



**Internationalist Group**

League for the Fourth International

**Stalinism—Gravedigger of the Revolution**

# How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled



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## Introduction

"Standing alone, as it does, the only live thing in the universe, there is a strong probability that the Russian Revolution will not be able to defy the deadly enmity of the entire world. But whether it survive or perish, whether it be altered unrecognizably by the pressure of circumstance, it will have shown that dreams can come true, that the race may be to the strong, that the toiling masses can not only conquer, but build."

—John Reed, March 1918

The Russian Revolution of 25 October 1917 (7 November in the modern calendar) was the defining political event of the 20th century. When the working class, led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky and organized in democratically elected soviets (workers councils), seized power from the bourgeoisie and its autocratic holdovers and built the world's first proletarian state, they gave flesh and blood to the Marxist theory developed by an earlier generation of revolutionists.

The great German revolutionists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had seen harbingers of proletarian power as early as the 1848 revolutions in Europe and particularly the 1871 Paris Commune. Although the 19th century working class was too weak to conquer and hold state power, Marx and Engels foresaw that the bourgeoisie which was conquering the planet for its mode of production was also bringing into being a powerful proletariat which would be its gravedigger. Just as the capitalist class, deriving vast economic power from the tremendous leap in the productive forces made possible by the industrial revolution, had to push aside the agrarian-based feudal ruling classes (whose decrepit social order had become an obstacle to growth of the means of production and to commerce, science and secular culture), so too must the proletariat, in its turn, sweep away the rule of the bourgeoisie and usher in a new society of peace and plenty based on an international division of labor and the end of exploitation of man by man.

The Russian working class, and its Bolshevik leadership, saw their revolutionary wave the first victory of the unprecedented carnage of World War I. It was a truism for all revolutionists at the time that the conquest of power in at least several advanced capitalist countries was necessary if a workers state was to survive in backward Russia. The

young Soviet republic, premised on the slogan "Workers of the world, unite," became a beacon to the exploited and oppressed the world over, from the powerful organized workers movements of Europe to the small but militant proletariats of countries subjected to colonialist oppression. But due mainly to the absence of a hardened, tested leadership like the Bolsheviks, the revolutionary wave was repulsed in the advanced imperialist centers, first and foremost Germany where revolutionary upsurges in 1918-19 and 1923 were defeated.

Under conditions of hostile imperialist encirclement, economic backwardness and the disappointment of the hopes the advanced workers and party cadres had placed in the German revolution, a conservative, nationalist bureaucratic caste arose in the Soviet Union headed by J.V. Stalin. This parasitic layer of usurpers of working-class political power acquired self-consciousness as it sought to consolidate and expand its privileges atop the apparatus of the young workers state; its "theoretical" outlook was Stalin's 1924 formulation of building "socialism in one country"—an impressionistic and defeatist acceptance of capitalist restabilization outside the borders of the USSR. Stalin and his henchmen perverted the Communist International, hoping (falsely) to mitigate imperialist hostility to the Soviet Union, ultimately by eschewing international revolution. The parties of the Comintern increasingly became "reformists of the second mobilization," using the authority of the October Revolution to sell out revolutionary opportunities through alliances with the "progressive" wing of the class enemy, from China to Spain in the 1920s and 1930s to Italy, Greece and France following World War II.

The rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy did not go unopposed within the Bolshevik Party. In the struggle which he waged at the head of the Left Opposition and later the Fourth International against the degeneration of the workers state, Leon Trotsky insisted that only the restoration of soviet democracy and a return to the perspective of world socialist revolution could save the USSR from ultimate defeat at the hands of imperialism and counterrevolution. Sixty years ago, Trotsky advanced the program of proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucracy. In works like *The Third International After Lenin* (1928) and *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), Trotsky

*continued on page 10*

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## Bankrupt Stalinism Opens Floodgates to Capitalist Restoration

# Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!

AUGUST 27—The working people of the Soviet Union, and indeed the workers of the world, have suffered an unparalleled disaster whose devastating consequences are now being played out. The ascendancy of Boris Yeltsin, who offers himself as Bush's man, coming off a botched coup by Mikhail Gorbachev's former aides, has unleashed a counter-revolutionary tide across the land of the October Revolution. The first workers state in history, sapped and undermined by decades of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, lies in tatters. The state power has been fractured, the Communist Party—its bureaucratic core—shattered and banned from the KGB and armed forces, the multinational union is ripping apart as one republic after another proclaims secession.

But while Yeltsin & Co. now see a clear field to push through a forced-draft reintroduction of capitalism, *the outcome is not yet definitively decided*. As the imperialists rejoice and the pro-capitalist petty bourgeoisie exult, Soviet workers are facing a disaster of catastrophic proportions: every gain for which they, their parents and grandparents sacrificed is on the chopping block. An explosion of even greater nationalist strife is looming. The lash of capitalist exploitation being introduced amid universal economic dislocation threatens widespread hunger and mass unemployment in the coming winter. The Soviet proletariat, whose capacity for militant action was dramatically shown in the miners strike of the summer of 1989, has not been heard from. Opposition from the factories against the ravages of capitalist assault could



Laski/Sipa



Spartacist

**Bush and Yeltsin congratulate themselves (top). Pro-Yeltsin crowd in front of Russian "White House" in August 1991.**

throw a giant wrench in the works and prevent the rapid consolidation of counterrevolution.

Soviet Stalinism has breathed its pathetic last gasp. 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 hard-line "patriotic" wing of the bureaucracy.

*There is no room anymore for such illusions.*

The coup's collapse and the ascendancy of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union buttresses, for the present moment, Bush's proclaimed "New World Order" militarily dominated by the U.S. Following its annihilation of Iraq, the triumphalist and vengeful American ruling class threatens to turn its wrath, unrestrained by the deterrent of a powerful USSR, against myriad peoples of the world. Cuba, in particular, is in Bush's cross hairs, and its defense is more than ever a duty of all opponents of Yankee imperialism.

From the time of Stalin's bureaucratic usurpation of power in 1924, Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition waged an unrelenting fight for the internationalist program of the Bolshevik Revolution. Under the deadly blows of Stalinist terror and slander, the Trotskyists persevered as the best and only consistent defenders of the remaining revolutionary gains. Today the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) continues this struggle.

Stalinism was the political rule of a bureaucratic caste parasitically sitting atop the proletarian property forms created by the October Revolution of 1917. Whether during the bloody purges of the 1930s or the myriad "reforms" from Khrushchev and others, this system based on lies and repression of the working class not only blocked further

progress toward socialism but clogged every pore of Soviet society. After decades of self-sacrifice extracted from the proletariat in the name of building "socialism in one country," Gorbachev's perestroika was the last desperate attempt of the Stalinist bureaucracy to preserve its position by adopting capitalist measures. But like Nikolai Bukharin's appeals to the rich peasants (kulaks) in the late 1920s to "enrich yourselves," perestroika fueled the forces of capitalist restoration which have now reached their fruition with Yeltsin's counter coup.

Boris Yeltsin is not a "Westernizer"—he is an extreme Russian chauvinist who intends to *sell out* the Soviet Union to the West. He is connected to a far-right, racist outfit in the U.S. called the "Free Congress Foundation" (whose East European operatives include notorious Nazi collaborators) which takes credit for "training" him and his staff on how to seize power. His laws are being drawn up by advisers supplied by the U.S. government. One of Yeltsin's first acts as Moscow party chief in the mid-'80s was to legitimize the anti-Semitic Pamyat fascists when they emerged from their ratholes. While he promises working people that the free market will bring them prosperity, in fact it will lead to the elimination of what every Soviet worker considered a right until recently: a stable job, free health care, an education for their children—gains which all

rest on the collectivized economy.

The alternatives posed before the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state have always been: counterrevolution or Trotskyism. Today Stalinism is dead. The key to frustrating the bloody plans of Bush, Yeltsin and their counterrevolutionary cohorts is the early forging of a Trotskyist nucleus in the Soviet Union, regrouping those elements in the workers movement, the army and throughout society who would fight for the program of October.

