yeltsinlites and Coupists: Conflict of Interest

Like all rationales those of Weinstein and Mandel contain elements of truth emphasized to falsify the larger picture. It is true, as Weinstein would point out, that the Emergency Committee, unlike Soviet Stalinists in the past, did not seek to justify its actions with the rhetoric of socialism. Nor can it be denied that the attitude toward collectivized property expressed in their public statements was ambiguous: on the one hand, they voiced concern about the growing peril to the “integral national economic mechanism that has been shaping for decades,” and the offensive that is “underway on the rights of working people....to work, education, health, housing and leisure” (*New York Times*, 19 August 1991). Yet on the other hand, they pledged themselves to respect the different forms of property that had grown up in the Soviet Union, including private property, and to continue down the path of perestroika.

This equivocation is explained by the fact that the coup plotters were bereft of any positive historical outlook. Very few of them, in all likelihood, believed in the superiority of socialized property, let alone in “socialism.” Writing in the early 1930s, Trotsky described the Stalinist bureaucracy as a mixed bag: it ran the gamut from utterly cynical time-servers who would betray the Soviet state at the first opportunity, to sincere socialist revolutionaries; from fascists like Butenko to proletarian internationalists like Ignace Reiss. The Brezhnev years, however, saw the erosion of whatever socialist conviction the bureaucracy retained. As the Soviet economy lost its forward momentum, complacency, cynicism and corruption pervaded the apparatus at all levels. This corrosion was personified by Brezhnev himself, with his notorious fondness for accumulating fancy dachas and foreign sports cars. The only ideological conviction that motivated the “hardliners” was Soviet patriotism: a commitment to maintain the USSR's standing as a world power. This “patriotism” explains the undeniably heterogeneous

character of the opposition to Yeltsin, and the curious affinity between old-guard apparatchiks and czarist anti-Semites: for both, maintaining a strong Russian state is far more important than the property relations that support it.

But a Marxist analysis of the Soviet ruling caste is not primarily based on what the bureaucrats think, much less what they say in public. The key to explaining the political behavior of different social classes and strata lies in their objective social position and the material interests that derive from it. Unlike the bourgeoisie, the Soviet bureaucracy was never a property-owning group. In August 1991, as at the height of Stalin's power, its privileges derived from its role as custodian of the centrally administered, state-owned economy. As the power of the center came under mounting attack from rebellious nationalities, breakaway bureaucrats and free marketeers, it was natural that some sections of the central state and party apparatus would attempt to reassert their prerogatives. This was the significance of the power struggle within the party that preceded the August coup, and of the coup attempt itself (see IBT September 1991 statement, page 20).

What requires explanation is not the fact that a section of the Stalinist bureaucracy offered resistance, but that it allowed itself to be overthrown unresistingly in most of Eastern Europe, and that the attempted counterblow of the Soviet nomenklatura, when it finally came, was so belated, irresolute and pathetic. The sclerosis of Stalinism was indeed far more advanced than had been thought prior to 1989.

The status quo, which the "gang of eight" sought to preserve, included something more valuable to Soviet workers and the workers of the world than a thousand constitutions or parliaments: public ownership of the means of production. No one could have known on the morning of 19 August that the barricades erected in defense of the status quo would prove as ephemeral as they did. But as we wrote before the coup:

"It is possible that leading sections of the bureaucracy may attempt at some future point to arrest the process of capitalist restoration. If that happened, it would be our duty to side militarily with the 'conservatives' against the Yeltsinites. The Stalinist caste is incapable of solving the problems which gave rise to the 'reforms' in the first place, but slamming on the brakes could at least buy some time."

—1917, No. 10

Ernest Mandel, who complacently assures us that the Stalinist bureaucracy is still in power, also buttresses his argument with certain fragments of truth. Yeltsin was indeed a creature of the apparatus, first gaining national notoriety as a party boss in the city of Sverdlovsk (now, as in czarist times, Yekaterinburg), and then going on to become Moscow party chief. A brash man with a very high opinion of himself, Yeltsin chafed at the autocratic party discipline imposed by Gorbachev, and publicly criticized the Party Chairman for not taking glasnost and perestroika far enough. Yeltsin's rupture with Gorbachev eventually led to his dismissal as head of the Moscow party and his expulsion from the Politburo. He subsequently repudiated

the Communist Party altogether.

Yeltsin survived politically only because his reputation as Gorbachev's most prominent critic allowed him to become a spokesperson for forces outside the party. Yeltsin was elected president of the Russian Republic against the party as a champion of those elements, in Russia and the USSR as a whole, that sought to destroy the CPSU's political monopoly. When he stood on a tank outside his White House to confront the coup makers, he spoke as a representative of foreign capital, national separatists and Moscow's pimps, currency speculators and other "entrepreneurs" who, along with their private security guards, comprised the bulk of the crowd that rallied to his support. Mandel can paint Yeltsin as a "man of the apparatus" only by ignoring his defection to the camp of the class enemy.

"Spontaneous Privatization" and the Nomenklatura

Mandel's assertion that the bureaucracy remains in power contains an element of truth as well. The millions of individuals who constituted the nomenklatura have not disappeared and many of them have not even lost their jobs. The Ukrainian president, Leonid Kravchuk, and his Khazak counterpart, Nursultan Nazarbayev, were Stalinist party chiefs who became fervent nationalists only after August. It is no surprise that holdovers from the old regime, and the lower bureaucratic echelons on which they lean, are scrambling for positions of influence in the new political and economic order. If a fully developed capitalist class, armed with a legal code and a repressive state apparatus to protect private property, were a precondition for capitalist restoration, capitalism could never be reestablished in any collectivized economy.

The 27 December 1991 *New York Times* quoted Graham Allison, a Harvard Sovietologist, on the new role played by many directors of state firms:

"You are the manager of a state enterprise, say an aircraft company with 10,000 employees, and you begin to imagine there is no one above you," he said. "You don't get any orders, and the ministry you reported to disappears. You begin to imagine that the property is yours, and since you aren't getting any supplies you have to look out for yourself and your employees. Sometimes you get a foreigner to buy half of the operation in a joint venture. That is spontaneous privatization."

The USec's *International Viewpoint* (20 January) contains a remarkable interview with Yuri Marenich, academician and delegate to the Moscow Council (Soviet) of Peoples' Deputies. Marenich describes the process by which local Yeltsinite officials appropriated large chunks of real estate and other public property:

"They ran their electoral campaigns under the slogan: 'having won power, we will demonopolize property and manage the economy through the market.' But once they got the power to manage the public's property, they found themselves facing a tremendous temptation to grab this property for themselves. This was made easy by the possibility of combining jobs in government institutions with posts in private firms dealing with the government.



YURI ABRAMOCHKIN—NOVOSTI

Pugo and Yanayev: leaders of the August coup

"Briefly, those in charge of supervising privatization simply transferred the district's property to companies they themselves head.

"All the members of the soviet's executive committee set up private companies that they headed. One firm took over the soviet's information services; another its legal services, a third took over all the real estate, its sale and leasing rights on the territory of the district.

"It's quite simple. Since the 1930s, we've had a system of transferring property without payment. But it was all state property and the transfer was from one state agency or enterprise to another. All the parties were acting in the name of a single owner, the state. Now, however, we also have private owners. But they have used the same procedure to transfer real estate from the district soviet, a state body, to a private company...."

Marenich speculates that a similar pattern is being replicated throughout the country. Many of the old nomenklatura are likely to find a place as members of a new post-Soviet capitalist class. Those who replace the Stalinist apparatchiks will no doubt for some time continue to operate the mechanisms of public ownership.

Reimposition of capitalism must obviously come about as the result of a process in which elements of continuity with previous modes of social and economic life will survive, as an indigenous bourgeoisie is formed from fragments of other classes and strata. Powerful centrifugal forces were at work in the Soviet economy years before Yeltsin's triumph in August. But Mandel's stress on the elements of continuity obscures the fact that the defeat of the coup marked a qualitative change. As long as the center in Moscow could exert administrative control over the economy, regional and local bureaucrats were obliged to work within (or around) the framework laid down from above; their appetite for the prerogatives of property owners ran into an objective constraint. Only after the central power was definitively broken in August were they free to embark on the path of "spontaneous privatization." The August events sounded the death knell of the Soviet workers state. All of Mandel's and Weinstein's assurances that nothing fundamental has changed are,

in the end, little more than elaborate attempts to avoid responsibility for having sided with the counterrevolution.

Workers Power: Defensists in Word, Yeltsinites in Deed

The ostensible Trotskyists of Workers Power (Britain) and its partners in the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) are a good deal more candid than the USec in acknowledging the significance of the aborted coup. Reluctant at first to admit that the Soviet workers state met its end in August, they initially described the post-coup situation as one of "dual power," in which Gorbachev, representing the bureaucracy, continued to vie for state authority with the Yeltsinite restorationists. When, however, the "Gorbachev pole" capsized with a tap of Yeltsin's little finger in December, Workers Power finally recognized reality and conceded that, "The Soviet Union is dead. The spectre that haunted the capitalists for over seventy years has been laid to rest." (*Workers Power*, January).

Workers Power also sees the connection between the death of the Soviet workers state and Yeltsin's August victory over the coup. A September 1991 statement by the LRCI International Secretariat asserts that the bureaucratic faction represented by the Emergency Committee "hoped by their actions on 19 August to defend their privileges on the basis of post capitalist property relations" (*Workers Power*, September 1991, emphasis added). The statement goes on to describe the Yeltsin forces in the following terms:

"The former layer of [democratic and nationalist] oppositionists...lost almost all belief in reforming 'really existing socialism' and were oriented to western democracy and a market economy as ideals. The latter—the ex-Gorbachevites—became disillusioned with Gorbachev's utopian project of 'market socialism', outraged by their leader's vacillations and compromises with the conservatives and attracted into the service of imperialism as the restorers of capitalism in the USSR. "What does the Yeltsin-headed coalition of forces politically represent? Yeltsin, Shevardnadze, and indeed the whole military and political entourage of the Russian President, represent a faction of the bureaucracy that has abandoned the defence of its caste privileges and their source—a degenerate workers' state—in favour of becoming key members of a new bourgeois ruling class."

Thus, according to the LRCI, the identity of the contending forces in the August confrontation is clear: on the one side, a section of the Soviet bureaucracy which, if only to maintain its privileges, sought to defend the Soviet workers state; on the other side, a coalition of nationalists, "democratic" intelligentsia and bureaucrats that sought to destroy the workers state and restore capitalism. In this confrontation, Workers Power did not hesitate to choose sides...with those who sought to destroy the workers state! The same issue of *Workers Power* proclaimed, "we had to stand with, and indeed take the front ranks in, the fight to stop the coup." To underscore this point, the same issue features an article en-

titled "Their song is over," which lambastes "the Coup's Left Supporters." Lest anyone doubt the LRCI's seriousness on this score, they recently broke relations with a small California group called the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency for refusing to support the Yeltsinites against the Emergency Committee.

By what miracles of ideological contortion can the LRCI square this position with its claims to be communist, Trotskyist and Soviet defensist? The LRCI International Secretariat statement continues:

"Major questions are posed by these events. Was the perspective of political revolution an unreal, a utopian perspective? Was the resistance to the conservative coup in itself counter-revolutionary? Would a successful bureaucratic clamp-down have given the working class a breathing space? The answer to all of these questions is no!

"In what sense could it be said that SCSE [the Emergency Committee] 'defended the planned property relations'? Only in this: that it resisted their abolition to the extent that they were the 'host' off which it was parasitic. However, this massive social parasite was the principle [sic] cause of the sickness unto death of the bureaucratic centrally planned economy, of the consequent disillusion of the masses in it.

"Through their totalitarian dictatorship the Stalinists were also an absolute bloc [sic] on the self-activity and self-consciousness of the proletariat and its ability to crystallise a new vanguard, which alone could have not merely preserved but renewed the 'gains of October'."

—*Workers Power*, September 1991

It is axiomatic for Trotskyists that the Stalinists were an obstacle to the self-activity of the working class and acted as a parasite on the planned economy, which they ruined through their mismanagement, and ultimately proved incapable of defending. This is why a political revolution was necessary in the USSR: to oust the Stalinists and preserve the planned economy.

What Was To Be Done?

Even a relatively small revolutionary grouping could have made a great impact during those critical August days, when the weak and vacillating coupists faced Yeltsin's motley rabble. The weakness and disorganization evident on both sides presented an opportunity for a Trotskyist group committed to preserving nationalized property under the direction of democratic organs of workers power. The immediate tactical objective in those first days would have been to organize an assault to disperse the few hundred lightly armed Yeltsinites in and around the Russian White House.

A determined initiative against the counter-revolutionaries would have won wide support in the working class, who were fed up with perestroika. It would also have been viewed sympathetically by a considerable section of the armed forces, and could have galvanized active support from pro-socialist elements. The floundering grey men running the coup would have had little choice but to accept this "help" even though, carried out in the name of workers power, it would in the end have threatened their interests too.

The scattering of the Yeltsinites could have been followed up by a call for representatives from every factory, barracks and working-class housing estate to gather at the White House to create a real, democratic Moscow soviet.

The success of such an initiative could have sparked mass workers struggles throughout the USSR to rout the capitalist restorationists. It would also have further weakened the grip of the CPSU apparat. A military bloc with the coupists against Yeltsin was not counterposed to the struggle for soviet democracy. Just as Lenin's bloc with Kerensky against General Kornilov in August 1917 prepared the overthrow of the bourgeois Provisional Government, a struggle against Yeltsin in which independent working-class formations pointed their guns the same way as the coupists would have strengthened the forces favoring political revolution, and blocked efforts by Yanayev, Pugo et al to resurrect their system of political repression.

There is no way to guarantee in advance that an assault on Yeltsin would have succeeded. Yet even bloody defeat would have been preferable to succumbing without a struggle. Millions of workers would have been exposed to the program of Trotskyism. The attempt to defeat capitalist restoration and to fight for direct workers power would remain as an example and as an important focus of debate in the developing consciousness of the Russian working class. But in the actual circumstances, defeat was by no means inevitable. The intervention of a small, but cohesive group armed with a correct political orientation might well have tipped the balance against the counterrevolution.

Unfortunately the Soviet working class did not play any independent political role. The struggle for power was between the Stalinist parasites who sought to preserve their host and the Yeltsinite restorationists who sought to destroy it. Workers Power complains that the Stalinists defend collectivized property "only" as a parasite. But the little word "only" obscures a convergence of interests that, during those three August days, was a matter of life and death for the Soviet workers state. A parasite cannot exist without its host, and therefore has a distinct interest in preserving it. If, at the hour of mortal danger, the parasite is armed and the host is not, the host's survival depends on the parasite's victory. That the Stalinists ruined the planned economy and could not be counted on to defend it in the future does not alter the fact that, in trying to preserve the status quo, their aims, for that moment, coincided with the interests of the working class. When Trotsky spoke of the *unconditional* defense of the Soviet Union, he did *not* mean that the Fourth International should defend the USSR *only if* the Stalinists ceased to rule, or became more competent or purer in heart.

Yeltsin Was the Greater Danger

Workers Power blocked with the Yeltsinites because it considered the Stalinists a greater enemy of the working class than the capitalist restorationists. This is spelled out in the September issue of *Workers Power*:



VASSILI KORNEYEV—AFP

Free market "magic" turns pensioners into beggars

"the only force capable of defending state property...is the working class. And it cannot act when its strikes are banned, when it is subject to curfews, censorship and political bans. It is far better that the fledgling workers' organisations of the USSR learn to swim against the stream of bureaucratic restorationism than be huddled in the 'breathing space' of the prison cell."

The "democratic" breathing space which Workers Power values so highly is not likely to last long under Yeltsin, as WP admits: "Once installed in power and seeking to crystallise a new class of exploiters even full and consistent bourgeois democratic rights for the masses will become intolerable" (*Ibid.*). So the sole difference between the Stalinists and the Yeltsinites with regard to democratic liberties is in the time required to abolish them. The Stalinists, had they prevailed, would have had an already existing police state to use against the workers. The Yeltsinites, on the other hand, need more time to consolidate a repressive apparatus and cannot yet get rid of many democratic freedoms.

Workers Power concedes that capitalism will mean, "poverty, high prices, unemployment, back breaking work, social oppression and the threat of war" (*Workers Power*, January), and "a historically unprecedented expropriation of the rural and urban workers of the 'fruits of their labour'" (*Workers Power*, December 1991). Is Stalinist political repression more harmful to the working class as a fighting force than the social chaos and mass destitution of capitalist restoration? To justify its decision to back Yeltsin against the coup plotters Workers Power must answer in the affirmative. But

such an answer would fly in the face of the whole body of Trotsky's writings on the Russian question. Trotsky insisted that the struggle to oust the Stalinist oligarchs was not counterposed to, but rather based on (and ultimately subordinate to), the defense of collectivized property. This is why Workers Power, which poses as an orthodox Trotskyist tendency, cannot openly state its *real* position: that the defense of the social gains of the Russian Revolution was subordinate to the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy. But its position on the August events will permit of no other conclusion.

Trotsky defined centrism as revolutionary in word and reformist in deed. Workers Power provides a chemically pure example of this phenomenon. While they frequently analyze events and political forces accurately, their opportunist impulse to tailor their politics to radical/social-democratic public opinion prevents them from translating that analysis into a program of action, and often forces them to practical conclusions that contradict their own reasoning. They have yet to learn from Ernest Mandel and the USec that the gap between opportunist theory and practice can only be mediated by false representations of reality. To bridge that gap the USec asserts that there were no differences between the Yeltsinites and the Emergency Committee over property forms—only over whether to use democratic or authoritarian methods. Workers Power, by contrast, allows that the two rival camps did objectively represent opposing property forms, but throws in its lot with Yeltsin nonetheless, and attempts to paper over this contradiction with a series of "orthodox" non sequiturs.

The Spartacists: 'Neither the Coup Committee Nor Yeltsin'

James Robertson's Spartacist League/U.S. and its overseas appendages in the International Communist League (ICL) have long claimed that, alone of all the so-called Trotskyist groupings on the planet, only they truly defend the Soviet Union. Yet this posture contrasts with their utter confusion over the victory of Yeltsin's counterrevolution. The January/February issue of *Workers Hammer*, the publication of the ICL's British affiliate, contains an exchange with Gerry Downing of the Revolutionary Internationalist League (RIL) entitled "RIL: neither the coup committee nor Yeltsin," which castigates the RIL for remaining neutral in the coup:

"for RIL there is no difference between a wing of the bureaucracy on the one hand and a wing of world imperialism and capitalist restorationism on the other. And of course if Stalinism is equated with imperialism, then the possibility of a military bloc with a section of the bureaucracy against capitalist restorationists is necessarily precluded, since by their lights this would boil down to a bloc against capitalist restoration with 'capitalist restorationists'."

One would hardly suspect that the ICL, like the centrists they upbraid, *also* refused to take sides in the coup. If *Workers Hammer* wishes to take anyone to task

for neutrality, we suggest that it begin with its American sister publication, *Workers Vanguard* (WV), which responded to the coup in its 30 August issue as follows:

"Even up to the coup, many of the most advanced workers, who opposed Yeltsin's plans for wholesale privatization and Gorbachev's market reforms, looked to the so-called hardline 'patriotic' wing of the bureaucracy. *There is no room anymore for such illusions.*

"[The] avowed program [of the coupists] was martial law to keep the USSR from breaking apart, which comes down to perestroika minus glasnost: the introduction of the market but not so fast, and shut up.

"During the coup, the Moscow workers council...issued a call to: 'Form workers militias for the preservation of socialized property, for the preservation of social order on the streets of our cities, for the control of the carrying out of the orders and instructions of the State Committee on the Emergency Situation.' There was not one word of criticism of the GKChP [Emergency Committee]. A call for workers militias to smash the counterrevolutionary Yeltsinite demonstrations was certainly in order. But if the Emergency Committee had consolidated power, it would have attempted to disband any such workers militias, which would otherwise have inevitably and rapidly escaped its political control."

Prodigies of exegesis would be required to interpret the above passages as suggesting anything other than "neither the coup committee nor Yeltsin." And no amount of bombast can cover up the fact that the Spartacists' arguments closely resemble those of the Mandelites, viz that there was no essential conflict between Yeltsin and the Emergency Committee. Like Mandel, the Spartacists seek to rationalize their failure to take a side by claiming that the coup left the class character of the state unchanged. For the ICL, the Soviet state still exists and Boris Yeltsin even now presides over a degenerated workers state.

Yet, unlike Mandel, the Spartacists cannot simply advocate a plague-on-both-your-houses position. Until August 1991 they had often endured the opprobrium of the entire mainstream left for advocating a military bloc with Stalinists against restorationist forces. The Spartacists correctly sided with the Jaruzelski regime in its 1981 confrontation with the counterrevolutionaries of Solidarnosc and gave military support to Soviet troops battling the reactionary, imperialist-backed insurgency in Afghanistan. The Spartacists were, in fact, so enthusiastic about siding with the Stalinists that they began to blur the line between military and political support. Their neutrality in August thus represents a radical departure from the noisy claims to be the last, best Soviet defensists.

Neutrality with a Bad Conscience

Because this turn has no real programmatic basis, the Spartacist leadership has been reluctant to acknowledge that a major political line shift has taken place. Hence, they insist, in defiance of all logic and contrary to their own written pronouncements, that they were *not* neutral. They present their stand as perfectly consis-

tent with past positions, and hedge it with a variety of qualifications, ambiguous formulations and distortions of fact. To obscure the striking resemblance between many of their arguments and those of other centrist and reformist pseudo-Trotskyists, the Spartacists must turn up the volume of their polemics. But increased volume only makes more audible the discordant sounds emanating from the Robertsonite headquarters in New York.

To the extent that the Spartacists advance any coherent arguments at all, they revolve around the highly dubious claim that the Emergency Committee made no attempt to disperse the counterrevolutionary rabble that gathered to defend Yeltsin's White House. Assuming for the sake of argument that this claim is true, it would mean either that the coup leaders were not really in conflict with Yeltsin, or that they did oppose Yeltsin, but were too weak and indecisive to move against him. The Spartacists are never quite clear about which of these assessments they favor. Their repeated claim that the Emergency Committee's power bid represented a "perestroika coup" points to the former. Their characterization of the coup as "pathetic," and of its leaders as "the gang of eight that couldn't shoot straight," on the other hand, lean toward the latter. Either conclusion, however, leads to a hopeless tangle of contradictions.

How, for instance, can the claim that both Yeltsin and the Emergency Committee were equally in favor of marketization be squared with the assertion in the same article that, "The working people of the Soviet Union, and indeed the workers of the world, have suffered an unparalleled disaster," and that the coup's failure "unleashed a counterrevolutionary tide across the land of the October Revolution" (WV, 30 August)? How could a counterrevolutionary tide have been unleashed unless some major obstacle to it had been removed? Were the forces that the coup leaders represented such an obstacle? Or would they have unleashed a similar counterrevolutionary tide had they won? In that case, why was their defeat an "unparalleled disaster" for the working class? *Workers Vanguard* can not answer these questions.

Workers Vanguard's assertion that the Emergency Committee stood for "perestroika minus glasnost" echoes the arguments of Weinstein and Mandel. They all agree that Yeltsin and the coup leaders differed only over the question of democratic rights, with the latter wanting to impose capitalism by means of an "iron-fisted dictatorship." A thoughtful Robertsonite might wonder if the Soviet workers would not be in a better position to organize against restoration with glasnost than without it. Of course, this soon leads to support for the "democratic" Yeltsin camp. Unlike the USec, *Workers Vanguard* stops short of pursuing this argument to its logical conclusion.

Then there is the second set of excuses for neutrality: that the Emergency Committee did in fact represent those elements of the bureaucracy with interests that conflicted fundamentally with those of the Yeltsin camp, but that they were too half-hearted and inept to

stop the Yeltsinites. First, it should be noted that this judgment was made with the invaluable benefit of hindsight: the events unfolded so swiftly that *WV*'s first article on the coup was published some days after its fate had already been decided. Do the Spartacists claim to have known in advance that the coup would fail so miserably? It was long evident that Soviet Stalinism had reached the end of its tether, and could not have restored the pre-Gorbachev status quo in any event. But this *general* assessment was not sufficient to gauge the exact correlation of forces on 19 August. This could be tested only in action. Even if a victory by the coup leaders would only have temporarily slowed the momentum of capitalist restoration, this *alone* was adequate grounds for a military bloc. Trotskyists do not choose sides according to the resolve, tactical finesse or strength of opposing camps, but on the basis of their political character. The coupists either had an interest in stopping Yeltsin or they didn't. But the Spartacists want it both ways: they simultaneously claim that the Emergency Committee never intended to stop Yeltsin in the first place *and* criticize them for bungling the job.

The Robertsonites' criticisms of the Emergency Committee take an even more bizarre twist when they condemn the "gang of eight" for failing to mobilize the working class against Yeltsin:

"The 'gang of eight' not only did not mobilise the proletariat, they ordered everyone to stay at work.

"The 'gang of eight' was incapable of sweeping away Yeltsin in its pathetic excuse for a putsch because this was a 'perestroika coup'; the coupists didn't want to unleash the forces that could have defeated the more extreme counterrevolutionaries for that could have led to a civil war if the Yeltsinites really fought back."

—*Workers Hammer*, January/February

The same article proudly recalled the Spartacist position on Solidarnosc a decade earlier:

"Poland in 1981 posed the same question as the Soviet Union today, but in the earlier instance the Stalinists *did* take measures to temporarily suppress counterrevolution. In the face of this confrontation it was impossible to waffle..."

In the Soviet case, the Spartacists are turning waffling into a fine art. But the comparison with Poland in 1981 is an apt one. We do not recall Jaruzelski mobilizing the Polish working class against Walesa. The Spartacists seem to forget that Stalinists in power rarely mobilize the working class politically because the very existence of the bureaucratic caste is predicated upon monopolizing political power. To make military support to Stalinists fighting capitalist restorationists conditional on their mobilizing the working class is tantamount to demanding that they cease to be Stalinists.

Elsewhere in the same polemic *Workers Hammer* implies that it would have supported any measures the 'gang of eight' had taken against Yeltsin:

"Calling for workers to sweep away Yeltsin's barricades would have meant a military bloc with any of the coup forces that moved to crush the counterrevolutionary rabble....Against RIL's Third Campism in the August events we wrote: 'in an armed struggle pitting outright restorationists against recalcitrant elements of the

bureaucracy, defence of the collectivised economy would have been placed on the agenda whatever the Stalinists' intentions. *Trotskyists would have entered a military bloc with "the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counterrevolution"*, as Trotsky postulated in the 1938 Transitional Programme."

Jaruzelski's 1981 crackdown involved no armed struggle because Solidarnosc offered no armed resistance. Martial law was imposed through a series of police measures. The Spartacists here seem to be suggesting that they would have blocked with the Emergency Committee had it moved more decisively to enforce martial law. By this logic, military support becomes contingent upon the firmness and skill of Stalinist tactics as opposed to the Stalinists' social character, political aims or the objective consequences of their victory or defeat. Or, more precisely, the Spartacists judge the political aims and social character of the Stalinist "hardliners" by their behavior in the coup.

The argument has a circular quality: the Emergency Committee did not take adequate measures against Yeltsin because they had no fundamental differences with him. How do we know they had no fundamental differences? Because they took no adequate measures. In other words, forget the fact that the majority of the bureaucracy had an objective interest in preserving the state from which they derived their privileges and prestige; forget as well the whole inner-party struggle that preceded the coup attempt, in which Gorbachev came under increasing attack for giving too much ground to Yeltsin and nationalist schismatics; forget, in short, that the *coup attempt itself* was a blow directed against the Yeltsinite restorationists. The Spartacists treat the Stalinists' motives as opaque, and the coup as an event without context or background.

Did the Couplists Go After Yeltsin?

The effectiveness of the coup leaders' tactics are a question of secondary import. But did the Emergency Committee in fact attempt to move against Yeltsin? In the days following the coup's defeat, reports began to surface that the KGB's elite commando division, known as the Alpha Group (the same unit that assassinated the Afghan president, Hafizullah Amin, in 1979), was ordered to assault Yeltsin's White House, but refused to obey the order. This version of events was first reported by Yeltsin himself, and later confirmed by the officers of the Alpha Group. The Spartacists have gone to great lengths to debunk these reports. *Workers Vanguard* of 6 December contains an article entitled "Why They Didn't Go After Yeltsin—Soviet Union: X-Ray of a Coup." The article quotes a piece by Robert Cullen in the 4 November 1991 *New Yorker* to discount the version of events given by the officers involved: "The Alpha Group's post-coup interviews, in fact, have only one thing in common: in each case, the officer doing the talking tries to take credit for being the hero whose refusal to obey orders foiled the coup." *Workers Vanguard's* "X-Ray" relies heavily on excerpts from the interrogations of the coup plotters after their



ALAIN NOGUES—SYGMA

Yeltsinite rabble in front of Moscow "White House"

arrest, published by *Der Spiegel*, in which they all deny having issued orders to attack Yeltsin's White House. It is peculiar that *Workers Vanguard* should be so skeptical of the claims of the Alpha Group officers yet so credulous of the denials by the coup plotters, as they prepare to go on trial for their lives.

Workers Vanguard, moreover, quotes very selectively from Cullen's *New Yorker* piece. Cullen reports at least one attempt by the Alpha Group, supported by paratroop units, to advance on the White House. The first attempt, according to Cullen, was foiled when Yeltsinite crowds surrounded the armored personnel carriers moving into position, and a pro-Yeltsin military man, General Constantine Kobets, met with the paratroop commander and persuaded him not to attack. Cullen reports that this setback did not deter the Emergency Committee from trying to mount a second assault:

"The leaks coming in to the White House suggested that the conspirators were trying desperately to find units both capable of seizing the building and willing to follow an order to do so.... I know that there was a small group meeting at the Ministry of Defense concerning the realization of the plan for taking the building,' Kobets told me."

The second attack never materialized. Cullen adds:

"In the aftermath of this final, conclusive failure, various sources offered various explanations for the conspirators' impotence.... All the explanations, however self-serving and however contradictory, had a common thread: the Soviet Army had refused to shed blood on behalf of the conspiracy."

So, in fact, the Spartacists' claim that the Emergency Committee attempted no concrete measures against the Yeltsinites is belied by the one credible source they cite to support it.

Yeltsin's Victory: Counterrevolutionary Triumph

The details of what happened during the coup are still somewhat murky. But it would be a mistake to counterpose the plotters' timidity and incompetence to the refusal of their subordinates to obey orders. The two explanations are complementary, not mutually exclusive. The men of the Emergency Committee were not Stalinists of the 1930s mould. Their will to act was compromised by the fact that they were demoralized enough to accept the inevitability of loosening central controls and giving market forces a wider scope. Their difference with Yeltsin was that they favored market "reforms" within the overall framework of bureaucratic rule. By the time they decided to strike in defense of the beleaguered central state apparatus, it was already in such an advanced state of decay that it no longer commanded the unquestioned allegiance of the armed forces. These factors fed into each other, leading to the August debacle. The Spartacists emphasize the obvious affinities between the Emergency Committee and Yeltsin in order to obscure the fact that their conflict boiled down to a struggle over the fate of Soviet state power.