## Perestroika Coup Fiasco

As the crowd of yuppies, students and assorted Russian nationalists, including fascists and priests, gathered at the start of the coup outside the Russian parliament, Yeltsin's "White House," a call on Moscow workers to clean out this counterrevolutionary rabble was in order. Yet the coup plotters not only did not mobilize the workers, they ordered everybody to stay at work and at home. The working class did, and Yeltsin's call for a protest strike fell flat. But the free-enterprise "cooperativists" and petty-bourgeois self-styled "democrats" intoxicated by the allure of dollars and D-marks thronged into the streets. And the impotent "state of emergency committee" (GKChP) did nothing. Any class-conscious Soviet worker who saw the urgent need to halt the capitalist-restorationist forces would certainly have been against Yeltsin, but critical of the coup—which wouldn't stop Yeltsin, and was therefore doomed to failure.

The ineptitude of the coup plotters astounded even imperialist commentators. It was reported that they had ordered 250,000 handcuffs from a factory in Pskov as well as stacks of blank arrest orders, but they failed even to seize the man who would clearly be the focus for a pro-imperialist counter coup. Washington spokesmen ascribed this failure to follow the first rule of coup-making and arrest Yeltsin to a "miracle." They didn't even cut off his phones, and incredibly allowed TV to report Yeltsin's appeals for soldiers to disobey their orders! But these apparent stupidities were no mere oversight. The coup authors staked everything on a neutral acceptance of the coup by the imperialists, hinting that Gorbachev might be brought back and leaving Washington's darling Yeltsin untouched. The GKChP's statement vowed to "support private enterprise" and to observe every treacherous commitment to the imperialists by Gorbachev. Its chief economic spokesman Tizyakov insisted that "the policy of the reforms toward a market econ-

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Reuters

**Uniformed Pamyat fascists burn Soviet flag outside Communist Party headquarters.**

omy will not be reversed." There was no mention of "Marxism-Leninism," "communism," or even "socialism."

For this was a "perestroika coup." For months there had been calls for a crack-down coming from hardline Stalinist/nationalist "patriots" like the "black colonels" of Soyuz. But what moved the coup leaders, all of them Gorbachev appointees, to action was the imminent signing of a new union treaty, which would have ceded significant central powers to the republics. The coup was not so much by the military, which largely stayed out of the fray, but by top administrative and party hacks of the central apparat whose bureaucratic fiefdoms were threatened. Their avowed program 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. Thus one of the "gang of eight," Prime Minister Pavlov, was the Gorbachev regime's main spokesman for the new law allowing widescale privatization of industry, and was notorious for tripling food prices last spring. At the time, he told a British journalist:

"I must be very firm and say that privatisation has always been on the agenda of economic reform, and it was always, for obvious reasons, very closely linked with the liberalisation of prices.... We want to bring about the normal situation of capital as in other countries."

—London *Independent* (18 April)

Not exactly a program to inspire Soviet workers to support the plotters' bid for power! The coup leaders conspicuously avoided any mention of the October Revolution, or for that matter even the "Great Patriotic War." Instead they looked to the traditions of the tsarist empire—which Lenin called a

"prison house of peoples"—declaring: "Our multinational people have lived for centuries, proud of their Motherland." But in appealing to Russian nationalism, Yeltsin held the stronger hand.

Nor did the coup organizers manage to assuage Washington and Wall Street. As soon as Bush took a hard line backing Yeltsin (and incidentally demanding Gorbachev's return), the coup began unraveling. In the aftermath, there has been a lot of hoopla about the outpouring of popular support for "democracy." While up to 150,000 (out of a city of ten million), undoubtedly including many workers, turned out at one point to hear Yeltsin, the fabled barricades outside the "White House" were purely symbolic, generally having only a few thousand hanging around them. "They were mainly young ones, like myself, students, intellectuals, professionals," said one participant. In addition to a couple dozen Russian republic police, Yeltsin's bodyguards were rent-a-cops from a private security company (like the strikebreaking Pinkertons in the U.S.). At most there were a dozen tanks, dispatched by pro-Yeltsin commanders, in front of the building. Speaking of a possible assault, a Yeltsin "commander" said: "Of course, we could not hold them off for more than five minutes." But there was no serious assault.

Emboldened by the paralysis of the coup leaders, the reactionary mob heaved Molotov cocktails at young tank drivers. And then, barely two and a half days after the action began, the army withdrew. At this point frenzied Yeltsinites began rampaging through the city. A lieutenant colonel who attended the demonstrations was shocked: "I am surprised by how many of the young are thirsting for blood." Their first

target was the statue outside KGB headquarters of Feliks Dzerzhinsky, a Polish Communist and founder of the Cheka, the Bolsheviks' fighting arm against White Guard subversion. The next day they toppled the statue of Yakov Sverdlov, a Jewish Communist and first president of the Soviet republic. There, the pro-Hitler NTS distributed a leaflet that called for the very measures that Yeltsin decreed the next day. The Russian Orthodox Patriarch presided over the burial of three who died assaulting the tanks. British TV reported, "The images today were of old Russia, pre-revolutionary, a country throwing itself back 75 years."

In the wake of the botched coup, Yeltsin, the former bureaucratic hack turned capitalist-restorationist, moved quickly and ruthlessly against his opponents. In the best tradition of Stalin, Yeltsin dragged the politically enfeebled Soviet "president" Gorbachev before jeering members of the Russian parliament to crudely humiliate him. Aping the tsar, the "democratic" Russian president Yeltsin haughtily issued a *ukase* (decree) banning activities of the Communist Party on Russian soil and outlawed *Pravda* and other CP newspapers. The CPSU Central Committee and Moscow offices were sealed and surrounded by bloodthirsty gangs. Flaunting his power over Gorbachev, Yeltsin named the new head of the Soviet army, KGB and interior ministry, who promptly outlawed Communist Party activity in these pillars of state power. The next day Gorbachev not only resigned as general secretary of the CPSU but called for dissolution of the disintegrating party and confiscation of its property.

Yeltsin may wield the pen and the microphone, but his orders came on the direct line from the White House on the Potomac to the "White House" on the Moskva. Less than 24 hours after Bush expressed dissatisfaction with Gorbachev's appointment of General Moiseyev as the new defense minister, Moiseyev was out. The Russian demagogue Yeltsin is portrayed as a great hero of "democracy." This "democrat" is calling for the formation of a new Russian army, the "National Guard," whose first decoration would be the Order of St. George—the tsarist emblem and banner of the Russian fascists. A former White House official called Yeltsin "a Slavic edition of Huey Long" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 August), the right-wing Louisiana demagogue who in the 1930s used populist rhetoric to build up a personal, authoritarian regime. Even many pro-Western, "free market" intellectuals in

the Soviet Union fear Yeltsin as a potential dictator who will ride roughshod over them. Like Poland's Lech Walesa, admirer of the nationalist dictator Pilsudski, he will try to use his popularity to impose capitalist "shock treatment" on the workers.

The imperialist media are exultant, hailing "The Second Russian Revolution." The *New York Times* sneeringly refers to V.I. Lenin as "little more than a demagogue with a lisp." (The *Times* is so intent on portraying a counterrevolution victorious that its copious coverage never once mentions the Soviet workers.) But in the Soviet Union, even some of the more liberal Yeltsinites are beginning to get nervous about reaping the whirlwind they have sown. *Ogonyok* editor Vitaly Korotich is now warning of a

falling the system of bureaucratic rule installed by Stalin and his henchmen in 1924 with Leninism. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky carried out the October Revolution as the first step of the world socialist revolution. Backward Russia, the "weak link" of imperialist rule, was the scene of the first workers revolution, but it had to be completed by the proletariat in the advanced imperialist countries if it was to sustain itself and lead to socialism, a society of equality based on abundance. It was on the basis of the defeat of the European revolutions, centrally in Germany, in the 1918-23 postwar period, that the usurpers Stalin/Bukharin "discovered" the profoundly anti-Marxist notion that it was possible to construct "socialism in

socialist revolution. He also spelled out the bleak alternative:

"If—to adopt a second hypothesis—a bourgeois party were to overthrow the ruling Soviet caste, it would find no small number of ready servants among the present bureaucrats, administrators, technicians, directors, party secretaries and privileged upper circles in general. A purgation of the state apparatus would, of course, be necessary in this case too. But a bourgeois restoration would probably have to clean out fewer people than a revolutionary party. The chief task of the new power would be to restore private property in the means of production. First of all, it would be necessary to create conditions for the development of strong farmers from the weak collective farms, and for converting the strong collectives into producers' cooperatives of the bourgeois type—into agricultural stock companies. In the sphere of industry, denationalization would begin with the light industries and those producing food. The planning principle would be converted for the transitional period into a series of compromises between state power and individual 'corporations'—potential proprietors, that is, among the Soviet captains of industry, the émigré former proprietors and foreign capitalists. Notwithstanding that the Soviet bureaucracy has gone far toward preparing a bourgeois restoration, the new regime would have to introduce in the matter of forms of property and methods of industry not a reform, but a social revolution."