The Stalinist apparat, which was the backbone of bureaucratic rule, was shattered forever with the defeat of the coup. The Spartacists, who refused to block with the Stalinists in their last-ditch attempt to keep the "floodgates of counterrevolution" closed, now seek to rationalize this lapse of judgment by arguing that the former Soviet Union is still a (severely weakened and gravely endangered) workers state. This recalls the assurances given by the pet-shop owner of Monty Python fame to a customer whose recently purchased parrot lies supine and lifeless at the bottom of its cage. When the customer demands a refund, the store owner insists that the parrot isn't dead, only resting, taking a nap, in a state of suspended animation, etc.

The Robertsonites have merely asserted their position that the ex-USSR remains a workers state without seriously attempting to argue for it. At public forums and in person they provide a range of, sometimes contradictory, explanations.

First, they point to the fact that most of the ex-Soviet economy has not yet been privatized and remains formally in state hands. Capitalism cannot be restored by government decree. Its restoration involves undoing structures, organizational forms and habits of life built up over the last seventy years. In November 1937 Trotsky remarked that:

"In the first months of Soviet rule the proletariat reigned on the basis of a bourgeois economy.... Should a bourgeois counterrevolution succeed in the USSR, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon the nationalized economy."

The victory of Yeltsin, Kravchuk, etc. was a triumph



Interior Ministry's Black Berets: no future under Yeltsin

for the forces of counterrevolution because it signified that henceforth political power would be exercised by those unambiguously committed to the restoration of private property in the means of production.

Confronted with these arguments, the Spartacists retreat to a fall-back position. Yeltsin, they contend, heads a pro-capitalist government, but has not yet consolidated his hold over the state apparatus. At a Spartacist forum in New York City in February, much was made of the January gathering of 5,000 military officers in the Kremlin to protest the dismemberment of the old Soviet armed forces. A big offensive by the working class, the Spartacist League argued, could split the officer corps, with a sizeable segment going over to the workers. Such a development, say the Spartacists, would amount to a workers political revolution, which they still call for in their propaganda.

Such arguments trade on the inevitable ambiguities of the transition now taking place. The regimes that have emerged from the breakup of the USSR do not preside over consolidated capitalist states, any more than Russia, the Ukraine, etc. are full-fledged capitalist societies. Yeltsin's hold on power is fragile, but this does not change the fact that Yeltsin and his republican counterparts are using their newly acquired power to unleash a social counterrevolution. Imperialism, perestroika millionaires and the black-market mafia now call the shots in the Kremlin. Many former Stalinist bureaucrats are appropriating huge chunks of state property. Yeltsin's men hold the top military positions. As *Workers Vanguard* itself reported, the Moscow police did not hesitate to shed the blood of demonstrators calling for a return of the Soviet Union in March. A year ago Gosplan was still issuing planning directives and joint military-police patrols were on the streets harassing black-market speculators, and arresting and confiscating the property of perestroika profiteers. Now Gosplan is no more and profiteers and millionaires are in the saddle.

The social counterrevolution is far from fully consolidated, but it is victorious. A resurgent proletariat struggling for power would face far less resistance today in Russia than it would in a mature capitalist

state. But a proletarian revolution would have to mop up the black-market mafia, suppress the Yeltsinites in the military and police, reverse the privatization drive and restore centralized state planning. With the passing of each month, the tasks confronting the proletariat become more and more those of a social, as opposed to a political, revolution.

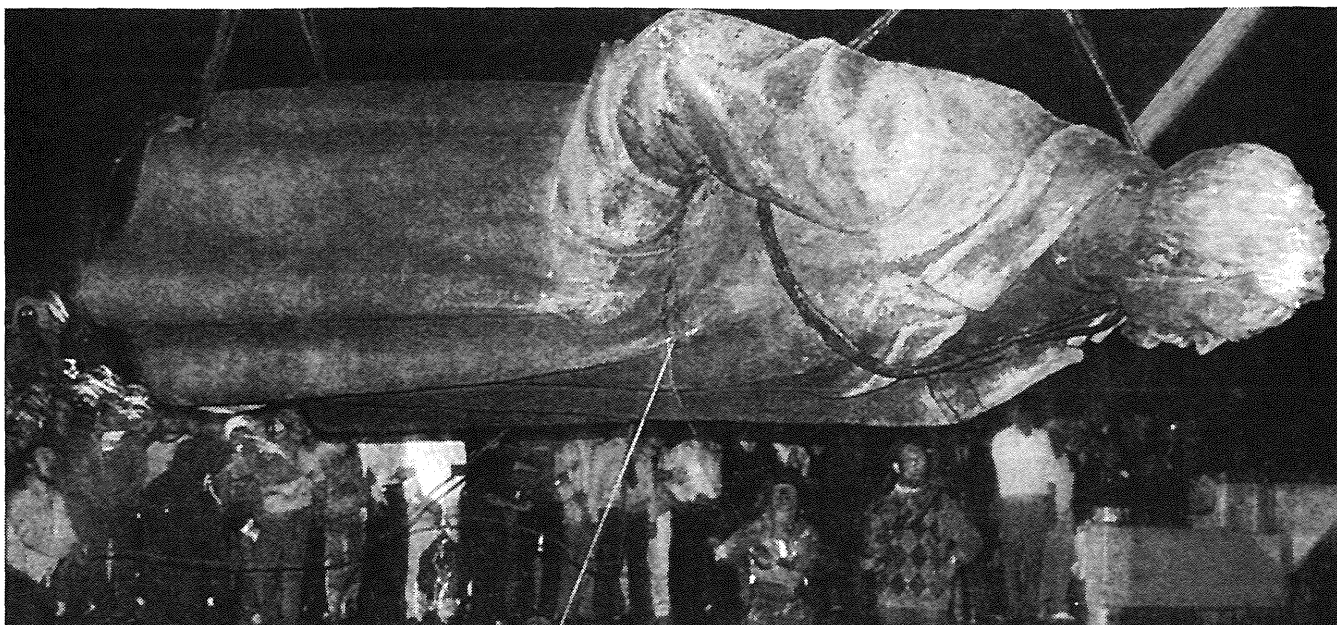
The Spartacists say we claim the Soviet workers state is dead in order to wash our hands of responsibility for defending it. This argument is ludicrous on its face. The imperialist bourgeoisie is acting with the knowledge that the Soviet workers state no longer exists. Marxists too must recognize this bitter truth. Workers struggling to turn back the tide of counterrevolution in the ex-USSR will want to know when state power passed into the hands of their exploiters. They will also want to know where the various self-styled Trotskyist groups who aspire to lead them stood at that fateful moment.

"Yuri Andropov Brigade"— Long Ago and Far Away

The Robertsonites have always prided themselves on their mastery of the Russian question and the politics of the deformed workers states. Yet they have been consistently wrong throughout the terminal crisis of Stalinism. When mass demonstrations erupted against the Stalinist regime of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) in late 1989, they proclaimed the beginning of a "workers political revolution." They thought that the prospect of reunification would provoke sufficient working-class resistance to split the SED (the DDR's ruling Stalinist party), with a large section of it going over to the side of the proletariat in defense of collectivized property. The ICL threw large amounts of cash and every available cadre into its intervention. In January 1990, when the SED accepted the Spartacists' proposal for an anti-fascist mobilization in East Berlin's Treptow Park, the Spartacists' Peerless Leader, James Robertson, became so flushed with delusions of grandeur that he (unsuccessfully) attempted to arrange a meeting with Gregor Gysi, then head of the SED.

But the anticipated political revolution never materialized. Instead of resisting reunification, the Stalinists entered into a coalition with pro-capitalist parties to engineer the liquidation of the DDR. By the time elections were held for the *Volkskammer* (DDR parliament) in March, the fix for reunification was already in. Yet still the Spartacists clung stubbornly to the notion that a workers political revolution was in progress, that workers and soldiers were about to set up soviets, seize the factories and establish dual power in opposition to the weak pro-capitalist government. The ICL leadership expected that hundreds of thousands of workers would support their electoral campaign and that they would be precipitated into the leadership of an insurgent, pro-socialist working class. The results were an unmitigated disaster for the Spartacists, as their candidates finished far behind the German Beer Drinkers' Union.

The German disaster was probably the most imme-



FILIP HORVAT—SABA

Counterrevolutionaries tear down statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky to celebrate Yeltsin's victory

diate cause of the political shift that led to the Spartacists' neutrality in the August coup. It was the culmination of a period in which the Spartacists exhibited an unhealthy fondness for Stalinist regimes. Trotskyists have always sided with the Stalinists against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution, while recognizing that the degenerated and deformed workers states could only be defended in the long run by a political revolution to oust the Stalinist parasites.

During the Reagan years, however, the Robertsonites all too often crossed the line between military defense and political support. In 1983 a contingent in a Washington anti-Klan demonstration was named the Yuri Andropov Brigade, after the then-Soviet party chief, who, in 1956, played a leading role in the suppression of the Hungarian workers revolution. When Andropov died, *Workers Vanguard* printed a laudatory obituary-poem on its front page. A picture of the Polish military strongman, General Jaruzelski, adorned the walls of the Spartacist League's New York headquarters. And rather than simply calling for military victory to Soviet troops in Afghanistan, the Spartacists insisted on "hailing" the Kremlin's intervention.

With the ignominious collapse of bureaucratic regimes throughout Eastern Europe in 1989, however, this pro-Stalinist tilt began to become a source of acute embarrassment. Months before the coup, *Workers Vanguard* was already steering a middle course between the Yeltsinists and the conservative faction of the bureaucracy (whom they simply referred to as "patriots"):

"Soviet working people must cut through the false division between 'democrats' and 'patriots,' both products of the terminal degeneration of the reactionary and parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy. Both are enemies and oppressors of the working class in the interests of world capitalism."

—WV, 15 March 1991

Workers Vanguard never mentioned the possibility that this "false division" might lead to a confrontation in which it would be necessary for the workers to take a side. And when this confrontation did take place in August, the Spartacists swung from their previous tendency toward *political support* for Stalinist regimes, to abandoning the elementary Trotskyist tactic of a *military bloc* with Stalinists against the forces of open counterrevolution. The Robertsonites' shameful neutrality in August, and their concomitant refusal to recognize the fact that the Soviet workers state is no more, demonstrates the hollowness of their pretensions to revolutionary leadership.

For the Rebirth of the Fourth International!

Over half a century ago, Trotsky wrote that the struggle for proletarian leadership is ultimately a struggle for the survival of human culture. The creation of a new revolutionary leadership for the working class depends above all on the conscious efforts of committed socialist militants. It is vitally important that every serious socialist absorb the lessons of the entire 74-year history of the Russian Revolution: its victory, degeneration and ultimate destruction. The forces of revolutionary Marxism today represent only a tiny minority. Yet through a combination of revolutionary determination and a willingness to struggle for programmatic clarity, the cadres will be assembled to shake the world once more. Revolutionary regroupment begins with the political exposure of the confusion, vacillation and treachery of the various reformists, centrists and charlatans who falsely claim the mantle of Trotskyism. Through hard political struggle, and a process of splits and fusions, the Fourth International, World Party of Socialist Revolution, will be reborn! ■

Defend Soviet Workers Against Yeltsin's Attacks!

Counterrevolution

Triumphs in USSR

The International Bolshevik Tendency published the following statement in September 1991:

The aborted Moscow coup of 19-21 August was so ill-conceived and executed that it almost didn't happen. Yet it will be remembered as one of the decisive events in the history of the 20th century. The victory of the openly pro-capitalist current around Boris Yeltsin after the coup collapsed shattered the state power created by the October 1917 revolution. This represents a catastrophic defeat not only for the Soviet working class, but for workers everywhere.

August's events came as the culmination of recent power struggles within the Kremlin and the country as a whole. But, in a larger sense, they are the final act in the degeneration of the Stalinist bureaucracy, a privileged stratum that usurped political power within the Soviet workers state in the mid-1920s. In place of the democratically elected workers soviets of 1917, the Stalinists erected an authoritarian police state. For the proletarian internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky, they substituted the doctrine of "socialism in one country," which justified betraying revolutions abroad to gain petty diplomatic advantage. Yet, for all its crimes, the Stalinist bureaucracy rested on the collectivized economy created by the October Revolution and, in its own distorted way, it frequently attempted to defend these economic foundations from imperialist pressure abroad and counterrevolution at home. The failure of the August coup ended the rule of this bureaucratic caste, and led to its replacement by a group of fledgling nationalist regimes committed to dismantling the state-owned economy and reimposing the rule of capital.

Over half a century ago, the leader of the Left Opposition, Leon Trotsky, warned that in the long run a social system based on collectivized property could neither be developed nor defended with bureaucratic police methods. The stagnation of the Soviet economy during the Brezhnev years represented a powerful confirmation of this prediction. In an attempt to reverse the USSR's economic decline, Mikhail Gorbachev launched his celebrated market reforms. The economic and political chaos caused by perestroika polarized the Soviet bureaucracy, and the divisions within it became particularly acute during the past year. On one side a wing of the ruling elite—identified with former Moscow party boss, Boris Yeltsin—openly embraced capitalist restoration. On the other side an alliance of military men and party and state apparatchiks, the so-called hardliners, saw the drift toward the market and national disintegration as a threat to their power. Gor-

bachev acted as a middleman between these two factions, tilting alternately toward the "reformers" and the "hardliners."

Gorbachev's Zig-Zags

Beginning in October 1990, the "hardliners" unleashed an offensive within the Soviet Communist Party. They forced Gorbachev to scrap Shatalin's 500-day plan for the privatization of the economy. They sent "black beret" units to crack down on the pro-capitalist secessionist governments of the Baltic republics. They engineered a purge in the highest echelons of the party, compelling Gorbachev to remove "reformers" from key party and government posts and replace them with loyal servants of the apparat. These moves drove many leading "reformers"—most notably Gorbachev's foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze—into the Yeltsin camp, and caused widespread speculation in the Western media that Gorbachev had retreated from perestroika.

Yet, in the face of huge Yeltsinite demonstrations in Moscow early last spring, and the fear that the imperialists might be even less forthcoming with economic aid, Gorbachev backpedaled, and again tried to mend fences with the Yeltsin forces. He refused to carry the Baltic intervention to its logical conclusion and depose the governments there. He once more began pushing marketization. Most ominously of all from the "hardline" point of view, he accepted the "nine plus one" agreement that would have transferred most governmental powers to the USSR's fifteen constituent republics. Gorbachev's attempts at conciliation only emboldened Yeltsin, who responded with a series of decrees banning the Communist Party from the police force and the factories in the Russian Republic. The "hardliners" concluded that the middle ground occupied by Gorbachev was fast disappearing, and that they could no longer rely upon him to resist Yeltsin. This set the stage for the formation of the Emergency Committee and its arrest of the Soviet president on the morning of 19 August.

The Working Class Had a Side

In light of the coup's abject failure, discussion of the positions of the rival factions may now seem a fruitless academic exercise. Yet only by adopting a correct orientation to past events can the working class arm itself for future struggles. The August coup attempt was a con-

frontation in which the working class had a side. A victory for the coup leaders would not have rescued the USSR from the economic impasse that Stalinism has led to, nor would it have removed the threat of capitalist restoration. It could, however, have slowed the restorationist momentum at least temporarily, and bought precious time for the Soviet working class. The collapse of the coup, on the other hand, led inevitably to the counterrevolution that is now in full flood. Without ceasing to expose the coup leaders' political bankruptcy, it was the duty of revolutionary Marxists to side with them against Yeltsin and Gorbachev.

It comes as no surprise that most of the reformist and centrist left has cast its lot with Gorbachev and Yeltsin. These pseudo-Marxists are so fearful of offending bourgeois liberal opinion that they can always be relied upon to take the side of "democracy," even when democratic slogans are a camouflage for capitalist counterrevolution. Somewhat more baffling are the arguments of centrist groups who recognize Yeltsin for the restorationist that he is, admit that his triumph was a grave defeat for the working class, but nevertheless refuse to take sides in the coup. The proponents of this "plague-on-both-your-houses" position include the U.S. Spartacist League and their overseas satellites in the International Communist League, who for years touted themselves as the staunchest defenders of the Soviet Union.

The advocates of neutrality contend that the coup leaders were no less committed to capitalist restoration than Gorbachev and Yeltsin. Some point to passages in the principal declaration of the Emergency Committee in which its leaders promised to honor existing treaties with imperialism and respect the rights of private enterprise in the USSR. Trotskyists, however, have never based their political attitude on the official pronouncements of the Stalinists, but rather on the inner logic of events. Anyone claiming that there was no essential difference between the contending factions would be hard put to explain why the coup leaders decided on such a desperate gamble in the first place. When one faction of the bureaucracy arrests the president, attempts to suppress the leading capitalist restorationists and sends tanks into the streets; when leading members of that faction carry out suicide pacts with their wives and hang themselves when they fail, it is abundantly clear that more is involved than a quibble over tactics.

The reasons for the coup leaders' actions are obvious. They represented the Stalinist faction that had the most to lose from a return to capitalism. They saw the aggressiveness of Yeltsin, the growing power of the pro-capitalist nationalists and Gorbachev's prostration before these forces as a mortal danger to the centralized apparatus upon which their privileges and prestige depended. They acted, if only half-heartedly and at the eleventh hour, to stem the tide.

There can be no doubt that the "hardliners" were thoroughly demoralized: they had lost faith in a socialist future of any kind, harbored many of the same pro-capitalist notions as their adversaries, and were only too willing to stoop to Great Russian chauvinism

and even anti-Semitism to protect their political monopoly. But the Trotskyist position of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union always meant defense of the system of collectivized property against restorationist threats *regardless of the consciousness or subjective intentions* of the bureaucrats. The status quo the "hardliners" sought to protect, however incompetently, included the state ownership of the means of production—an objective barrier to the return of capitalist wage slavery. The collapse of the central state authority cleared the way for the juggernaut of reaction that is now rolling over the territory of the former USSR. To halt the advance of that juggernaut revolutionists had to be prepared to make a tactical military alliance with any section of the bureaucracy that, for whatever reason, was standing in front of its wheels.

Defeat the Counterrevolution!

All is by no means lost for the working class of the Soviet Union. The pro-capitalist governments that have hoisted themselves into the saddle are still extremely fragile, and have not yet consolidated their own repressive state apparatuses. Most of the economy remains in state hands, and the Yeltsinites face the formidable task of restoring capitalism without the support of an indigenous capitalist class. Workers resistance to the impending attacks on their rights and welfare will therefore involve a defense of large elements of the social/economic status quo. The embryonic bourgeois regimes now forming in the ex-USSR can be swept aside much more easily than mature capitalist states.

None of this, however, can change the fact that the workers will now be forced to fight on a terrain fundamentally altered to their disadvantage. They have not yet constituted themselves as an independent political force, and remain extremely disoriented. The Stalinist apparatus—which had an objective interest in maintaining collectivized property—has been shattered. Further resistance by the Stalinists is unlikely, since they have already failed a decisive political test, and those cadre who attempted to resist are now in forced retirement, in jail or dead. In short, the major organized obstacle to the consolidation of a bourgeois state has been effectively removed. Before the coup, massive working-class resistance to privatization would have split the Stalinist bureaucracy and their armed defenders. Now workers struggling to reverse the restorationist drive will face "bodies of armed men" dedicated to the objectives of Western capitalists and their internal allies. This incipient state power must be disarmed and destroyed by the workers.

The transition from a degenerated workers state to a full-fledged bourgeois state is not something which can take place in a month or a year. In 1937 Trotsky predicted that:

"Should a bourgeois counterrevolution succeed in the USSR, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon the nationalized economy. But what does such a type of temporary conflict between the economy and the state mean? It means a *revolution* or a

counterrevolution. The victory of one class over another signifies that it will reconstruct the economy in the interests of the victors."

—"Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?"

It was clear to him, as it is to us, that such a transformation can only occur as the result of a *process* in which the workers state is undermined by degrees. The task of analysis is to locate the decisive point in this transformation, i.e., the point beyond which prevailing trends cannot be reversed without the destruction of the state power. The momentum toward capitalist restoration had been building in the Soviet Union for the past several years. All available evidence leads us to conclude that the defeat of the coup and the ascension to power of the elements committed to reconstructing the economy on a capitalist basis constituted a qualitative turning point.

Revolutionary activity cannot be undertaken on the

basis of pleasant fictions. The fight for the socialist future requires the ability to face reality squarely and "speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be." The victory of the Yeltsinites is a huge defeat for the working class. The attempt to reimpose capitalism in the Soviet Union will involve attacks on the most basic interests of tens of millions of working people. Yet in resisting these attacks, Soviet workers can rediscover their own heroic traditions. The revolutionary ideas of Bolshevism, which alone correspond to the necessity of historical progress for humanity, can overcome any obstacle. But these ideas only become a factor in history through the agency of a party of the sort which led the revolution in 1917—a party educated in the irreconcilable revolutionary spirit of Lenin and Trotsky. The struggle for such a party, a reborn Fourth International, remains the central task of our time. ■

Gruppe Spartakus Program for East German Workers

The following is an excerpt from the 23 April 1991 statement of the Gruppe Spartakus, which addressed the strike wave then underway in the former DDR.

- ***Equal pay for equal work in East and West!***
- ***No layoffs, no short work, no rationalization at the expense of the workers!***
- ***Trade-union organization of the unemployed!***

The unemployed in both East and West must be reintegrated into production.

- ***Divide the available work among all hands with full and equal pay in East and West!***

If capitalism is unable to meet these demands, which result from the evils it created, then the capitalist system must be ended. Workers are not concerned about what is profitable for the capitalists.

- ***End the harassment of immigrants!***

Fascists are murdering immigrants in the East and organizing attacks on Polish citizens. Skinhead attacks in the West are on the rise. For trade union organized self-defense groups to smash the Nazi rabble! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

- ***No witchhunt against former SED members!***

Defend the PDS against the attacks of the state! No to Berufsverbote! [restrictions on rights of left-wingers to jobs in the public sector]

- ***Occupy the factories and spread the factory occupations to the West!***

Factory committees must be elected by all workers to enforce workers control over production. With such committees, the workers in East and West can control the capitalists' plans, and determine what is necessary to ensure decent living standards for the working class.

- ***Organize the economy on the basis of a workers planning authority!***

End the chaos of capitalist competition! Expropriate the capitalists without compensation! Not

Stalinist-bureaucratic planning, but comprehensive participation of the workers in every phase of the development and administration of the economic plan.

- ***For a workers government based on workers councils!***

Factory committees, together with LPG [agricultural workers organized in farm cooperatives], white-collar workers, short-time workers and unemployed committees, could form the basis for a national workers council that would put an end to capitalist misery and thwart the attempts of resurgent German imperialism to assert its growing military strength in the international arena.

- ***A Question of Power—Not a Question of New Elections!***

Many workers in the East have the illusion that Bonn's plans for Abwicklung [liquidation] of the former DDR can only be blocked by holding more frequent and larger demonstrations. It is urgently necessary for factory committees in the East to send large delegations of workers to the West (including to the Ruhr region, which has been shaken by mass layoffs), to appeal directly to the workers there to take solidarity actions. Spreading the strikes and factory occupations from East to West can lay the groundwork for a national general strike. In the final analysis there are only two alternatives: either going forward to the seizure of power by the working class or being pushed backward by new defeats!

Gruppe Spartakus, German section of the International Bolshevik Tendency, is fighting for the way forward. On the basis of our program, we seek to build a Trotskyist party rooted in the working class to consistently champion the interests of working people.

Down with the Capitalist Kohl Government!

The Social-Democrats Vogel/Lafontaine/Engholm are No Alternative!

First the Wall...Then the Factories

DDR Junked

The following article is an edited report by a comrade of the Gruppe Spartakus (German section of the International Bolshevik Tendency) outlining the process of capitalist restoration in the former German Democratic Republic (DDR).

Capitalist restoration in the former DDR, now the eastern section of the Federal Republic of Germany (BRD), has been a social and economic disaster. Soon after the border went down, economic planning disappeared. Foreign trade was uncontrolled and the BRD's deutsche mark (DM) simply took over. Hordes of people gathered at train stations and border crossings to try to exchange their DDR marks for BRD ones at 12 to 14 times the official rate.

The economic destabilization of the DDR accelerated in July 1990 when an "economic, social and monetary union" with the BRD was proclaimed. Historically, three-fourths of the DDR's trade had been with the Soviet bloc. Suddenly all trade had to be conducted in hard currency. The DDR's trading partners simply could not pay, so foreign trade largely collapsed. Meanwhile, capitalists from the BRD consumer goods sector moved east and voraciously bought up stores, warehouses and every link in the system of distribution. Once they controlled the retail network, the first thing they did was substitute their products for those manufactured in the DDR.

The takeover of retail marketing was particularly destructive for the DDR's collective farms, which had been the most efficient of any in the Soviet bloc. The DDR had been able to meet most of its own domestic requirements for basic foods and still have some left for export. Farming and food production collapsed very rapidly once the BRD concerns destroyed the demand for their products. If you drive through the East today, you'll see the villages and land sitting idle. Most of the collective farms have simply gone bankrupt. By January, according to Berlin's *Journal for Human Rights (JHR)*, only a quarter of the 800,000 people employed in agriculture in the DDR were still on the land. Half of those remaining are expected to be eliminated before the "rationalization" is complete.

The West German economy expanded by five percent in 1990. Most of that growth was due to increased sales of consumer goods in the East. These goods were largely purchased with unemployment insurance and other benefits paid to DDR citizens to smooth the path for reunification. BRD statistics indicate that the 1991 rate of growth fell to 3.2 percent and Kiel University's World Economic Institute is projecting real growth of only one percent this year. The German central bank reported that this year net transfer payments from West to East are expected to increase almost 30 percent to DM180 billion. Some 6.5 percent of West Germany's GNP will go east this year (*Financial Times*, 19 March).



DER SPIEGEL

Unemployment line in Schwerin

These "transfers" from the BRD treasury are ultimately paid for by the employed workers in the West.

Annual inflation in the East was over 25 percent last year—five times the rate in western Germany. This was largely a result of the removal of subsidies on transport, rent, communication and other basic necessities. In the DDR rents had been limited to between five and seven percent of a person's income. When controls were removed last October rents soared by some 700 percent. Yet workers in the East lucky enough to have jobs earn only 30 to 40 percent as much as their colleagues in the former BRD.

Unemployment: Ex-DDR's Growth Industry

The working class of the DDR was one of the most skilled and best educated in the former Soviet bloc. Ninety-five percent of all workers had an apprenticeship. Despite Stalinist promotion of the family and considerable cultural backwardness, women had more of the material prerequisites for real social equality than almost anywhere else in the world. The Stalinist regime made a priority of providing housing for single women with children, thus removing the economic compulsion for women to remain in relationships. The DDR also had one of the most extensive systems of childcare in the world. Most workplaces were required to provide childcare on the premises and to allow working mothers to visit their children during the work shift. With full access to job training and guaranteed employment, more than 90 percent of DDR women worked, compared to only 50 percent in the BRD.

Capitalist restoration has reversed many of these

gains. Women workers have generally been the first laid off. The subsidized childcare system has now been almost entirely disbanded, with the intent of forcing women back into the home. Mothers unable to afford private childcare cannot claim unemployment insurance and are reduced to welfare. Last year Kurt Biedenkopf, Prime Minister of Saxony, estimated that *two million* DDR workers, mostly women, will never work again (*Die Tageszeitung*, 7 March 1991).

Officially, unemployment in the former DDR is reported at 16.5 percent, but this figure is the result of a variety of devices designed to hide the reality. Some 350,000 workers were enrolled in phony make-work schemes (which are now being wound up). In many cases they were put to work dismantling their old factories. Another technique used to juggle the figures was the creation of "short-time work." These workers put on "short time" were officially classified as employed, and still drew about 80 percent of their wages, but rarely if ever set foot in their factories. Workers were told that being on "short time" meant that they still had jobs and, one day, if things picked up and the capitalist miracle took hold, they might go back to work. This is not how things have turned out, and most short-time workers have now been officially reclassified as unemployed.

According to the November-December 1991 issue of *Intereconomics*, four out of the ten million workers in the DDR in 1989 are out of work. Approximately a million of these workers were forced to retire early on reduced pensions. Officially, pensions in the East are about half of those in the West, but the *JHR* estimates that the three million pensioned workers in the East in fact only get about 30 percent of the benefits paid to Western retirees.

One of the little publicized features of the reunification treaty is Article 143 of the BRD Constitution, which effectively suspends elementary constitutional rights in the former DDR until 1993. Using this provision the government can "legally" reduce access to the social benefits to which citizens in the East are supposedly entitled.

Demolishing the DDR Economy

The DDR economy had serious problems, and most analysts doubted that many of its enterprises could successfully compete in the world market. Labor productivity was probably only half that of West Germany. Yet the DDR was generally considered to be among the fifteen largest economies in the world, and it was certainly the most advanced of the workers states.

In theory, when the German bourgeoisie took over the DDR, they could have continued to operate the state-owned economy and even retained some degree of planning. France and other Western European countries have functioned successfully with substantial state-owned sectors. The Ruhr, the industrial heartland of post-war Germany, was built with considerable state intervention.

Yet, unlike the former degenerated and deformed



Factory daycare cut back after reunification

workers states, the nationalized industries in Western Europe were administered for the benefit of the private sector. French state intervention in steel and automobile production was designed to maintain France as a major industrial power and strengthen the position of French capitalism in the world market. In the former DDR and the other deformed workers states, by contrast, *all* primary productive forces were collectivized and subjected to centralized state planning and administration.

From the beginning, the serious German bourgeois press was united in its absolute hatred of collectivized property. Even the most "left" sections of West German social democracy never seriously contemplated taking over and running the state-owned economy. In their minds, the DDR *Kombinats* could only be a source of unwanted competition.

One of the paradoxes of the capitalist *Anschluss* is that the workers in the East hardest hit by the economic "rationalization" are those employed in sectors considered the most competitive by world standards (machine tools, ship-building and optics, for example). While the German capitalists were initially very anxious to get access to the ex-DDR, they were soon worrying about "unnecessary production" from industry in the East cutting profit margins. Germany's leading bourgeois newspaper, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, began early on to talk about liquidating the chemical, textile, electronics and optical goods industries as well as the remaining large-scale farms.

The BRD capitalists complain that overemployment in the former DDR tends to put upward pressure on wages. They are also frightened by the potential volatility of this highly proletarian population. Capitalist social stability requires significant numbers of "middle-class" citizens, housewives, petty proprietors and others who are not direct participants in production to counterbalance the influence of the organized workers.

On 3 October 1990, the day that reunification was formally completed, the entire DDR economy was put

under the control of a government agency, the Treuhand. This body was not a holding company in the usual capitalist sense, but a tool created by the German bourgeoisie to liquidate the entire DDR economy. It has not attempted to reorganize or salvage the firms the BRD inherited. In a scandal-ridden process (exemplified by the bargain basement sale of the East Berlin NARVA light bulb factory to a West German land speculator) the Treuhand had, by the end of 1991, sold off 4,777 firms with 6,000 remaining (*Die Welt*, 8 January).

Der Spiegel (23 March) reported that in the former DDR, as of November 1991, textile production had fallen 32 percent, machine-building had dropped 37 percent, electronics was down 54 percent and optics 88 percent. Even the most ambitious West German move into the East, the Opel takeover of the Wartburg auto plant at Eisenach, involves slashing the workforce from 9,000 to 2,000. The most optimistic capitalist estimates of the future of the region project 40 percent of the labor force out of work by the turn of the century. Most commentators are closer to R. J. Barro and X. Sala-i-Martin (*Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 1991, No. 1), who calculate that it will take 35 years to *halve* the income gap between East and West.

Why Did DDR Workers Succumb to Capitalism?