Every Soviet worker, collective farmer, pensioner and soldier will immediately recognize that this process of counterrevolution is well under way. The state monopoly of foreign trade has been scuttled, the planned economy abandoned. In their stead, imperialist corporations from Pepsi-Cola to Chevron oil have made encroachments on the Soviet economy. The Russian federation's new "land reform" lays the basis for destroying the *kolkhoz* collectives, promising rural poverty for the many and riches for the new kulaks. "Cooperative" profiteers and black market speculators have grown explosively in the vacuum of the collapsed distribution system. But this is only the beginning. Yeltsin now intends to ram through capitalist restoration at breakneck pace. Yavlinsky, co-author of the Harvard-designed "grand bargain" to sell out the Soviet Union to the imperialists, is now in charge of the economy. But for the Soviet working masses, the "magic of the marketplace" holds the promise of hunger and homelessness. In an insiders' newsletter, the major Wall Street brokerage firm Merrill Lynch hints at the truth being hidden from the Soviet masses:

"Although there is likely to be a surge in optimism among the Soviet people as a new political order emerges, expectations about the new order's ability to turn



Coup organizers' press conference: (from left) Tizyakov, Starodubtsev, Pugo, Yanayev and Baklanov.

"third force, which may be represented by certain young people of the fascist persuasion." The leaders of the "democratic revolution" are already promoting the tsarist watchword of "Russia, one and indivisible." Leningrad mayor Anatoly Sobchak lambastes centrifugal forces pulling apart the USSR: "This is insanity. We are a nuclear country." Yeltsin aides talk of destabilization of the economy and warn Ukrainian secessionists that "these lands were settled by Russians."

Meanwhile, thousands of Muscovites have been lining up to visit the Lenin mausoleum, worried that this may be their last opportunity to pay their respects to the founder of the Soviet state.

### Fight Capitalist Enslavement!

For decades, the Stalinists and imperialists have joined together in identi-

fying the system of bureaucratic rule installed by Stalin and his henchmen in 1924 with Leninism. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky carried out the October Revolution as the first step of the world socialist revolution. Backward Russia, the "weak link" of imperialist rule, was the scene of the first workers revolution, but it had to be completed by the proletariat in the advanced imperialist countries if it was to sustain itself and lead to socialism, a society of equality based on abundance. It was on the basis of the defeat of the European revolutions, centrally in Germany, in the 1918-23 postwar period, that the usurpers Stalin/Bukharin "discovered" the profoundly anti-Marxist notion that it was possible to construct "socialism in

one country." Trotsky denounced this nationalist dogma as writing off the world revolution, and predicted it would be the undoing of the Soviet Union if the bureaucracy was not swept away by the resurgent working class. In his decisive analysis of Stalinism, *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), Trotsky asked prophetically, "Will the bureaucrat devour the workers' state, or will the working class clean up the bureaucrat?" In developing this, he elaborated the program of proletarian political revolution led by a Bolshevik party to re-establish Soviet democracy. The planned economy would be subordinated to the will of the workers, freeing it from the arbitrary zigzags of the faceless, grey bureaucrats. And instead of the conservative anti-revolutionary policies of Stalin's Kremlin, the Soviet Union would again become the headquarters of international

around the economy are likely to exceed what is realistically possible. If the experience of eastern Europe is any indication, the next several years will be painful for the Soviet economy as workers lose lifetime jobs and state-owned enterprises are restructured."

—*Wednesday's Global Report*,  
21 August

Up until now Yeltsin has been able to blame the economic chaos and immiseration of perestroika on Gorbachev's "half-measures" and the sabotage of the old Stalinist apparat. The Russian demagogue talks out of both sides of his mouth, visiting strikers one week and approving anti-strike laws the next. But now Yeltsin will seek to implement his real program, to impose brutal capitalist austerity on the Soviet working class. He will be held responsible for closing down "unprofitable" enterprises, throwing millions of workers into the streets, raising rents and the price of food, shutting down childcare centers and attacking Soviet working people in all ways. At the same time, it will be very difficult in the next several months to use the army, KGB or police to break strikes or break up popular protests.

Despite Yeltsin's present ascendancy and the mood of anti-Communist hysteria among the petty bourgeoisie, it will not be that easy to carry out a capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. In fact, one might expect a higher level of strike action than took place under Gorbachev's perestroika. During this period the Soviet working class has been politically disoriented and confused by the ever-shifting lineup of Yeltsin vs. Gorbachev vs. the "hardline" Stalinists. Now the lines of battle are hard, and raw. But the absence of genuinely communist leadership represents the greatest obstacle, leaving the working class prey to confusion, false polarizations and defeatism in the face of their class enemies.

Both the Yeltsinites and the "hardliners" compete on the terrain of counterrevolutionary Russian nationalism. Starting with Stalin himself, vicious Great Russian chauvinism has characterized the bureaucracy, undermining the multinational USSR. The Pamyat anti-Semites' rise was protected by sections of the Gorbachev bureaucracy, in particular Yeltsin's wing. Meanwhile, the nationalist secessionists—mostly from the better-off republics—yearn to be pawns of imperialism today, as many of their forefathers were for the Nazis. In the last fight of his life, Lenin insisted, against Stalin, that the revolutionary Soviet state be a voluntary union based on equality of nations.

**1989 miners strike threw up incipient workers councils (soviets), showed potential power of multinational USSR proletariat.**



It is urgently, indeed desperately necessary for the working class to now establish organizational forms to mobilize its power to resist and overthrow the forces of capitalist counterrevolution.

- As every hustler is out to "get theirs," workers will be anxious to protect their own threatened livelihoods. *Independent workers committees* must be formed in factories, mines, railroad yards and other enterprises to prevent layoffs and privatization by taking over the plants and controlling production. Such workers committees can be the basis for genuine *soviets*, drawing into their ranks collective farmers, oppressed minorities, working women, Red Army soldiers and officers, old-age pensioners—all those who will be victimized by the "new order."

- Yeltsin & Co. have already begun purging the officer corps of the military. This has nothing to do with democracy. He wants to turn the Soviet army which defended the Soviet people against the Nazi scourge into a compliant tool for internal repression in the interests of the new capitalist masters. *Committees of soldiers and officers* must be formed to oppose the purges and prevent the army from being used to attack the workers' interests.

- The anti-Communist mobs are the shock troops of a budding fascist movement, the future strikebreakers, jailers and torturers of militant workers and leftists. Already the NTS, former WWII quislings of the Hitlerite invaders, have raised their heads at the Yeltsinite mobilizations. The blackshirted Pamyat fascists are burning red flags. Next they will be staging deadly anti-Semitic

pogroms. *Workers militias* must be formed, aided by Red Army officers and soldiers loyal to socialism, to defend against and crush the lynch mobs and pogromists.

- Illegalization of the Communist Party will be used as a precedent to ban all groups claiming to stand for socialism or communism. The red purge will be used to victimize militant workers who lead strikes against layoffs and privatization. *Down with the witchhunting ban on the CP! Don't let them drag away Jewish or Communist coworkers!*

- The escalating nationalist secessionist movements in the various republics are fueling fratricidal slaughter among the deeply interpenetrated Soviet peoples. It is urgently necessary to organize *multinational defense guards* to ward off communalist butchery. As Leninists, i.e., proletarian internationalists, we stand for full equality of all nations and nationalities in a genuinely socialist federation.

Working women, who have suffered most under perestroika's economic misery, must be in the forefront not only of the battle to stop the closures of childcare centers, but in the forging of a genuinely communist nucleus. In Poland and the former DDR (East Germany) women are being driven from their jobs and abortion is considered a criminal act. Reawakened women workers of the Soviet Union—who have the most to lose under capitalist counterrevolution—must play a leading role as their grandmothers and great-grandmothers did in the Bolshevik Revolution.