The DDR was a workers state in which proletarians were deprived of the right to organize, to discuss politics and to read and write what they wanted. They had no access to anything resembling Marxist analysis, and had learned to be suspicious of the lies of their Stalinist rulers. They lacked the tools to cut through the pro-capitalist propaganda barrage that preceded the *Anschluss*.

DDR workers had no objective interest in turning over their economy to the Frankfurt bankers. They *did* have an interest in breaking the political stranglehold of the Stalinists and running the planned economy through democratic workers councils. Under such a regime they could enjoy the political freedom that Honecker's police state had denied them, while tapping the enormous creativity of the working masses to preserve and extend the gains of collectivized property. Most importantly, such a proletarian political revolution could have provided a powerful example for the rest of the Soviet bloc, while simultaneously exerting a powerful influence on workers in the BRD and the rest of Western Europe.

The DDR working class did not see this as an option. Events proved that their attachment to collectivized property was very shallow. In the first few weeks of the autumn 1989 political crisis, there was widespread sentiment for maintaining the DDR as a separate state. This reflected popular fears that a conversion to capitalism would mean a loss of social benefits and a drop in living standards. In only a few weeks the capitalist propaganda machine managed to undermine this sentiment. Collectivized property was equated with Stalin-

ism, and DDR citizens were promised that once the border was down everyone would have a share of "democracy" and the good life they had seen on BRD television. Tragically, there were no forces with any roots or influence in the German workers movement that sought to organize opposition to reunification. The overwhelming majority of DDR workers believed the honeyed lies of the capitalists and their social-democratic lackeys, and opted for the free market.

Once convinced that capitalist reunification was a good thing, DDR workers bypassed the social-democratic middlemen and voted heavily for the political parties most closely connected to the big capitalists. After all, they were the ones who were going to be performing the market miracle.

German nationalist sentiments became increasingly powerful as reunification gained momentum. In the first days of the mass protests the crowds chanted "We are the people," an assertion of democratic rights against the dictatorship of the Stalinist Socialist Unity Party (SED). This was soon replaced with the cry "We are *one* people"—in other words, we are Germans. The extremely rapid shift to the right that took place in the DDR revealed that this once vigorous and politically cultured working class (which in 1953 spontaneously rose against the SED's political monopoly and even attempted to spread their strike to workers in West Berlin) had gradually been suffocated by decades of Stalinist repression.

Strike Movement in the East

Shortly after voting for the pro-capitalist parties in the March 1990 elections, DDR workers launched a strike wave demanding BRD pay scales and contractual guarantees against layoffs. Simultaneously, DDR cooperative farmers blockaded the highways in an attempt to stop the flood of Western products that was destroying their market. Those leaders of the FDGB (the DDR trade-union federation) who had not deserted their posts tried to give some direction to the strike movement, and in many localities took the lead in organizing the protests.

This largely spontaneous working-class outburst panicked the BRD capitalists and social democrats. The Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB—the main BRD trade-union federation) immediately dispatched thousands of organizers, with lots of hard currency and technical support, to the East to "reorganize" the unions on a class-collaborationist basis. Their first objective was to destroy the FDGB.

Using its money and powerful connections, the DGB had already gained control of a few FDGB unions and had them demand a conference. Amid an orgy of red-baiting, the DGB had its proxies put up a motion to disband the FDGB. When this passed, the next move was to incorporate the former FDGB unions into the equivalent social-democratic controlled industrial unions of the West. After that, the DGB lost no time cleaning out the old FDGB leadership, right down to the shop stewards. Thousands of new shop stewards

and trade-union functionaries were enrolled in training courses to learn the class-collaborationist norms of the DGB. The labor lieutenants of capital thus successfully diffused and strangled this round of working-class defensive actions, and consolidated their political monopoly over the German unions.

The 1990 mass actions by workers and collective farmers scared the BRD government into pouring money into the East to soften the impact of the huge social dislocations of capitalist restoration. It also stiffened the resolve of the BRD capitalists to liquidate DDR industry and atomize this explosive working class. The German rulers recognized during the summer of 1990 that they had a potentially explosive situation in the DDR, and that they possessed no reliable instruments in the East to suppress growing proletarian resistance. So they moved up the date of the *Anschluss*.

From Stalinists to Social Democrats

One of the most striking features of the collapse of the DDR was the complete demoralization of the Stalinists. While SED leader Erich Honecker was bitterly rejecting Gorbachev's market "reforms," much of the cadre of his party had apparently already begun to adopt the perspectives of social democracy. In the 1980s, as the DDR was busy "normalizing" relations with the BRD, there was considerable sentiment within the SED bureaucracy for a political dialogue initiated by the Social Democratic Party (SPD). The result was an extensive series of political/ideological discussions, codified in *Streit der Kultur* (joint declaration of the SED/SPD, 1988).

While BRD rightists vilified the social democrats for playing footsie with the SED, these discussions helped undermine the morale of a significant layer of middle and upper-level Stalinist cadres. They gradually came to accept the social-democratic thesis that any system based upon collectivized property is incapable of sustained growth, and concluded that the only role for a workers party is to bargain over the terms and conditions of wage slavery.

The SPD's *Ostpolitik* reinforced the effects of Gorbachev's turn toward "market socialism." The result was the ideological collapse in the ranks of what had appeared to be a monolithic Stalinist formation. In the summer of 1989, when Hungary opened its border with Austria, tens of thousands of the DDR's best workers began fleeing to the West. This, combined with massive demonstrations in the autumn demanding freedom to travel and democratization, shook the morale of the regime. By late 1989 the Stalinist bureaucracy had lost confidence in its ability to rule. When the SED elected a new leadership in early 1990, the proto-social democrats within it moved into the top positions. The SED passively accepted capitalist reunification and reconstituted itself the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), a slightly left social-democratic formation. Relegated to the status of a minor opposition party in the DDR parliament after the March 1990 elections, the PDS limited its objectives to

agitating for better conditions for DDR workers in a reunified Germany.

Armed Bodies Fail to Defend Collectivized Property

All the repressive organs of the DDR—the secret police, the army and the police—proved completely subservient to the Stalinist bureaucracy. The "armed bodies" remained passive, as the bureaucracy capitulated and collapsed. The fearsome Stasi (secret police) were told to remain in their barracks and not to bother anybody—and that is what they did.

By early 1990 the army had begun to dissolve. The DDR had what was probably the most highly trained and best equipped army in the Warsaw Pact, but suddenly the soldiers began to walk away from their posts and go home. In the six months after Honecker was deposed, the army shrunk from 173,000 to 90,000. Some lower-ranking officers tried to sign up with the BRD army. A few hundred were accepted. The higher ranks remained passive and most of the top-ranking officers were pensioned off. After reunification almost all who remained were discharged, although some noncommissioned officers were kept.

Even before reunification BRD officers had begun to take over DDR army units. They disbanded regiments and integrated the remnants into the BRD army. At no time did any DDR police or army units attempt to resist capitalist reunification. The only independent initiatives were the creation in early 1990 of a few scattered soldiers' committees. But these committees limited themselves to demands for better housing, wages and working conditions.

The DDR police were also incorporated without difficulty. While the tops were replaced by police officials from the West, most rank-and-file cops in the East today are holdovers from the DDR. Former SED members and current PDS members are being weeded out, but the police in the East are still not considered entirely trustworthy by their new bosses.

Most of the top civil bureaucracy was dismissed, particularly in the fields of law, education and state administration. Bonn sent large numbers of administrators east to take their place. A partial exception to this pattern is in industry, where some old SED bureaucrats have been allowed to stay for a while. This is because, within the SED, the section of the bureaucracy charged with administering industry was the first, in its majority, to go over to capitalism.

The State of the Left

SED/PDS cadres and most former SED members are being subjected to a continuing massive witchhunt, spearheaded by the social democrats. At every step, instead of resisting, the PDS has capitulated. It has only very timidly attempted to give any leadership to the spontaneous defensive actions of the embattled working class. PDS groups in the workplaces have been disbanded, and PDS members in the trade unions are



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Steelworkers in Henningdorf occupy factory to protest Treuhand attack

instructed not to run for even the most minor office, including shop steward. The PDS now has very little influence in the working class, nor for that matter, does any other ostensibly socialist group.

The German left has been badly disoriented by the momentous events of the past several years. Among the ostensible Trotskyist formations, the German followers of James Robertson's American-based political obedience cult (currently known as the Spartakist Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands—SpAD) initially aimed at "unity with the SED," and mistook the counterrevolution sweeping the DDR for a "proletarian political revolution." (For more on the SpAD's peculiar Stalinophilic performance during the last months of the DDR, see "Robertsonites in Wonderland," 1917 No. 10).

Most of the rest of the supposedly Trotskyist left were so deeply Stalinophobic, and so hypnotized by the "mass movement" against the SED dictatorship, that they closed their eyes to reality and hailed each step toward capitalist restoration as a progressive development. The same ingrained Stalinophobia has led some of them to support the witchhunt against the PDS.

Lessons of 1991 Strike Wave

In the spring of 1991 there was another round of massive working-class resistance in the East. By this time the reality of life under capitalism had dispelled many earlier illusions. Strikes, led by shop stewards' bodies, broke out in industries slated for liquidation. An alarmed DGB leadership moved in to grab control of the demonstrations, call off the strikes and divert the protests into an endless series of pointless meetings, assemblies, rallies and marches. Top DGB leaders from the West monopolized the stage at every event, while the shop stewards leading the struggles were not allowed to speak. The boring bureaucratic speechifying eventually demoralized the strikers and dissipated the energy of the protests. The immediate danger passed.

Militants within the shop stewards' bodies who

wanted to escape the control of the DGB apparatus should have attempted to set up a representative body to coordinate the protests and to provide the organizational framework to push the struggle forward. This would have meant a political fight against the class collaborationism of the social-democratic tops. Our comrades in the Gruppe Spartakus intervened with a program that showed the way out of the impasse (see box).

One key factor in the defeat of the 1991 upsurge was the failure of the workers in the West to respond to the rebellion in the East. In the West, the main struggle of the workers has been to resist getting stuck with the bill for the *Anschluss*. Thus far the DGB has successfully resisted the "reunification" of the workers movement across the old border. For example, the DGB tops negotiate separate contracts, naturally with different expiry dates, for workers on each side. In April 1991, at the height of the strikes, the DGB called a meeting in East Berlin for metal workers from the East to protest the collapse of their industry and the loss of jobs. Workers flocked from every corner of the former DDR. Yet this massive meeting was scheduled for a weekday, during working hours, to ensure that metal workers from West Berlin could not attend.

Workers in the DDR grew up in a society where rent, food, clothing, childcare, transportation and even furniture were all subsidized. Today they are experiencing capitalist social Darwinism first hand. As prices soar and unemployment benefits run out, as more firms go bankrupt and jobs disappear, life for many workers has become a struggle to survive. There is a growing gap between the attitudes of workers in the West, whose real standard of living remains among the world's highest, and the mood of the workers in the East, who are rapidly becoming bitter, atomized and demoralized. The crime rate is rising; domestic violence, alcoholism, drug abuse and prostitution are increasing dramatically; serious psychoses are on the increase and the suicide rate has doubled.

In recent months a new wave of plant occupations against the destruction of jobs has swept the steel mills,

factories, mines and shipyards in the East. These actions have had very little economic weight since the Treuhand does not really care if the enterprises go bankrupt. Although these strikes often demand no more than "socially acceptable" privatization, some of them have won partial concessions because of the capitalists' fear of social unrest.

Attacks on West German Workers

Reeling under the combined pressures of the enormous costs of reunification, an international economic downturn and sharpening global competition, German capitalism has stepped up its attacks on the working class. Bonn ran the national debt up to DM1.1 trillion in 1991. This represents 3.7 percent of the Gross Social Product, compared to 3.5 percent for the U.S. According to Lothar Mueller, President of the Bavarian Central State Bank, the national debt will hit DM2 trillion in 3 years (*Der Spiegel*, 23 March).

In the West the attacks on living standards which began last year are increasing. Wage settlements in 1991 averaged about 7 percent, but this was well behind the increase in the cost of living. Income, insurance, tobacco and many hidden taxes went up. The tax on gasoline alone went up 55 cents per gallon. The British *Financial Times* reported on 19 February that, "Net wages dropped between 1.1 and 3.3 percent between October 1990 and October 1992." Apprenticeship training programs have been cut back; spending on education is down; health care cuts introduced in 1989 reduced the medical budget 9.5 percent in the first year alone. Pensions have been "adjusted"—to keep people working longer. Chancellor Kohl was reported to have approved an increase of only 2.7 percent in state pensions, well below even the ludicrously low 4.2 percent official annual rate of inflation. Some bourgeois experts have suggested that workers would need wage increases of 12 percent just to catch up.

The bourgeois media is full of stories from the capitalists and their flunkies accusing the workers of wrecking the economy. Economics Minister J. Moellemann is demanding a statutory limit of 5 percent on pay rises for civil servants and calling for breaking the traditional system of national wage agreements in favor of increasing disparities from one region to another, especially between East and West. He is also demanding "greater flexibility of working times," i.e., a longer working week.

Saddled with the openly pro-capitalist DGB bureaucracy, the workers in the West have generally been slow to react, but they are beginning to show signs of restiveness. *Der Spiegel* (24 February) reported a survey indicating that 78 percent of West Germans have reached the limit of their willingness to shoulder the costs of reunification. Workers in the declining steel industry settled this spring for a 6.4 percent pay increase, but other large unions such as the OTV (which represents 4.67 million public workers) and the powerful metalworkers union are demanding pay rises closer to 10 percent.

The difference in material circumstances between workers in the East and West has naturally produced differences in consciousness that are compounded by the cultural differences that arose over the past four decades. Workers in the East see those of the old BRD as arrogant and unsympathetic, while workers in the West see those from the former DDR as lazy, passive and easily manipulated.

The Way Forward

When workers in the former DDR, acting alone, occupy the idle factories, they are only sitting on properties that the Treuhand is planning to liquidate anyway. Only by connecting their desperate plight to the struggle against the capitalists' attacks on the workers of the West can the workers of the ex-DDR put up an effective resistance. Workers in both sections of Germany have a common enemy in the German ruling class and their agents who control the DGB. The Trotskyists of the Gruppe Spartakus advocate demonstrations, strikes and factory occupations against the capitalist assault. We also call for workers in the East to organize sizeable delegations to go directly to workers in the West—especially in the highly industrialized Ruhr—to appeal for solidarity strikes and other forms of support.

The more politically conscious layers of the Western working class already know that what is taking place in the East poses a serious threat to their living standards. The German bourgeoisie intends to make the working class pay for reunification. To do that it must further slash living standards and social benefits and rip up the decades-old social contract.

The DGB tops' control of the unions, which the capitalists exchange for guaranteed labor peace, can be broken by a militant response from the base to the capitalist offensive. The inability and unwillingness of the official leadership to resist creates the possibility of a political realignment within the unions and the explosive growth of a militant left wing. This in turn poses the question of leadership and program. While participating in every struggle of the workers to defend their past gains and win new concessions, it is the duty of class-conscious militants to struggle within the unions for a program that addresses more than just the immediate issues facing one or another section of the class. It is necessary to connect these struggles to the fundamental question of which class shall rule.

The German bourgeoisie is driven by the logic of global competition with Japanese and North American imperialism to step up its attacks on German workers. In this situation effective defensive struggles can ultimately pose the question of power. This is a question that can only be answered by a revolutionary leadership with roots in the working class. Such an organization, standing in the tradition of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, must possess both the programmatic capacity and the political will to struggle for the overturn of the whole system of capitalist exploitation, with a perspective of forging a workers Germany as part of the Socialist States of Europe. ■

Yugoslav Civil War

Nationalism & Counterrevolution

The historical tragedy of the collapse of the Soviet Union has been paralleled in the Balkans with the bloody demise of the Yugoslav federation. In both the USSR and Yugoslavia the destruction of the bureaucratized workers states has produced a myriad of smaller formations, in various stages of consolidation as capitalist states. The banner of the movement toward capitalist restoration across Eastern Europe has been that of bloody nationalism, linking demands for the reintroduction of the market with competing and usually irreconcilable territorial aspirations.

The vicious nationalist struggles that have torn Yugoslavia apart are a reactionary regression for the peoples of the Balkans. Leninists recognize the right of nations to self-determination and the right of all peoples to self-defense. Yet the axis of the conflicts in the Balkans today pits rival proto-capitalist regimes against each other in fratricidal struggles to enlarge their domains at the expense of their neighbors. Working people have no stake in such squabbles.

The age-old national hostilities, long submerged by the Titoist federal state, are threatening once more to drown the region in a tide of blood. History proves that there is nothing inevitable about this poisonous nationalist warring. For decades after the founding of the multi-national Yugoslav deformed workers state, there was a tendency toward the integration of peoples in a region whose name has historically been synonymous with inter-ethnic strife and carnage.

Serbs, the largest single nationality, were predominant within the Yugoslav federation and constituted 70 percent of the officer corps of the federal military. In contrast to the overtly national-chauvinist nature of Soviet Stalinism—organized around the domination of the Great Russian bureaucracy—Stalinism in Yugoslavia always had a genuinely federal character. The partisan army, led by Josip Broz Tito, which successfully resisted the Nazis during World War II, included members of every nationality. The ruling Yugoslav League of Communists (LCY) consciously attempted to defuse nationalist antagonisms. With the decay and collapse of the federal state, the peoples of the Balkans, who for decades have lived together in relative peace, are again caught in a tragic cycle of irrational bloodletting.

Yugoslavia and Albania were the only two countries in Europe where Stalinist parties came to power after the war without the direct intervention of the Soviet army. This allowed them a measure of independence that none of the Soviet clients in Eastern Europe possessed. Yugoslavia's insistence on determining its own foreign policy led to a break with the USSR in 1948. Tito quickly turned to the American and German imperialists for economic "aid." The imperialist powers were happy to oblige in order to deepen the split between



VAN DER STOKT—GAMMA LIAISON

Serbian irregulars in Croatia

Belgrade and Moscow and gain leverage over the Yugoslav economy. Between 1948 and 1962 Yugoslavia received some \$2 billion in economic and military assistance from the U.S. (*Politische Berichte* No. 6, 15 March 1991).

For years propaganda from Belgrade trumpeted the "Yugoslav" road to socialism as distinctive and successful. The rule of the Yugoslav Stalinists was generally more relaxed than either their Soviet or Chinese counterparts; there were fewer restrictions on freedom of speech and even some narrow scope for worker participation in workplace decision-making. Yet the essential contradiction between property forms on the one hand, and the rule of a parasitic bureaucracy on the other, eventually destroyed the Yugoslav deformed workers state.

Yugoslavia's ruling bureaucratic caste sought to maintain its political monopoly and privileged lifestyle by conciliating imperialism, while pursuing its own national interests at the expense of those of the international working class. Yet the collectivized property upon which the rule of the Titoist bureaucracy ultimately depended was undermined by the restorationist social forces engendered by the pressure of world imperialism.

The profound economic contradictions that produced the current explosion of nationalist warfare result from four decades of Stalinist misrule and economic bungling. After initially following Stalin's hyper-centralist USSR, Tito began to decentralize economic control in the early 1950s under the rubric of workers self-management. While this accentuated centrifugal tendencies in the economy, those tendencies

were partially checked by the maintenance of central control over investment. The economy expanded at an average annual rate of 8 percent through the 1950s and early 1960s.

Zig-Zags on the "Yugoslav Road"

In 1965, as productivity began to slow and the trade deficit and inflation grew, Belgrade introduced a major market-oriented "reform" aimed at allowing the market to determine prices and investment. Foreign firms were allowed to acquire up to 49 percent ownership in Yugoslav enterprises, which were permitted to retain their earnings and determine investment and wages. Investment funds, previously allocated through the central planning institutions, were disbursed through banks, which were supposed to invest where the rate of return was highest.

These market "reforms" subverted the economic basis of the deformed workers state. Investment dropped in the more economically backward regions of the country: Kosovo, much of Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The growing disparities between Yugoslavia's constituent republics fuelled the revival of national antagonisms. The attempt to introduce market mechanisms simultaneously created a layer of wealthy petty-bourgeois entrepreneurs, with connections to foreign capital, who aspired to widen their field for exploitation. The emergence of this social stratum exerted a powerful attraction on a section of the LCY bureaucracy, and contributed to the resurgence of petty-bourgeois pro-capitalist nationalism.

In the early 1970s, alarmed by the growth of such elements, the regime changed course and attempted to repress the restorationist forces that its economic liberalization had unleashed. There was an unsuccessful attempt to reverse many of the changes introduced in 1965 without abandoning the attempt to marry market forces and socialized property. But the rate of growth of the Yugoslav economy continued to fall. Annual net growth fell from 6.5 percent in 1970 to 3.6 percent by the end of the decade. Meanwhile, imports outstripped exports by close to 100 percent.

The regime attempted to paper over these problems with massive borrowing on the international market: between 1970 and 1980 the Yugoslav foreign debt ballooned from \$24 to \$11 billion. Debt service drained valuable resources into the pockets of the international financiers, thus deepening the economic crisis. By the 1980s the Yugoslav economy was contracting. In the later half of the decade net growth in labor productivity was falling by one percent a year.

In 1983, alarmed by the deteriorating economy, the federal government's "Commission on Economic Stabilization"—under supervision from the International Monetary Fund—adopted an austerity program promoting those enterprises that could compete on the world market. This further exacerbated tensions within the federation, as Croatia and Slovenia, which had the bulk of the enterprises capable of producing goods for export, began receiving a disproportionate share of

economic resources. Despite the LCY's attempts to develop the more backward regions through a system of transfer payments, the disparities continued to grow. By 1990 in Slovenia, Yugoslavia's wealthiest republic, per capita income was roughly \$7,000—seven times that of ethnically Albanian Kosovo.

Yugoslav Road Deadends

By the late 1980s the Yugoslav federal system and the central state authority were on the brink of a complete breakdown. Real personal income per capita had fallen by 25 percent during the decade. The financial system was in tatters, with annual inflation reaching 2,000 percent. In January 1990 the Yugoslav League of Communists held an "extraordinary" fourteenth congress, where it abandoned its 45-year monopoly of power and then effectively dissolved itself into its different national components.

Ante Markovic, the last federal prime minister, attempted to hold Yugoslavia together by ignoring the paralyzed LCY and seeking to use the federal government's nominal powers to fast-track capitalist restoration. His 1990 austerity reform package aimed at slashing government subsidies and freeing up enterprises to sink or swim on the international market.

Markovic succeeded, briefly, in reducing the rate of inflation by tying the dinar to the German mark. Other "reforms" included allowing foreign capitalists to buy Yugoslav banks and enterprises outright, and to repatriate their profits. The effects of these measures would have varied widely from one republic to another. In Montenegro it would have bankrupted an estimated 80 percent of enterprises, in Slovenia only 10 percent. But events overtook Markovic's attempts to restore capitalism within a federated Yugoslavia, and the disintegration of the federal state set the stage for a different road to capitalist restoration.

As central authority crumbled, the processes of economic fragmentation necessarily accelerated. Republics were freed to engage in vicious competition against one another by an increasingly impotent federal government. To finance their activities the republics simply printed currency. Tariff barriers sprang up between republics as Serbia imposed a 50 percent duty on goods manufactured in Croatia and Slovenia. Industrial output contracted by 23 percent in 1990, and fell as much again in the first half of 1991. Since that point, with the outbreak of hostilities between Serbia and Croatia, reliable statistics have ceased. But the economic situation has continued to deteriorate rapidly in most of the republics.

Federal Government Disintegrates

The collapse of the economy accelerated the disintegration of the rickety federal political structure. Throughout 1990 one republic after another proclaimed that its laws took precedence over those of the federal authorities, and began withholding payments to the central government. Elections held in Slovenia and

Croatia, in April and May 1990 respectively, returned anti-communist slates pledged to win independence from the Serbian-dominated federal state.

In July 1990 the Serbian LCY, under the ultra-chauvinist Slobodan Milosevic, fused with its own mass front group and changed its name to the Serbian Socialist Party. Five months later it managed to get elected by using its ability to set the rules, running on a social-democratic program and downplaying its historic connection to Tito's LCY.

Milosevic has made a political career out of Serbian chauvinism. In July 1990 his government revoked the autonomy of the overwhelmingly Albanian province of Kosovo, dissolved its provincial parliament and began a reign of police terror. Strikes were outlawed and ethnic Albanians replaced with Serbs throughout the administrative apparatus. Albanians who wanted to keep their jobs were forced to sign statements pledging loyalty to Serbia. Some 60,000 Albanian workers who refused to sign have resigned or have been fired.

The brutal suppression of the Albanians in Kosovo proved to be the first of a series of inter-ethnic conflicts that have since convulsed the region. The attacks on Kosovo and Vojvodina (a region in northern Serbia with a large Hungarian minority) provoked an outcry against Serb expansionism throughout the other republics. The Slovenian government openly denounced Serbian chauvinism as well as Milosevic's tactic of mass mobilizations of Serb minorities in the other republics.

Right-wing Extremist Croatian HDZ vs. Reactionary Serb Nationalists

The Serbs have no monopoly on reactionary national chauvinism. When the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) assumed office it dismissed all Serbs from governmental posts. It also revived the symbols of the pro-Nazi Ustashi government of the 1940s that killed hundreds of thousands of Jews, Roma ("gypsies") and Serbs during World War II. The HDZ regime promptly renamed the Square for the Victims of Fascism in the Croatian capital of Zagreb the Square of the Croatian Giants. Members of the Serbian minority, which make up 12 percent of the population of the Croatian republic, were ordered to sign an oath of loyalty to the new regime.

As tensions escalated between Zagreb and Belgrade in the run-up to the outbreak of war, Serbs in Croatia were randomly snatched off the streets by police for interrogation; Serbs who owned property in Croatia were slapped with punitive extra taxes. In response, the Serbian population in Croatia began to talk of seceding. In 1990, as Milosevic was suppressing Kosovo, the Zagreb regime in turn outlawed a proposed referendum on autonomy for the six counties in which Serbs are a majority. In March 1991 Serbian leaders in Krajina, backed by Milosevic, proclaimed a "Serbian autonomous region" within Croatia. In Krajina and Slavonia, in eastern Croatia, Serbian paramilitary guerrilla units went into action in an attempt to carve out enclaves



G. SCHACHMEER—BYGMA

Milosevic: Serbian nationalist strongman

within Croatia.

At the end of June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from the federation. The Slovenes secured their independence by successfully beating off the federal army the next month. A few months later the Croatian and Muslim populations of Bosnia-Herzegovina declared their intention to secede as well. The European Community (EC) and the U.S. recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina in April. This was followed by the eruption of intercommunal fighting as the Serbian minority, backed by the Yugoslav army, attempts to secede from the newly independent republic.

The conflict between Croatia and Serbia began in earnest in August 1991, after months of escalating clashes. Numerous cease-fires negotiated by the EC were broken by both sides. For a time it seemed possible that the Yugoslav federal army might play some kind of quasi-independent role, balancing between and counteracting nationalist tensions. The army high command had even made noises about the need to protect Yugoslavia's "federal and socialist society." But as the ethnic tensions mounted during 1991 many senior non-Serb officers were replaced by Serbs, puncturing illusions in the "federal" character of the Yugoslav army. It had become, before all else, the agency of Serbian nationalism. During the conflict in Croatia it did not hesitate to target civilian population centres. The Croatian militia was outmatched and the Serbs soon gained control of roughly a third of Croatia, including the port of Dubrovnik.

Working people of Yugoslavia have no interest in the victory of either of the murderous nationalist for-



Ante Pavelic: head of Nazi puppet state in Croatia

mations in this conflict. The rapidly deteriorating living standards of workers have produced significant opposition within Serbia. Milosevic has attempted to suppress opposition to the war, but thousands of Serbian soldiers have deserted or have gone into hiding to avoid being dragooned into the squalid conflict. Last October Montenegro, Serbia's closest ally, came out against the use of its reservists in the campaign against Croatia.

Yugoslavia: No Longer a Workers State

Much of the ostensibly revolutionary left have supported Tudjman's counterrevolutionary Croatian regime; others have responded with confusion and agnosticism. Today there are openly pro-capitalist regimes in all the major fragments of what was once Yugoslavia. Moreover, the federal state structure has collapsed and economic coordination between the republics has ceased. Neither Yugoslavia as a whole, nor any constituent part of it, survives as a deformed workers state. There are of course remnants of the old state structures, but the state itself, as an entity dedicated to the defense and preservation of a collectivized economy, is gone.

The governments of Slovenia and Croatia, which declared independence in June 1991, were overtly pro-capitalist. They represented clear breaks from the republican fragments of the Titoist LCY they had defeated in the 1990 elections. The demoralized residue of the old Stalinist order was dispersed by the purging and restructuring of the republics' apparatuses. The new regimes based themselves on police forces and militias established in political opposition to the federal army. Clearly these new rightist regimes constitute nascent bourgeois states.

Milosevic initially opposed the secession of Slovenia and Croatia and claims continuity with the old Yugoslav state. For this the Serbian "strongman" is occasionally portrayed by the bourgeois media as one of the last "communists" in Europe. Croatian president Franco Tudjman has sometimes tried to paint the conflict with Serbia as a struggle against "communism." But this is so absurd that even the Croatian rightists of the HDZ do not push it very hard. They know they are fighting Serbs, not communists.

Milosevic's regime, unlike those in Croatia and Slovenia, was not founded in such open political and military conflict with the Stalinist past. There is considerable organizational continuity between the LCY and the Serbian Socialist Party. Furthermore, Milosevic's demagogic approach and rhetoric are conditioned by the presence of a political opponent, Vuk Draskovic, who as leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement has a substantial right-wing following. This does not change the fact that Milosevic is a capitalist-restorationist at the head of a capitalist-restorationist regime. He does not pretend to be anything else.

The axis of capitalist restoration within Yugoslavia has been nationalist polarisation, and the pro-market Milosevic has embraced this nationalist poison with as much vigor as any other political figure in the region. This is evidenced by his willingness to ally with the proto-fascists of the Chetnik Serb militias. Milosevic took power within the Serbian LCY in the mid-1980s on a program of chauvinist opposition to the federalism of the Titoist wing of the party. Like Tudjman and every other aspiring would-be capitalist politician in Eastern Europe, he promises to establish a market economy without social pain.

The consolidation of a new bourgeois state power is less complete in Serbia than in Croatia and Slovenia. The Yugoslav army, although allied with Milosevic, remains somewhat independent of his regime. Yet no government or military personnel has attempted to defend collectivized property. Serbia's war on Croatia was a war to carve out a *capitalist* Greater Serbia. With the disintegration of the crucial federal tier of economic planning, all the signposts on the road to forging a new Serbian nation-state point to capitalism and free-market austerity. All significant elements of the Serbian bureaucracy have abandoned hope of maintaining their privileges through a planned economy.

For most of its history Yugoslavia was not a Soviet satellite, but Yugoslav Stalinism found a niche living off the tension between imperialism and the USSR. The end of the Soviet Union means that niche no longer exists. The apparatchiks of the Serb republic know that their best hope lies in carving out a Serbian capitalist nation-state, integrated into world capitalism.

One of the circumstances that permitted the establishment of the deformed workers states in Eastern Europe after World War II was the economic and military supremacy of the Soviet Union in the region. In 1992, with the collapse of the USSR, the world is a very different place. The idea that, amidst the current chaos and the broad, powerful movement toward capitalism across Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe as a whole, a

new, specifically Serbian, deformed workers state has been constructed, is hard to take seriously.