The youth, many shocked into political awareness for the first time in recent days, must find their way to the program



**Leon Trotsky shortly before his assassination by Stalin's agents in Mexico, 1940. Left Opposition intransigently defended USSR against threat of capitalist restoration. Right: Trotsky's 1935 article, "Where Is the Stalin Bureaucracy Leading the USSR?" in *Bulletin of the Opposition*.**



of revolutionary internationalism. Reversion to the Slavophilic backwardness of Yeltsin & Co. precludes the genuinely open intellectual and artistic climate that so many young people yearn for. Make no mistake: life for youth in the West does not resemble a music video! The reality for working-class youth under capitalism is a nightmare of uncertainty, unemployment, hopelessness with the very real prospect of being cannon fodder in the next imperialist war. The young Soviet republic in the days of Lenin and Trotsky fought for women's emancipation, for every kind of social emancipation, against censorship, for freedom from state intervention in one's personal affairs.

Workers and soldiers soviets (councils) must orient to defeating the counterrevolutionary Yeltsin regime and establishing a government based on soviet democracy such as was established by the October Revolution of 1917. In this hour of dire need more than ever, the key to successful defense of the Soviet proletariat is the forging of a new, authentically communist vanguard party of the working class. Return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky!

## For Revolutionary Regroupment!

With the evident and total collapse of Stalinism, there is a crying need for regroupment among the numerous would-be communist groupings on the left fringe of the CPSU. Many of the most communist-minded workers have

had illusions in the "patriotic" elements of the Stalinist bureaucracy, who frequently appealed to Great Russian chauvinism and conciliated or embraced outright anti-Semites, fascists and tsarists. But for example Soyuz leader Colonel Viktor Alksnis denounces Gorbachev not for introducing the market, but for introducing "democracy": "My model is the market first and democracy later." This is known as the "Chilean option," modeled on the bloody Pinochet coup, whose vaunted fake "economic miracle" was built on the corpses of tens of thousands of leftist workers and peasants.

In late July activists from the "patriots" milieu initiated a workers conference in the capital which drew over 500 delegates from 400 major Moscow-area plants. A representative of the International Communist League addressed this gathering:

"Today the imperialists and the native restorationists strive to dismember the USSR by splitting, paralyzing the Soviet proletariat with nationalism. This is their greatest weapon. But the proletariat has its own weapon—internationalism. We need to forge a party that mobilizes against all forms of discrimination, nationalism and anti-Semitism!"

—WV No. 532, 2 August

During the coup, the Moscow workers council which came out of this July conference 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. 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. The last thing these degenerate Stalinists wanted to see was the independent mobilization of the working class.

Those communist-minded leftists who looked to the "patriotic" wing of the Communist Party and armed forces are now understandably in a state of political trauma. They cannot understand what happened. In fact, they cannot understand what has happened since Gorbachev became leader of the CPSU in 1985. The economic chaos and miseries of perestroika, the abandonment of East Europe, the endorsement of the American destruction of Iraq in the name of Bush's "New World Order"—these are not simply a result of spinelessness, corruption or stupidity on the part of Gorbachev and his collaborators. They are the legacy of more than six decades of Stalinist perversion of the October Revolution: the bureaucratic usurpation of workers rule, the high-handed bureaucratic mismanagement of the economy, the Great Russian chauvinism at the expense of national minorities, the stifling of free expression and creativity, the political demobilizing of the working class.

After the relative stagnation of the last Brezhnev years, in their own way the dominant sections of the Kremlin bureaucracy came to recognize there can be no "socialism in one country," that the Soviet Union must be integrated into the world economy as part of an international division of labor. Since the core of the Stalinist ideological outlook is the rejection of socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries, this meant integration into the world capitalist system. The intent of Yeltsin and Gorbachev—who both began as typical young, up-and-coming apparatchiks under the Brezhnev regime—to sell the Soviet Union to Wall Street and Frankfurt is the logical culmination of the Stalinist doctrine of "socialism in one country." Gorbachev's neo-Bukharinite "market socialism" was the antechamber to counterrevolution.

Despite the anti-Communist hysteria now raging in the Soviet Union, there are large numbers of workers and even a few intellectuals who want to defend socialism and communism. They must understand that Trotskyism is the genu-



ine expression of Bolshevism today, that a Trotskyist party must be built to lead the struggle against the counterrevolution. Stalin's first step in consolidating his regime, aided by Bukharin, was to purge and persecute the Left Opposition, and eventually to murder the entire surviving Old Bolshevik cadre, the leaders of October.

The disastrous effects of "socialism in one country" on the world revolution and on the USSR soon made themselves felt. Stalin/Bukharin collaborated with the British social-democratic labor bureaucracy who then sabotaged the 1926 General Strike. They supported the Chinese nationalist general Chiang Kai-shek, who then drowned in blood the revolutionary proletariat. As the 1927 *Platform of the Opposition* stated: "The defeat of the revolution in China, following the defeat of the British General Strike, has inspired the imperialists with the hope that they may succeed in crushing the Soviet Union." Only a few years later, the German CP, on Stalin's orders, allowed Hitler to come to power unchallenged.

Having rejected Trotsky's call for a principled workers united front to defeat the fascists, as Nazi Germany became an obvious threat to the USSR, Stalin called for a "popular front" with the so-called "democratic" imperialists of France and Britain. In the name of this "popular front," the Stalinists sabotaged a prerevolutionary situation in France and strangled the revolutionary Spanish working class, paving the way for Franco's victory. Then, by beheading the general staff of the Red Army during the bloody 1936-38 purges and relying on his "non-aggression" pact with Hitler, Stalin was directly responsible for the catastrophic losses in the initial stages of World War II.

More than 20 million Soviet citizens were killed defending the homeland of October and liberating all of Europe from the nightmare of Nazism. On the basis of the Red Army's destruction of the Third Reich, subsequent threats to the USSR by nuclear-armed American imperialism led the Kremlin to undertake bureaucratically deformed social, i.e., anti-capitalist, transformations in East Europe as a defensive measure. But now East Europe is being handed back to the imperialists.

## We Trotskyists Have Defended the Soviet Union

Today the Soviet Union faces being dismembered and its constituent republics turned into neocolonies of Wash-

ington, Berlin and Tokyo. The present collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy has its immediate origins in the renewed Cold War offensive launched by American imperialism after its ignominious defeat in Vietnam. In every key battleground of Cold War II—Afghanistan, Poland, the German Democratic Republic (DDR)—the International Communist League (ICL, formerly the international Spartacist tendency) has stood resolutely in defense of the Soviet Union against the capitulation of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

Where the Soviet Stalinists waged a halfhearted war against CIA-armed Islamic reactionaries in Afghanistan, ultimately selling out and withdrawing, we said "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and called to "Extend Social Gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan Peoples!" When in late 1981 Polish Solidarnosc, under the guidance of Reagan and Pope John Paul Wojtyla, made a bid for power in the name of "bourgeois democracy," we raised the call: "Stop Solidarnosc Counterrevolution!" General Jaruzelski's counter coup temporarily spiked these clerical-nationalist front men for Wall Street and Washington. But the Stalinists had neither the moral authority nor the program to undercut counterrevolution, and eight years later the same Jaruzelski, with Gorbachev's approval, abdicated political power to Walesa & Co.

When in late 1989 the Honecker regime in East Germany fell and the Berlin Wall was opened, the ICL threw

its forces into the fight for the perspective of a red Germany of workers councils. We initiated the call for the giant Treptow anti-fascist demonstration of 3 January 1990, which drew 250,000 people to honor the Soviet soldiers who died liberating Germany from the Nazis. Then, as Gorbachev gave the green light to a reunified Fourth Reich of German imperialism, our comrades of the Spartacist Workers Party of Germany were the *only* party which clearly and unambiguously opposed capitalist reunification.

Within the Soviet Union representatives of the ICL have fought for a revolutionary internationalist perspective. Thus at a coal miners congress last October in Donetsk, we helped block the effort of right-wing, Yeltsinite forces advised by the American "AFL-CIA" federation to enlist Soviet miners in the international anti-Communist witchhunt against British miners leader Arthur Scargill. The imperialist rulers hate Scargill because he led the 1984-85 British miners strike—which Soviet workers generously aided. This momentous class battle gave the lie to the self-serving Stalinist myth that workers in advanced capitalist countries are incapable of hard-fought class-struggle.