LRCI: Consistent Stalinophobes

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI), headquartered in the offices of the British Workers Power group, is among those left organizations that fail to comprehend the scope of recent events in the Balkans. Despite the destruction of the Yugoslav state through vicious nationalist war and bourgeois counterrevolution, the October 1991 issue of *Workers Power* (WP) claimed that: "Despite the pro-capitalist nature of the national governments and the decades of market reform Yugoslavia remains, for the moment, a degenerate workers' state." This was implicitly reiterated in the January issue, which referred to the "Bonapartist bureaucracy" in Serbia and called for the "overthrow of the bureaucratic and bourgeois governments" in the region.

Their faulty position is bad, but their programmatic conclusions are worse. The LRCI sees no contradiction between claiming that Milosevic is heading a rump workers state and supporting the openly counter-revolutionary Croatian and Slovenian nationalists:

"At present those trying to construct working class unity in the face of the descent into murderous chauvinism have to start by recognising the legitimate right of Croatia and Slovenia to self-determination and secession. That means their right to resist the Serbian backed attempt to keep them in the federation by force."

—*Workers Power*, October 1991

In November *Workers Power* shifted its line, without explanation, and announced that "workers should at present take no side in the war between Serbia and Croatia;" but the common thread running through their positions is the refusal to defend what they apparently believed was still a "degenerate workers' state" based in Belgrade. The LRCI has a record of abject refusal to defend workers states against counter-revolution. Last August the LRCI lined up with Boris Yeltsin and the capitalist restorationists against the Stalinist coup in Moscow. Ten years earlier Workers Power stood shoulder to shoulder with Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II in defending Lech Walesa's openly counterrevolutionary Solidarnosc.

Workers Power's "Trotskyism" is purely nominal. While professing a defensist attitude toward working-class property, it lacks the political spine to side with the Stalinists against popular counterrevolutionary movements. If a deformed workers state existed today in Yugoslavia (or any part of it) it would be in a desperate situation. It would face further loss of territory and productive forces, and an extremely unfavorable domestic and international correlation of forces. It would be vitally necessary to defend it against pro-capitalist forces. This would not include support to nationalist pogroms against Croats or anyone else, but unlike the centrists of the LRCI, who place the right of national self-determination above the defense of proletarian property, Leninists support the right of workers states to forcibly retain territories against bour-

geois-separatist movements. In the Balkans today there is no deformed workers state left to defend, or—from the point of the view of the fair-weather Trotskyists of the LRCI—to fail to defend.

The LRCI's defensism is limited to opposing direct imperialist involvement: "Any imperialist intervention, under whatever guise, will be aimed at guaranteeing a capitalist Croatia and delivering a final death blow to what they see as 'communism' in Yugoslavia" (WP, October 1991). It seems that the LRCI's opposition to capitalist restoration depends on the *agency* of counter-revolution. If a counterrevolutionary movement has sufficient popular support, then the LRCI is prepared to go along with it. Despite their formal renunciation of Tony Cliff's third-camp politics, Workers Power retains the essence of the Stalinophobic methodology of its parent.

Spartacist Incoherence

Meanwhile, the ex-Trotskyists of the International Communist League (dominated by the Spartacist League/U.S.) have responded to the Balkan events in the same incoherent fashion as they did to the demise of the USSR. The Spartacists' refusal to side with the anti-Yeltsin coup last year compelled them to deny the significance of the victory of the counterrevolution. This, in turn, leads them to claim that nothing definitive has taken place, and to assert that a degenerated workers state still exists on the territory of the former USSR. As of this writing they are continuing to raise the slogan of "workers political revolution," which Trotsky developed for the bureaucratized Soviet workers state, but which is thoroughly disorienting when applied to the nascent *capitalist* state which Yeltsin now heads.

In its 9 May 1991 issue, *Workers Vanguard* (WV) speculated about a bloc with the Yugoslav federal military against the pro-capitalist Croatian forces, but had second thoughts when the nationalist wars erupted. In the months that followed WV denounced the various nationalist formations, but did not venture any new characterization of Yugoslavia or its constituent parts. Thus, at least by omission, their position appears to resemble the LRCI's: some or all of Yugoslavia remains a deformed workers state, but they take no side in the federal army's struggle against the openly counterrevolutionary forces of Tudjman.

Oppose UN/Imperialist Intervention!

The European imperialists would like to see stability in the Balkans, and fear that a full-scale civil war could ignite conflicts involving minorities which overlap into Austria, Albania, Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria. A few weeks before the failed August coup in the USSR, the Soviet bureaucracy told the EC to keep its hands off Yugoslavia, and warned that military intervention could lead to an "all-European" conflict (*Financial Times*, 7 August 1991). With Yeltsin in control, the major capitalist powers no longer have to worry about the Russians.



DAVID RUBINGER

UN Troops: spearhead for imperialist intervention in the Balkans

Yet even so, the imperialists were divided over how to respond to events in the Balkans. Britain, France and the U.S., wary of German expansionism in the region, did their best to maintain some sort of federation. Some of the EC imperialists are also concerned about the potentially destabilizing implications of support to "national liberation" rhetoric. The British do not want to establish precedents for the Scots nationalists or the Republicans in Northern Ireland. The French are concerned about the Corsicans and the Spanish are worried about the Basques and Catalans.

But as the conflict between Serbia and Croatia deepened, it became clear that there was no hope of any federal solution. After a series of failed attempts to arrange a cease-fire, the German imperialists, who fondly recall the fascist Croatian client state of World War II, eventually forced the EC to recognize the breakaway states. Germany also favored military intervention on behalf of the Croats—although preferably without German troops. On this score too they have had their way, with the United Nations providing a fig-leaf for imperialist intervention.

The 14,000-strong UN "peacekeeping" force is made up of cops and soldiers from the imperialist powers and their lackeys—including 900 Russians. Imperialist intercession will not resolve the bitter national antagonisms in the region. In the long term it can only have reactionary consequences. It is the duty of Marxists to oppose the UN intervention, and fight to keep the imperialists' bloody hands off the Balkans.

For a Multi-National Leninist Party!

At this point the immediate prospects for the region are bleak. The only way out of this descent into a sectarian bloodbath is through uniting working people across national lines and against the lethal logic of bourgeois nationalism. Revolutionists must oppose Milosevic's attempts to carve out a Greater Serbia, while simultaneously opposing the Croatian reaction-

aries' attempt to oppress Serbs and other minorities within a reborn Ustashi state. The restoration of capitalist property and the consolidation of a welter of Balkan regimes, each of which uses the oppression of its fellow nationals beyond its borders as an excuse to carve out more *Lebensraum* at the expense of its rivals, poses a deadly threat to all the peoples of the region.

Tragically, the multi-national deformed workers state Tito forged has collapsed. At this point there is no force on the ground that, even in a deformed way, represents the interests of the working class. For the moment working people on all sides are caught in the murderous logic of nationalist pogroms. Yet not everyone in the former Yugoslavia is accepting the fratricide without protest. In June there were sizeable demonstrations in Belgrade by Serbian women opposed to losing their sons in what they saw as a pointless exercise. Revolutionists must seek to use such sentiments as points of support in the struggle to turn back the tide of reactionary bourgeois nationalism and capitalist restoration.

Like their comrades in the rest of Eastern Europe, the working people of the Balkans are already learning that capitalist restoration means hunger and privation for many, so that a handful of parasites can get rich. What is vital is that the workers generalize and draw the lessons of their experience. They must reject the counsels of the nationalists who call for more bloodletting, and instead, organize to overthrow the regimes that are leading them deeper into the mire. The enemies of the working people of each nation are not the workers of the other Balkan nations, but their "own" pro-capitalist nationalist leaders and the loan-sharks and property speculators who are the pioneers of a future neo-colonial ruling class.

Marxists oppose all forms of national oppression. But the current nationalist conflicts throughout the former Yugoslav federation are for the most part struggles over territories with heavily interpenetrated peoples. The victory of one people must entail the oppression of the others. In such situations Marxists take a position of *revolutionary defeatism*. What is absent in the Balkans today is the nucleus of a revolutionary leadership, with a program to focus the inchoate anger against the ravages of capitalist restoration and barbaric nationalist warfare into class-conscious action.

Revolutionary internationalism is the only alternative to communalist mass murder and capitalist immiseration. The solution to the complex problems posed by the intricate mosaic of peoples that covers much of the Balkans can only be equitably resolved through the creation of a voluntary socialist federation of the peoples of the region.

To combat the nationalist pogromists it is necessary to create workers militias committed to opposing communalist terror from every quarter. The workers of the former Yugoslav federation must oppose every step toward the establishment of the market, and fight for the restoration of a centrally planned economy—but this time, one based on workers democracy, not Stalinist commandism. ■

Comrade Nedy

Comrade Juanita "Nedy" Hillman, administrative counselor for San Francisco Bay Area Local 1100, Department Store Employees Union, and a Trotskyist since her youth, died on 1 February of complications from pneumonia. She was 45 years old.

Comrade Hillman joined the then-revolutionary Spartacist League in the early 1970s, and was a member of the central apparatus of that organization until 1982, when she quit in disgust at its increasingly cult-like internal life and the dishonesty of some of its top leaders.

Shortly after leaving the Spartacist League she became a supporter of the Bolshevik Tendency (BT), and remained so until her death. Only recently, on 15 November 1991, she chaired a public debate between the BT and the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (at that time associated with the British Workers Power group).

Never in robust health, Comrade Hillman caught the flu over the year-end holidays and was hospitalized until her death more than a month later.

Nedy (as she was known to her friends and comrades) graduated from San Francisco's Hastings Law School in 1988 and clerked for the late Charles Garry, an attorney noted for his defense efforts in political trials of radicals in the 1960s and 70s.

While attending law school, she ran a student law clinic, the Unemployment Project, which specialized in unemployment compensation cases. She later wrote a legal handbook entitled "How to Fight for Unemployment Benefits in California," which has since gone through several printings.

Under the sponsorship of the Bay Area Income Rights Project, Nedy gave seminars to other unions and the Bar Association on unemployment compensation. After a year at the San Francisco Legal Aid Society, Nedy worked at the San Francisco Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation, appealing denied unemployment compensation claims and winning all but one of her cases. She also volunteered her services to the Homeless Advocacy Project. In her three years as a practicing attorney, she generously gave her time and skills to the working class and the homeless. In February 1991 she became legal counselor for Local 1100, and prosecuted the local's arbitration cases, unemployment hearings, workmen's compensation cases and mediations.

A public memorial service was held Saturday, 8 February, in San Francisco, attended by more than fifty of her friends, colleagues and comrades. Reprinted below is the eulogy delivered at the memorial service by Comrade Fred Riker of the Bolshevik Tendency.

James P. Cannon once said that his youth followed him all his life, looking over his shoulder and whispering in his ear: "Be true to me for I am your youth—don't betray me." Nedy never betrayed her youth. She



died an atheist and a communist. And we are proud to have known her.

Nedy *hated* oppression—the oppression of women and children, racial oppression and the universal oppression we suffer as workers in this most capitalist of societies. Beginning as a young woman, she fought all her life against Nazis and Klansmen, landlords and bosses. She fought against imperialist wars, homelessness, unemployment and against the arrogance, privilege and alienation that this system breeds by its very nature. When she found that her political organization had degenerated into a pathetic cult, she quit and fought to expose the betrayals committed by the leadership of that organization.

The pressure of having to live in this society, while simultaneously holding a vision of a better world, caused Nedy much pain and suffering. There were times when it made her sick and disoriented. There were times she behaved more like a character out of a Hunter S. Thompson novel than an "officer of the court."

What saved her, though, was her wonderful sense of humor and the fact that she managed to maintain her world view and her faith that the workers, the poor and the oppressed have the power to change this world.

For all her faults, Nedy was selfless in this belief. When she became a lawyer, she worked on homeless and unemployed projects, and later took a job with a labor union....When he was interviewed for her obituary, the president of the union for whom she worked said that she had to be strong-armed into taking pay raises. "She wasn't," he said, "in it for the money."

This is the Nedy we claim as ours. This is the Nedy we want to remember.

Defend Cuba!...

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The *Batistianos* hailed the announcement of the Soviet pullout. The "Cuban American National Foundation" (CANF), an organization of Florida millionaires and veterans of the CIA's Bay of Pigs fiasco, set up a commission to plan the counterrevolution. Included in the CANF commission are Jeane Kirkpatrick and Ronald Reagan (*Guardian Weekly*, 15 September 1991). Another CANF connection is George Bush's son, Jeb, a millionaire Miami property speculator. So far the CANF claims to have found buyers for 60 percent of Cuba's land and industry (*New York Times*, 6 September 1991).

Cuba's "Option Zero"

With poor sugar harvests and little hard currency to buy oil and other vital imports, Havana has launched a drive for self-sufficiency in foodstuffs. It is attempting to lure workers made redundant by drastic cutbacks in industrial production onto state farms. But the self-sufficiency campaign is hampered by a shortage of animal feed and fertilizers. Cuba still needs to buy wheat on the international market. The Cuban leadership is trying to prepare for a complete cessation of oil imports. In this "option-zero" scenario, oxen, horses and hundreds of thousands of Chinese bicycles are to be substituted for trucks and cars.

Castro adamantly opposed Gorbachev's pro-capitalist market "reforms" from the beginning. In the late 1980s the Cuban government banned Soviet newspapers considered too enthusiastic about perestroika. Instead of "market socialism" the Cuban

bureaucracy's slogan is "*Socialismo o muerte*" (socialism or death). Yet despite the socialism-or-bust rhetoric, the regime is now desperately seeking foreign investment to offset the economic pressure of capitalist encirclement and reduce the country's dependency on sugar. The Cuban government wants to boost tourism and, to this end, is promoting joint ventures with Spanish and Brazilian capitalists.

The burgeoning of the tourism industry has planted a dollar economy side by side with that of the peso. Cubans are now waiting on tables and driving taxis for foreigners with hard currency. The British *Independent* (2 November 1991) described how this is eroding the anti-imperialist sentiment that has helped maintain the regime:

"Cuba's best beaches, her choicest foods, her scarce consumer goods, are available only for dollars—which Cubans cannot legally possess.... Many Cubans comment on the contrast between rhetoric of national sovereignty and the daily humiliation of the peso shopper."

As tourism has increased, prostitution, bureaucratic corruption and the black market have all kept pace. The austerity measures adopted by the regime compel ordinary Cubans to look to their *socios*, (black market connections) for many consumer items. The *Guardian Weekly* (17 March 1991) reported that an acerbic parody of the official slogan, "*Socialismo o muerte*," has gained widespread popularity.

The Mechanics of Stalinist Rule

For 30 years Castro has tolerated no organized political opposition. In 1976 the regime unveiled a new constitution that formalized the Cuban Communist Party's (PCC) monopoly on politics and proclaimed it "the highest leading force of the society and of the state." The new constitution established local, regional and national "Assemblies of People's Power." These bodies only exist to provide a facade of popular legitimacy for decisions made by the PCC.

Nominations to the municipal assemblies at public meetings are subject to approval by PCC commissions, while the party itself makes the nominations to the higher assemblies. The National Assembly normally only meets twice a year, in July and December, usually for two days each time. Half the National Assembly members are nominated by the party from among delegates to the lower bodies. The other half are nominated directly from the PCC or government bureaucracies. Over 90 percent of delegates to the 1981-86 National Assembly were party members or candidate members.

Like every other Stalinist party, there is no internal democracy within the Cuban Communist Party itself. The PCC held its first congress in late 1975—seventeen years after the "July 26 Movement" came to power! Castro saw no problem with this, and blithely commented: "We are fortunate to be holding it now. Fortunate indeed! This way the quality of the Congress is endorsed by 17 years of experience" (*Granma*, 25 January 1976; quoted in *Workers Vanguard*, 12 March 1976). The congress itself was a carefully managed af-

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fair that concluded, as Stalinist congresses usually do, with the unanimous approval of the leadership.

Cuban Stalinism: "Pro-Family" and Anti-Gay

Cuban children learn at an early age that women are responsible for childcare, cooking and cleaning. Unlike the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky, who openly declared their intention of liberating women through socializing domestic labor, the Cuban bureaucracy, like every other Stalinist regime, celebrates the "socialist family."

The Castroist ruling stratum promotes the nuclear family and all the associated social backwardness as a point of support for its own authoritarian rule over the proletariat. Women remain concentrated in traditionally female jobs. The higher the administrative layers of the party and state bureaucracy, the lower the proportion of women.

The encouragement of the family goes hand in hand with the persecution of homosexuals. In 1965 the regime set up special "Military Units to Aid Production" which were really prison camps, mostly for homosexuals. The First National Culture and Education Conference in 1971 virulently denounced the "pathological character" of homosexuality, and resolved that "all manifestations of homosexual deviations are to be firmly rejected and prevented from spreading."

Of the 100,000 people who left Cuba via the harbor at Mariel in 1980, roughly 10,000 were lesbians and gays. These people were forced into exile through a state-sponsored campaign of homophobia directed through the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. In the age of the AIDS pandemic, and the growth of homophobia, Cuba has the unpleasant distinction of being the only country in the world that forcibly confines people who test positive for the HIV antibody.

Castrolism and Workers Democracy

The July 26th Movement that took power on New Years Day 1959 was an insurrectionary rural-based guerrilla movement. It was based in the Sierra Maestra mountains and was committed to a program of radical liberalism. After two years of guerrilla war, the rotten and corrupt Batista state apparatus collapsed, with the bulk of the officer caste fleeing to Miami. The July 26th Movement filled the power vacuum by forming a short-lived coalition with a few liberal politicians.

When a section of the bourgeoisie, backed by the American government, opposed some of the Castroites' radical nationalist measures, the July 26th Movement split. A majority, headed by Fidel and his brother Raul, opted for the expropriation of the Cuban capitalists. In July 1961 the Castroites fused with the Partido Socialista Popular, a traditional Moscow-line Stalinist formation that had earlier had a minister in Batista's government. The fused organization went on to form the Cuban Communist Party.

In the minds of New Leftists of the 1960s, the

Castroites were light-years away from the colorless apparatchiks of Eastern Europe. Yet one-party Stalinist rule deformed the Cuban revolution from its inception. As in every other deformed workers state, the working class played no independent political role. This was the inevitable outcome of the victory of a rural-based guerrilla insurrection in which the urban working class remained on the sidelines. In 1961, in the heady early days, Fidel proclaimed that the revolution must be a "school of unfettered thought." But soon the "barbudos," as the bearded guerrilla fighters were known, were responding to all criticism with police repression.

The harassment of the ostensibly Trotskyist Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) in the early years of the revolution is a case in point. POR members unconditionally defended the revolution against imperialism, but they also criticized the bureaucratism of the new regime. Castro's political police answered by smashing their printing press, breaking up the plates of a Spanish-language edition of Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution* and throwing five POR members into jail.

The Subjective Factor in History

For the "men of action" of the July 26th Movement, Marxist criticism and democracy within the left were simply impediments to "unity." In October 1960, as the large-scale nationalizations were under way, Che Guevara, a left-winger within the July 26th Movement, expressed the contempt for Marxist theory that animated the young pragmatists:

"Cuba's is a unique Revolution, which some people maintain contradicts one of the most orthodox premises of the revolutionary movement, expressed by Lenin: 'Without a revolutionary theory there is no revolutionary movement'....

"The principal actors of this revolution had no coherent theoretical criteria....

"Beginning with the revolutionary Marx, a political group with concrete ideas establishes itself. Basing itself on the giants, Marx and Engels, and developing through successive steps with personalities like Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, and the new Soviet and Chinese rulers, it establishes a body of doctrine and, let us say, examples to follow.

"The Cuban Revolution takes up Marx at the point where he himself left science to shoulder his revolutionary rifle....We, practical revolutionaries, initiating our own struggle, simply fulfill laws foreseen by Marx, the scientist....the laws of Marxism are present in the events of the Cuban Revolution, independently of what its leaders profess or fully know of those laws from a theoretical point of view."

— "We Are Practical Revolutionaries," 8 October 1960, reprinted in *Venceremos!*, J. Gerassi, ed.

Despite their personal courage and dedication to the cause of the oppressed, the Castroists' tendency to denigrate the role of the subjective factor in history constituted a *political obstacle* to the ultimate victory of the revolution. The "laws of Marxism" can only triumph through living, politically conscious human beings who apply them in the struggle to change the world. They do not operate autonomously or automat-



V.SAVOSTYANOV/V.YEGOROV—SOVPHOTO

Castro and Khrushchev

ically.

The struggle for socialist revolution is a struggle to win the masses of working people and oppressed to the political program of revolutionary Marxism. The history of the Cuban revolutionaries themselves, bold and radical as they were, confirms that the road to human liberation lies only through consciousness. This is what Marx meant when he said that the working class must emancipate itself—it cannot be freed by some group of leaders, however well-intentioned and sincere. The role of the Leninist vanguard is to develop and struggle for the revolutionary program against the myriad forms of pseudo-socialist false consciousness (including Castroite Stalinism). The victory of socialism requires that the Marxist program, embodied in a Leninist party, is embraced by the masses of the oppressed and exploited.

The Cuban leadership remains far more popular at home than the grey bureaucrats of the former Soviet bloc ever were. Over the years there has been significant participation in the various mobilizations conducted by the regime. But popular support for the initiatives of the ruling stratum is no substitute for the exercise of political power. The ability to make suggestions or to have input into how campaigns are carried out is fundamentally different from the power to decide and set the priorities in the first place. In a healthy workers state working people must in fact, as well as in name, be the political decision makers.

Cuba's "Revolutionary" Foreign Policy

The Castro regime has retained a certain luster for much of the petty-bourgeois left that has long since

abandoned the once-popular Stalinist rulers of Vietnam. The ex-Trotskyists of Ernest Mandel's "United Secretariat," who once adulated the Castroites for their "evolution toward revolutionary Marxism," are somewhat more reserved today. Yet they still "reject any sectarian attitude towards the Cuban leadership" and consider that, despite a few blemishes, the Castroites remain "revolutionary."

Mandel's former partners in the "United Secretariat," the Castro sycophants of Jack Barnes' idiosyncratic U.S.-based Socialist Workers Party (SWP), feel no need for any critical fig-leaf. The Barnesites cite Cuba's foreign policy as proof that Castro is carrying on the revolutionary internationalist traditions of Marx and Lenin. Yet Castro's foreign policy over the years has generally been tailored to the requirements of the anti-revolutionary Kremlin bureaucracy.

In May-June 1968, when ten million workers and students brought France to the brink of revolution, Castro covered for the sellout of the strike by the French Communist Party. A few months later Havana supported the Soviet tanks that rolled into Prague to oust Alexander Dubcek's reform Stalinists and install a faction more to Leonid Brezhnev's liking. In June 1989 the Cuban bureaucracy apologized for the massacre of worker and student protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square by the Chinese Stalinists.

Cuba's record in Latin America is equally wretched. In the early 1970s Castro endorsed Salvador Allende's popular-frontist "Unidad Popular," a coalition government with sections of the Chilean bourgeoisie. This class-collaborationist policy disarmed the Chilean working class politically, and set the stage for the massacre of tens of thousands of leftists and militant workers in the aftermath of Pinochet's September 1973 coup. Throughout the 1980s the Cubans advised the Nicaraguan Sandinistas against expropriating the bourgeoisie, and instead advocated a national-patriotic front with the capitalists. The Sandinistas searched in vain for the mythical "Third Road" between capitalism and socialism for nearly a decade, until a half-starved population voted them out in favor of the parliamentary wing of Reagan and Bush's *contra* movement.

Castro apologists frequently point to Cuba's support to the bourgeois-nationalist MPLA government in Angola against South Africa as evidence of Marxist internationalism. While revolutionaries militarily supported the Soviet-supplied MPLA/Cuban forces against the apartheid state and its Angolan allies, this was no struggle for workers power. The Cubans in Angola were Soviet proxies. When Gorbachev cut a deal with the White House in 1988, Cuban troops began pulling out. On the other side of Africa, Cuban soldiers helped prop up Mengistu's bloody Ethiopian regime (another Soviet client) during its long, brutal, losing war against the legitimate struggle of the Eritrean people for self-determination.

When the imperialists began their diplomatic preparations for war against the neo-colonial Iraqi regime in 1990, the Cuban Stalinists joined the hypocritical chorus condemning the invasion of Kuwait. Cuba did

not even oppose trade sanctions against Iraq in the United Nations. Speaking to the UN General Assembly on 25 August 1990, Cuba's delegate Ricardo Alarcon announced that "my government has taken the relevant steps to ensure that our country too complies" with the sanctions. Participation in the imperialist embargo of Iraq could only qualify as an example of Leninist "internationalism" to those, like Jack Barnes & Co., who are wilfully blind.

The Future of Castrolism

The Castro regime still has a reservoir of support amongst Cuban working people. Having eliminated any competitors on the left, Castro can present his rule as the only alternative to life under the U.S. jackboot. Still, as the Cuban economy moves progressively closer to the "zero option," powerful contradictions threaten to shatter the stability of the regime. As ordinary Cubans queue overnight for many consumer necessities, the contrast between the egalitarian rhetoric of the ruling caste and its bureaucratic privileges become more conspicuous and more maddening. The British *Independent* reported:

"The slogan of the Union of Young Communists, for instance, is 'Follow me!' Young people shout it, with a mixture of mockery and rage, at Roberto Robaina, the leader of the Young Communists, as he rides in his chauffeur-driven car past the long and irritable queues of people who wait, interminably, for Havana's overcrowded buses."

The Castroites have responded to the deepening discontent with denunciations of "subversives" and "fifth columnists." They have also established neighborhood "rapid reaction squads," which even make the loyal Fidelistas of the SWP squeamish (*Militant*, 18 October 1991).

No single personality inside or outside the bureaucracy personifies the forces of counterrevolution in Cuba as Yeltsin did in the USSR. Yet, the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the USSR has had powerful repercussions. In an attempt to tighten central control and weed out potential dissidents, the PCC in October 1990 announced the abolition of half the national and regional party posts.

This move followed on the heels of the 1989 execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez, a popular hero of the Angolan war, for drug trafficking. Ochoa pleaded guilty to a raft of implausible charges after a classically Stalinist show trial. Following the elimination of this potential rival to Fidel, other top bureaucrats were also jailed. The most prominent was Jose Abrantes Fernandez, the Interior Minister, who was considered third in line after Fidel and his brother Raul.

The Castro regime has little to offer the workers and peasants of Cuba besides moral exhortations to work harder and consume less. But "peaceful coexistence" with the pirates of Wall Street is not an option. There is no place for "socialist Cuba" in George Bush's New World Order.

For 30 years the chieftans of U.S. imperialism have

been obsessed with overturning the Cuban revolution. Bush and the Pentagon know that a military intervention against Cuba would not be a walkover like the 1983 rape of Grenada or the 1989 assault on Panama.

Defend and Extend the Cuban Revolution! For Workers Political Revolution!

Today, in the wake of the collapse of Stalinism, the proletarian internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky has burning immediacy for the Cuban workers. In a historic sense the survival of the Cuban revolution has always depended on its extension. Even with the Soviet lifeline, the long-term viability of the revolution depended on the integration of the Cuban economy into a regional federation of socialist states. This perspective, that of permanent revolution, is counterposed to the dead-end "Patria o muerte" of the Havana regime.

The current global capitalist depression is a nightmare for the masses of working people in Latin America, as it is for millions north of the Rio Grande. Tens of millions of people in the Americas, consigned to a life of uncertainty, poverty and hunger are acutely aware of the profound irrationality of the capitalist world order.

It is the duty of every class-conscious worker to defend Cuba against the "democratic" counterrevolution promoted by the American ruling class. In the first place it is necessary to fight to break the embargo against Cuba. The workers movement of Latin America, Canada and the U.S. has the power to stop any imperialist attack in its tracks. One way to popularize the notion of political strikes against U.S. military aggression is by educating working people about the practical benefits the revolution brought the Cuban masses in terms of shelter, healthcare and education. These are questions of immediate importance to millions of workers in the U.S. and Latin America.

The way forward for the Cuban working class is not through endless belt-tightening and conciliation with imperialism and its regional vassals. To survive, the Cuban revolution must find allies through successful overturns of capitalism elsewhere in the region. This runs counter to the nationalist "pragmatism" of the bonapartist Castro regime and its autarchic schemes for animal-powered "socialism" on one island.

The defense of the Cuban Revolution is linked directly to the necessity for the workers to wrest political power from the hands of the PCC through proletarian political revolution. Such a revolution, which requires the creation of a Leninist-Trotskyist party to succeed, would instantly alter the present unfavorable balance of forces. The creation of genuine organs of direct revolutionary democracy would reinvigorate the Cuban Revolution and act as a powerful impetus to workers struggles throughout Latin America. It would not fail to find an echo in the growing Hispanic component of the American working class. ■

Smash Yankee Imperialism!

Defend the Cuban Revolution!

The overthrow of the corrupt and brutal neo-colonial regime of Fulgencio Batista in January 1959, and the subsequent expropriation of the Cuban bourgeoisie, was a victory for working people everywhere. With Soviet aid, Cuba consolidated a functional and relatively egalitarian economic system, and for three decades Fidel Castro could thumb his nose at the U.S. colossus. After the ignominious collapse of the USSR, the rulers of a declining American empire are no longer compelled to tolerate the continued existence of a collectivized economy 90 miles from Florida. The U.S. imperialists are cranking up a "democratic" propaganda offensive, while simultaneously tightening their economic embargo and leaning on their Latin American neo-colonies to isolate Cuba. The defense of the Cuban revolution has never been more acutely posed than it is today.

Cuba under Batista was a gigantic sugar plantation and fun house for wealthy Americans. By breaking the social power of the Cuban bourgeoisie, the Castro regime cut the connection with world imperialism, thus dramatically transforming life for ordinary working people. In the first five years of the revolution consumption of meat and textiles *doubled*, the new regime slashed rents, deserted Havana mansions were converted into residences for 80,000 students from peasant families, and abandoned luxury automobiles were handed over to former servants so they could start working as taxi drivers.

Today Cuban standards of health, education and housing are far above those of other Latin American countries. Rents are subsidized, medical care is free and education is available to everyone. The level of literacy is 98 percent. Everyone has a job. Cuba remains poor by the standards of the imperialist colossus to the north, but there is none of the endemic disease and desperate poverty so common throughout the rest of the region.

Sovlet Connection Severed

Aid and trade from the Soviet bloc enabled Cuba to survive American attempts to strangle the revolution through an economic embargo. The Kremlin bureaucrats maintained Cuba as a bargaining chip in their search for global "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. The USSR bought Cuban sugar and other exports above the world market price, while selling oil to Cuba below the going rate. This amounted to a subsidy of billions of dollars a year. By the late 1980s, 85 percent of Cuban trade was with the Comecon countries.

In 1990, as perestroika disorganized the Soviet economy, shortfalls and delays in deliveries to Cuba made it necessary to ration basic foods and fuel tightly.



Industrial oil consumption fell by 50 percent. In December 1990, the Soviets halved the subsidy on sugar, and imposed world market prices for everything else.

The counterrevolutionary victory over the August 1991 coup in the USSR severed Cuba's economic lifeline. The Yeltsinites lost no time announcing the cancellation of the sugar subsidy and the withdrawal of Soviet military personnel from Cuba. By October 1991 Castro reported that less than 40 percent of scheduled imports from the former Soviet bloc were arriving in Cuban ports. The Cuban daily *Granma* noted bitterly that Moscow's abandonment of the Cuban revolution gave the "green light" for U.S. aggression.

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