We urgently seek to bring the program of Trotskyism to the Soviet proletariat and socialist-minded intelligentsia with our Russian-language *Spartacist Bulletin*, containing in addition to key documents of the ICL the section on the USSR from Trotsky's Transitional

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Program. In recent months, we analyzed the mounting crisis in our article "Where Is the Soviet Union Going?" (WV Nos. 520, 521 and 522, 15 February, 1 March and 15 March), including a program of struggle for genuine soviet power.

## It's Desperately Necessary to Fight

Writing in 1935 on "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism," Trotsky noted: "The inevitable collapse of Stalinist Bonapartism would immediately call into question the character of the USSR as a workers' state." This has now occurred. He added: "The fate of the USSR as a *socialist* state depends upon that *political* regime that will arise to replace Stalinist Bonapartism." The imperialists and their flunkies such as Yeltsin want to accelerate the consolidation of a capitalist state. But it will not be so easy. This is not East Germany, a compact, homogeneous country which was taken over by the existing German

bourgeoisie, which simply moved in its state apparatus, laid waste to the DDR economy and put half the working population on welfare. When the cost turned out to be higher than expected, Bonn kept pumping in billions of D-marks.

The Soviet Union, in contrast, is a huge country, with over 100 nationalities, a tremendous potential for chaos and no one to finance a capitalist takeover. The U.S. could probably buy the country for a few tens or hundreds of billions of dollars, but the American ruling class is as ideologically opposed to that as it is to financing a decent social welfare or health care system in this country. Soviet petty-bourgeois yuppies believe in a utopian capitalism, dreaming that they will suddenly achieve a standard of living like Scandinavia. In fact, economically and politically their fate under capitalism would be more akin to Mexico, or worse, with deep impoverishment of the masses presided over by an authoritarian state. The forces backing

Yeltsin would like to be a capitalist class, but they are not yet one. Even in Poland, where the state is capitalist from top to bottom, a capitalist class has not yet congealed because they lack...capital.

And there are additional obstacles: for one, the Soviet economy is organized on an all-Union basis and the departure of major components, particularly if the Ukraine pulls out, will wreak havoc. Moreover, many Soviet workers believe that the country belongs to them, and they have a deep reservoir of commitment to egalitarianism which must be rooted out for capitalism to be implanted. Thus although events are moving at breakneck speed, these factors may allow enough of a window for the Soviet proletariat to go into struggle before the counterrevolution consolidates. Should that happen, revolutionaries must seek to intervene to provide leadership, seeking above all to cohere a new revolutionary vanguard party, the necessary instrument for victory. ■

## Introduction...

(continued from page 2)

exposed the suicidal program of "socialism in one country" and analyzed the monstrous rise of the bureaucracy's apparatus of repression against the Soviet proletariat.

For decades, Stalinist hacks sneered at Trotsky as an "ultraleftist" prophet of doom and boasted of the Soviet Union's "superpower" status as they undermined and plundered the planned economy of the workers state. They cited the extension of deformed workers states after World War II—created through indigenous peasant-based revolutions in Yugoslavia and China (revolutions undertaken by Stalinist parties in self-defense over the objections of the Kremlin bureaucracy) and the Red Army occupation of Eastern Europe where the collapse of the Nazi-allied regimes left a power vacuum—as proof they could "go on forever" "peacefully coexisting" with world imperialism. But today fledgling capitalist regimes hold sway in Poland, Yugoslavia and throughout Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union has been destroyed, and a nascent capitalist state under Boris Yeltsin erected over its ruins. It was Trotsky who posed the question squarely: "Will the bureaucrat devour the workers state, or will the working class clean up the bureaucrat?" Now Trotsky's prophetic warning has been vindicated, bitterly, in the negative.

The central event of the Russian counterrevolution was Yeltsin's August 1991

"countercoup" against the inept "perestroika coup" of the Stalinist has-beens of the "Emergency Committee." Yeltsin's consolidation of his imperialist-backed power grab for "democracy," in the absence of mass resistance to the encroaching capitalist counterrevolution by a working class atomized and demoralized by decades of Stalinist rule, spelled the destruction of the Soviet deformed workers state. But the way for this was prepared, first by Stalin and his epigones, whose sole answer to perceived threats, whether from Old Bolsheviks and restless workers or from nationalists and monarchists, was terror and mass murder, and then by his successors, up to and including Gorbachev. Reflecting the increased weight in Soviet society of a privileged layer of bureaucrats' children, technocrats and other would-be "yuppskis," Gorbachev's "new thinking" was pro-capitalist old thinking—to use the "magic of the marketplace" (which in the final analysis means gouging the maximum of exploitation from the laboring masses by the threat of unemployment and starvation) to "revitalize" the USSR's (bureaucratically distorted) centrally planned economy. When he proved incapable of ramming through the "capitalism in 500 days" shock treatment, he was replaced by the more ruthless ex-Stalinist bureaucrat Yeltsin.

The ascendancy of counterrevolution in the former USSR is an unparalleled defeat for working people all over the world, decisively altering the political landscape on this planet. The Soviet masses have been plunged into desperate

poverty unknown since the darkest days of the war against Nazi Germany. The former multinational state has become a hotbed of Great Russian chauvinism and anti-Semitic agitation, while wars of nationalist fratricide rage in the Caucasus. No longer challenged by Soviet military might, U.S. imperialism has proclaimed a "one-superpower world," riding roughshod over semicolonial peoples from the Persian Gulf (100,000 Iraqis slaughtered) to Somalia.

The "post-Cold War world" looks very much as it did before World War I. The rival imperialists jockey for power amid an international recession, while many of today's "leftists" (in the spirit of their social-democratic forebears of 4 August 1914 who backed their own rulers in wartime) buttress the "humanitarian" lies of U.S./UN imperialism as it takes up the racist "white man's burden" in the Horn of Africa and prepares for military adventures in Bosnia and elsewhere.

The bourgeois media ceaselessly trumpets that "communism is dead." But it is not communism which has been shown to be a dead end, but its Stalinist perversion. Communism lives as the Trotskyist program for world workers revolution; it lives in the struggle of the toilers everywhere against their exploitation and oppression. And today, notwithstanding all the pious proclamations of the bourgeoisie and its mouthpieces about "the end of the class struggle" and even "the end of history," working people from Germany and Italy to South Africa and South Korea are showing through their protests and strikes that

they are not in the least reconciled to their rulers' attacks upon their living standards and lives. Here in the "belly of the beast," the multiracial explosion in Los Angeles following the acquittal of the racist cops who beat Rodney King was eloquent testimony to the indignation of young people who see that they have no future in this decaying, racist system. Even in the ex-USSR a massive strike in June by over a million coal miners and other workers in the Ukraine sent shock waves through the would-be bourgeoisies of the former Soviet republics. But desperate anger and willingness to fight are not enough; the key to victory is the forging of an authentic revolutionary leadership.

Thanks to the Stalinist sabotage of countless revolutionary opportunities, the imperialist system was ultimately capable of sapping and destroying the Soviet workers state, not merely by unremitting military pressure (beginning immediately as 14 imperialist armies invaded Russia in 1918-19, continuing with the post-World War II Cold War, which was punctuated by episodic "hot wars" from Korea to Vietnam to Afghanistan) but by the pressure of the capitalist world market. But capitalism remains a fetter on human progress and, in its imperialist decay, a threat to all life on this planet.

Consider the scenario sketched by bourgeois ideologues for the "post-Cold War era": a "peace dividend" in an economy freed from the arms race, "national liberation" in East Europe and the ex-republics of the USSR, continent-wide European unity beginning with currency union, and (in the mouths of the U.S. rulers) a "New World Order" under American hegemony. Now look at the reality. The governments of the advanced capitalist countries preach "austerity" and "sacrifice" to "their" workers, while the impoverished masses of the "Third World" are squeezed dry by their imperialist-dependent rulers to pay the "debt" to the imperialist banks. Murderous "ethnic cleansing" rages throughout the weak new capitalist states of East Europe, where nationalist ideology substitutes for non-existent capital as the motor force of counterrevolution.

In West Europe, so-called "welfare state" measures are rapidly becoming a thing of the past as the bourgeoisies no longer see any need for them (or for social-democratic governments) to stave off the "spectre of communism." The European monetary agreement is in shambles; the only bourgeois "unity" to be found there is the common crusade to deport immigrant workers, who are

being made scapegoats for rising unemployment and victims of emboldened fascist attacks. And the outlines of future trade wars and shooting wars are sharpening as Washington, Tokyo and Bonn—no longer constrained by Cold War unity against the USSR—pursue their conflicting interests with a vengeance. The only way out of immiseration and war remains the proletarian class struggle led to victory by an internationalist revolutionary leadership.

Throughout our existence as a tendency, the International Communist League, of which the Spartacist League is the U.S. section, has placed the Trotskyist program for defense and extension of the gains of the October Revolution at the center of our work. In the face of virulent anti-communist propaganda and repeated imperialist provocations during "Cold War II"—the anti-Soviet crusade over Afghanistan, Polish Solidarność' 1981 bid for power, Reagan's KAL 007 spy flight, etc.—we proudly upheld our unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union. We exposed and sought to combat at every juncture the bankrupt Stalinists' suicidal appeasement of imperialism—the introduction of "market socialism" in Eastern Europe, the withdrawal from Afghanistan in the face of the massively CIA-armed and funded war just across the border from Soviet Central Asia, the schemes to "rationalize" the Soviet economy through "perestroika," the decision to charge world market prices to Cuba for oil thereby devastating the Cuban economy, the acquiescence to capitalist reunification of Germany.

The ICL's present efforts to implant an outpost of Trotskyism in the homeland of the October Revolution follow a vigorous intervention in the former DDR (East Germany). When the barriers of Stalinist repression were loosened in response to massive sentiment from the DDR citizens for a freer political and social life, the ICL undertook a major effort to aid our German section in intervening there. We fought for revolutionary reunification of Germany through workers political revolution in the East and socialist revolution in the West. With the German bourgeoisie and its loyal "opposition," the social-democratic SPD "Trojan horse of counterrevolution," sparing no effort to turn the incipient DDR political revolution into a rush for reunification with the capitalist West (on the basis of lying promises of instant prosperity), we launched a Trotskyist newsletter and sold thousands of copies to receptive workers.

When fascists desecrated the Soviet war memorial in Berlin's Treptow Park,

we appealed for a massive united-front demonstration against fascism and in defense of the Red Army which defeated Hitler. Eventually endorsed by the Stalinist party, the Treptow protest drew a quarter of a million people who wanted a way to defend the DDR. We addressed the demonstration calling for revolutionary reunification through the immediate formation of workers and soldiers councils, a call which was seriously discussed in units of the East German army. Once again the alternatives were as Trotsky had outlined: the workers would take their fate into their own hands or the workers state would be destroyed by imperialism. And the bankrupt Stalinists, in mortal fear of the masses, chose the destruction of the DDR, apologizing for Treptow and actually moving the elections forward so they could lose faster. The Spartacists were the only party in the DDR to run in the elections on a program of "No to Capitalist Reunification." The Stalinists accepted the "inevitability" of capitalist restoration, quibbling only over the terms. Lacking any credible mass leadership to resist the onslaught, the East German masses voted overwhelmingly for unification under the deutschmark.

Our first publications in the Russian language were intended largely for distribution to the sizeable Soviet forces stationed in the DDR, as we sought to appeal to the Soviet and East German soldiers, doing their duty in the face of the threat of NATO imperialism, and win them to the internationalist program of Leninism, hidden from them for decades. This pamphlet brings together articles from *Workers Vanguard*, our American paper, and the Russian-language *Spartacist Bulletin* covering the recent events in the ex-USSR. Beginning with the pathetic "Emergency Committee" putsch and Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter-coup in August 1991, the material contained here documents the unfolding counterrevolution and the Trotskyist program to resist and reverse it. Included are several polemical articles which expose the role of numerous Western "leftists" in backing Yeltsinite counter-revolution and that of the Stalinist remnants in the former Soviet Union, whose bankruptcy is epitomized by their despicable "red-brown coalition" with virulent Russian nationalists, monarchists and outright fascists. Finally, we include an article from the current Russian-language *Bulletin* No. 4 which details the Stalinist degeneration of the CPSU and the struggle of the Trotskyist Left Opposition for the authentic program of Leninism. ■

## Traitors, Not Trotskyists

# Cheerleaders for Yeltsin's Counterrevolution

The counterrevolutionary tide sweeping the Soviet Union, spearheaded by Boris Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter-coup last month, poses a definitive test for organizations claiming to speak on behalf of the struggle for socialist revolution. Openly capitalist-restorationist forces led by Yeltsin and Gorbachev, now ascendant in Russia and other Soviet republics, are seeking to tear away every vestige of the greatest victory ever achieved by the international proletariat, the October Revolution of 1917.

The Left Opposition and the Fourth International of Leon Trotsky waged a life-and-death struggle against the Stalinist bureaucratic caste, whose usurpation of political power from the Soviet proletariat and capitulation to imperialism undermined the first workers state and created the present catastrophic situation. In doing so, the Trotskyists were the best and most consistent defenders of the gains of October. *Uncompromising, unconditional Soviet defensism* has always been the basis for the Trotskyist call for a proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy. In his germinal 1933 article laying out the perspective of political revolution, Trotsky warned of the "tragic possibility" of the counterrevolution now taking place:

"But in the event of this worst possible variant, a tremendous significance for the subsequent course of the revolutionary struggle will be borne by the question: *where* are those guilty for the catastrophe? Not the slightest taint of guilt must fall upon the revolutionary internationalists. In the hour of mortal danger, they must remain on the last barricade."

—"The Class Nature of the Soviet State" (October 1933)

We of the International Communist League today continue the struggle for Trotsky's Fourth International. *Workers Vanguard's* statement following the pa-

thetic Stalinist "coup" attempt and pro-capitalist counter-coup was headlined: "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" (reprinted on page 3). Pointing to the yuppies, speculators, fascists and priests who flocked to Yeltsin's "White House" in Moscow to present themselves as the shock troops for social counterrevolution during the two days of the feeble putsch by Yanayev & Co., we wrote: "a call on Moscow workers to clean out this counterrevolutionary rabble was in order. Yet the coup plotters not only did not mobilize the workers, they ordered everybody to stay at work and at home."

In the face of the ascendancy of the counterrevolutionary forces, we laid out a program of struggle against capitalist restoration, calling for independent workers committees in the factories to take control of production and fight privatization, for committees of soldiers and officers to resist the use of the Soviet army as an instrument against the working class, for workers militias to

crush anti-Semitic pogromists and anti-Communist lynch mobs and to ward off communalist butchery by revanchist nationalists. We immediately translated this article into Russian, and it is now being distributed among class-conscious Soviet workers with the aim of forging a Leninist-Trotskyist nucleus capable of leading a struggle by the Soviet working people to victory over the counterrevolution.

In contrast, in the "hour of mortal danger," a herd of pseudo-Trotskyists were on the *first barricade of counterrevolution*. Jack Barnes' Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which after years of being the reformist right wing of the centrist United Secretariat (USec) finally dumped Trotskyism outright a few years ago, cheered on the front page of the *Militant* (6 September): "Soviet Workers Win Giant Victory by Defeating Coup." As for the USec, its French-language organ echoed the imperialist gloating over the "second Russian Revolution" with the headline, "Three Days That

## THE MILITANT

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Wichita: ultrarightist street actions are threat to working people

Pages 18-19

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## Soviet workers win giant victory by defeating coup

BY GEORGE BUCHANAN

Working people in the Soviet Union won a giant victory when they resolutely opposed the August 19 coup.

Tens of thousands in Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities took to the streets to defend their hard-won rights when the coup was publicly announced. In the process they far surpassed the apathy of previous political crises here and in other states, gaining greater

was consolidated under Soviet Premier Boris Yeltsin in 1991. As an exclusive indication of popular will, the coup was held under the banner of the restorationist regime. They agreed to allow the drive toward a new, lesser form of democracy under the domination of the Russian republic led by Boris Yeltsin.

On the evening of August 18 Gorbachev was arrested on the Crimea and the police coup was under way. The next day the police declared the situation to be "10." The coup leaders made clear their intention to maintain working people by announcing a six-month state of emergency in selected parts of the country, including Moscow, Leningrad, and the Baltic republics. Soviet Workers Vanguard's "Trotskyism" was created for



—6 September 1991

—September 1991

## In Defense of Marxism Masses Resist Soviet Coup!

by George Samuels

As we were preparing this issue of the *Revolution*, the Defense of Marxism for the defense of the USSR. We have published in order to show George Samuels the following editorial comments. (and for us in our own words.)

The masses of power in the Soviet Union are represented by the masses of the USSR. The masses of power in the Soviet Union are represented by the masses of the USSR. The masses of power in the Soviet Union are represented by the masses of the USSR.

They hold out they can win.

Though working people in the USSR will correctly make a bloc with anyone to defend their hard-won democratic rights, their real interests cannot be won by looking to

## Socialist ACTION

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Vol. 1, No. 9 SEPTEMBER 1991 30 CENTS

## What the upheaval in the Soviet Union means

Hundreds of thousands of people filled the streets of Soviet cities. Many stood ready on the barricades, prepared to battle troops and tanks in the cause of democracy and a better life.

Socialist Workers Party (top) and its offshoots, Fourth Internationalist Tendency (above left) and Socialist Action, hailed "democratic" capitalist counterrevolution in Soviet Union. All falsely claimed Soviet working masses were on the barricades for Yeltsin.



Shook the USSR," a grotesque parody on the title of John Reed's history of the 1917 Bolshevik uprising. An article by Catherine Verla stated baldly: "It was necessary to unhesitatingly oppose the coup and, on these grounds, to fight at Yeltsin's side" (*Inprecor*, 29 August). This same reactionary line is being pushed by two American pro-USec satellites which are offshoots of the SWP, Socialist Action and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT).

For the last three decades our Spartacist tendency has denounced the imposers who masquerade as Trotskyists while abandoning every principled position Trotsky stood for and above all the fight for an independent Trotskyist vanguard. We have polemically combatted those who sought popularity in becoming the "left" tail of bourgeois "popular fronts," from Allende in Chile to Mitterrand in France. We exposed those who hail anti-Soviet nationalists from Khomeini in Iran to Walesa in Poland. We warned that their cowardly flinches and treacherous opportunism, their renunciation in deeds of revolutionary Trotskyism, went against every historic interest of the working class. Now they have openly shown themselves for what they are: *not Trotskyists but traitors to the October Revolution.*

### Painting Counterrevolution as "Victory"

Having lost the popular-frontist influence they assiduously cultivated during the "antiwar" movement of the late '60s and early '70s, the American SWP's eclectic brand of reformism has grown increasingly bizarre over the years. The same issue of the *Militant* which hailed Yeltsin's countercoup also announced that "World capitalism has suffered a historic defeat in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union," and carried a talk by Barnes under the heading, "Why U.S. Imperialism Lost the Cold War"! One has to ask, what planet do these people live on? The Barnesites simultaneously proclaim themselves to be North America's "Fidelistas" while pushing those forces in the Soviet Union who are out to strangle the Cuban Revolution as a favor to Washington.

Even as it unabashedly and uncritically reported how Yeltsinite mobs were tearing down statues of Lenin and Feliks Dzerzhinsky, the *Militant* (13 September) tried to paint it as some sort of proletarian uprising: "Key to the defeat of the August 19 coup was the action of tens of thousands of workers in Moscow, Leningrad, and elsewhere who defied the government's tanks, defended

**Spartacists  
opposed  
Solidarność  
counterrevolution  
in September  
1981 NYC picket.**



the democratic rights they had won in recent years, and in the process widened the space to advance their interests through demonstrations, debates, and political organization." The FIT likewise praised the "Soviet masses" for stopping the coup, and Socialist Action transformed the anti-Communist mobs of pro-capitalist yuppies into a "popular uprising" (see "Who Was on Yeltsin's Barricades," page 15).

In justifying their support to Solidarność counterrevolution a decade ago, the line of these outfits was that "ten million Polish workers can't be wrong." Today Solidarność in power is subjecting its former working-class base to vicious capitalist austerity. Even when the mass of workers is temporarily deluded into supporting counterrevolutionary forces, it is necessary for the communist vanguard to swim against the stream and defend the historic interests of the international proletariat as a whole. Moreover, in this case it's utter sophistry to claim that revolutionary-minded workers flocked to Yeltsin's counterrevolution. If anything, the overwhelming mass of Soviet workers—despite political confusion, cynicism and illusions in Western-style capitalist "prosperity"—exhibited far more class consciousness by refusing to heed Yeltsin's appeals than these cynical liars.

Indeed, the USec's *Inprecor* (29 August) not only acknowledged the lack of working-class support for Yeltsin's counterrevolution, but chided the Soviet workers for their absence:

"The next months will see the accelerated introduction of market reforms. The fact that the power play was defeated without the mobilization of the workers certainly strengthens Yeltsin's and the liberals' autonomy on this level; for the moment, they are less dependent on workers and popular support, and they will soon have their own

repressive forces and their own loyal bureaucracies."

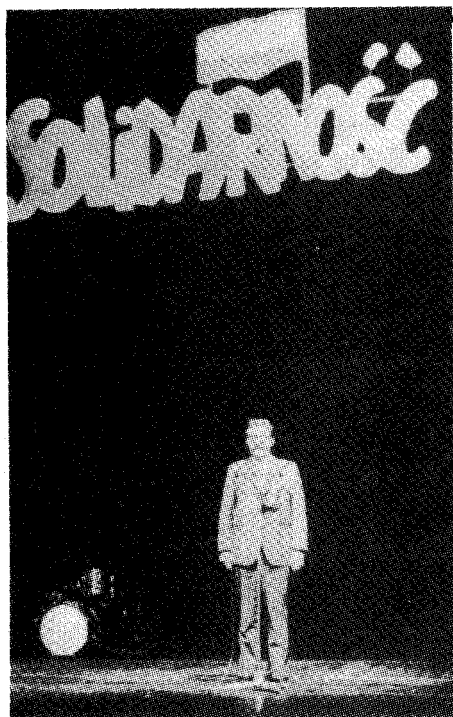
So the Soviet workers should have backed the rabidly restorationist Yeltsin in order that he would less readily attack them! This takes the meaning of chutzpah to new heights! Did the Polish workers' earlier support for Walesa, which the USec so fulsomely enthused over, hamstringing the "shock treatment" of capitalist austerity he is now meting out?

Mandel & Co. have no more in common with Bolshevism and its Trotskyist continuity than did Stalin and his heirs with Leninism. Neither rooted in the working class for a prolonged period nor anchored to a revolutionary program, when buffeted by Reagan's Cold War drive they were pushed ever more into the arms of anti-Soviet social democracy, whose hallmark since 1917 has been hostility to the October Revolution. They joined the imperialist hue and cry over the 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and cheered Solidarność bid for counterrevolution in Poland two years later. They hailed anti-Communist nationalist mass murderers who collaborated with the Nazi genocide of the Jews, like the Croatian Ustasha and Estonian Forest Brothers.

These handmaidens of social democracy have become full-blown social democrats themselves. Thronging to the counterrevolutionary barricades outside Yeltsin's White House, they have offered themselves up as foot soldiers in Bush's "New World Order." Not even a pretense of Trotskyism is left to any of them.

### Capitalist "Democracy" vs. the Workers State

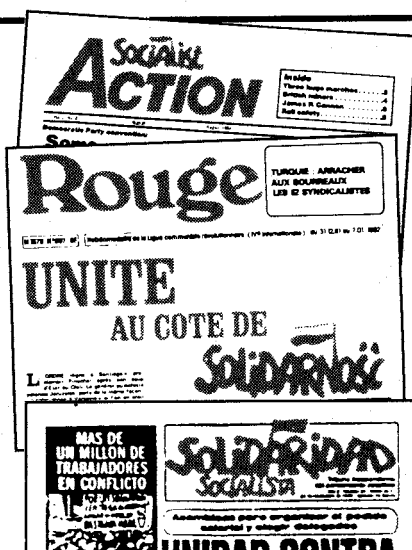
Insofar as these cheerleaders for counterrevolution in the Soviet Union attempt to provide any kind of "theoretical" fig leaf, it is that the Stalinist bureaucracy



Der Spiegel

is the chief, indeed the only, instrument for counterrevolution. The view, summed up in the phrase "Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through," has historically been used to justify de facto abandonment of the Trotskyist position of defense of the Soviet Union. Today it is being used to justify support to the counterrevolution. Thus, trying to buttress its outlandish claim that the victory of the Yeltsinites was a defeat for imperialism, *Socialist Action* (September 1991) claims that with the botched coup by the "gang of eight": "It will be extremely difficult now for the bureaucracy and its allies to organize a new, effective, instrument to carry through the restoration of capitalism."

In the first place, as Trotsky pointed out time and again, the bureaucracy was not a homogenous class but a brittle, contradictory layer resting atop proletarian property forms, from which it derived its privileged position, and potentially including both restorationist and revolutionary elements. In the absence of a proletarian challenge and under sharp pressure from imperialism, it was the restorationist wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy which blossomed under Gorbachev. The coup plotters were themselves committed to introducing a capitalist market economy, though more gradually and under centralized control. But the bureaucracy has now utterly collapsed. And, in any case, Yeltsin had already broken from it to become the spokesman for the incipient bourgeoisie—the "yuppskies," black marketeers and a political spectrum ranging from



**Social-democratic traitors to Trotskyism proclaimed "Solidarity with Solidarity," adopting Polish Solidarność logo to identify with Walesa's clerical-nationalist anti-Communist movement.**

would-be Western "democrats" to the fascists of Pamyat.

But the bottom line for these Stalinophobic proponents of counterrevolution, as it has been since the time of Karl Kautsky's diatribes against the October Revolution, is to back capitalist "democracy" against the dictatorship of the proletariat, whether under Lenin and Trotsky or disastrously deformed by Stalinism. Socialist Action leader Jeff Mackler declared in an August 28 Bay Area radio interview: "The essence of socialist politics is democracy." That was the "essence" of Kautsky's attack on the dictatorship of the proletariat under Lenin and Trotsky. As Lenin replied in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918): "It is natural for a liberal to speak of 'democracy' in general; but a Marxist will never forget to ask: 'for what class?'" Mackler apparently knows what class he is working for—the bourgeoisie. In the radio interview he flatly declared, "I agree with the bans on the Communist Party." So does the SWP. Shades of McCarthyism!

In Britain, the Workers Power group, subject to the hegemonic influence of Neil Kinnock's Labour Party, offers a crystallized expression of bourgeois "democratic" counterrevolution. *Workers Power* (September 1991) scarcely attempts to prettify the Yeltsinite forces, and even offers a candid eyewitness account of the social dregs that manned Yeltsin's barricades. Nevertheless it adamantly insists:

"No matter what the socially counter-revolutionary nature of Yeltsin's pro-

gramme, no matter how many spivs and racketeers joined the barricades to defend the Russian parliament, it would be revolutionary suicide to back the coup-mongers and support the crushing of democratic rights....

"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 cells."

Better to be subjected to capitalist exploitation, to hunger and homelessness, to brutal oppression of women and Great Russian chauvinist pogroms, says Workers Power, than for the Stalinist degenerated workers state to survive a day longer. Of course, the "workers organizations" they have in mind are those led by fascist-connected pro-capitalist "free trade unionists" like the notorious Yuri Butchenko whom Workers Power toured through Britain last year.

WP not only put themselves in Yeltsin's camp, they attack him for not being anti-Communist enough. WP concedes, "The measures to deprive the Stalinists of all the levers of economic and political power are an essential stage, a prerequisite to turn to the next stage—the task of rapidly dismantling the instruments of central planning." But they "put no trust in Yeltsin...to carry out the destruction of the Stalinist dictatorship." No, they call for a *workers' witchhunt*, for "workers' action to drive out the party and KGB spies in the workplace." And Workers Power's German affiliate, the Arbeitermacht group, calls (unnecessarily) for the SPD—bloodhounds for the butchers of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, and architects of the German bourgeoisie's *Ostpolitik* aimed at subverting and smashing the Soviet Union—to organize demonstrations to support the Russian counterrevolution.

### For a Fourth International Trotsky Would Call His Own!

One self-styled Trotskyist grouplet that tried to maintain the usual centrist posture—one foot in the camp of counterrevolution and another in the camp of revolution—was the British Revolutionary Internationalist League (affiliated to Peter Sollenberger's fragmented Revolutionary Workers League in the U.S.). The *Revolutionary Internationalist* (11 September) carried an article headlined, "Defend Collectivised Property! Build Workers' Councils in the USSR!" The RIL acknowledged that in the wake of the botched coup, "All the forces pushing for capitalist restoration have been enormously strengthened." Yet, echoing Workers Power, they attack our call on Moscow workers to clean out the counterrevolutionary rabble outside the Rus-

sian parliament. They add:

"For Trotskyists there should have been no more talk of critical support for, or for united fronts with the Yeltsinites than with the coup leaders. Where strikes occurred in response to Yeltsin's initial (never-repeated) call, Trotskyists should have participated, but fighting to turn them against both wings of the bureaucracy."

The RIL wants to "fight" capitalist restoration but doesn't want the workers to crush the shock troops of restoration. They oppose a "united front" with Yeltsin, but call on Soviet workers to observe Yeltsin's strike call—with the ludicrous aim of turning it against Yeltsin! They claim to oppose "Yeltsin and the restorationist wing of the bureaucracy," but attack the Spartacists for opposing Solidarność counterrevolution in Poland.

The "gang of eight" was incapable of sweeping away Yeltsin in its pathetic excuse for a putsch because, as we wrote,

it was a "perestroika coup." But both imperialism and the forces of internal counterrevolution were aligned on Yeltsin's side. The coup plotters were not only irresolute but 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. And in an armed struggle pitting outright restorationists against recalcitrant elements of the bureaucracy, defense of the collectivized 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 Program. This precisely was our policy toward Jaruzelski in 1981. But the RIL, beholden to social-democratic "anti-Stalinism," can't stomach being in a bloc with Stalinists even

in defense of a workers state.

Leon Trotsky went to his death—at the hands of a Stalinist assassin—an intransigent defender of the Soviet workers state. His last political struggle was waged over this question, against the Soviet-defeatist Burnham/Shachtman opposition in 1939-40 in the then-Trotskyist American SWP. As Trotsky wrote in his April 1940 "Letter to the Workers of the USSR" so eloquently: "Those who are incapable of defending conquests already gained can never fight for new ones." Should the homeland of October succumb to the counterrevolutionary tide, workers around the world will pay for it in blood for years to come. The need has never been more urgent for reorganizing a Fourth International that Trotsky would have recognized as his own. Defeat Yeltsin/Gorbachev counterrevolution! For a Trotskyist party in the Soviet Union, built in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International! ■

## Who Was on Yeltsin's Barricades?

reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*  
No. 535, 27 September 1991

"Soviet Workers Win Giant Victory by Defeating Coup," headlined the Socialist Workers Party's *Militant* as it lined up behind Yeltsin-Bush counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency likewise cheered "Masses Resist Soviet Coup!" And Socialist Action proclaimed: "The scale of the current popular uprising in the Soviet Union has had few precedents since the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917, led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky."

But were the Soviet workers out on the barricades for capitalist restoration? To be sure, the demagogue Yeltsin won 60 percent of the vote for president of the Russian republic last spring. His imperialist backers certainly hoped that with this "popular mandate," as soon as would-be Tsar Boris leapt atop a tank to call for a general strike to back his pro-capitalist countercoup, workers would leave the factories in droves, just as millions of Polish workers had followed the lead of Lech Walesa in 1980-81. But despite imperialist hopes and the extraterrestrial daydreams of the SWP, FIT and SA, this was not the case.

From the start, Western bourgeois commentators expressed bitter disappointment at the lack of Soviet



Outside Yeltsin's "White House": Russian nationalists, black marketeers, yuppies, priests, fascists.

working-class support for capitalist counterrevolution. The Yeltsinite rallies on August 20 in Moscow, Leningrad and other Soviet cities were sizable, though no more so than numerous other recent demonstrations in the Soviet Union. As for the fabled barricades outside Yeltsin's "White House," a spectrum of eyewitnesses, many of them pro-Yeltsin, uniformly attest that they never attracted more than several thousand hard-bitten pro-capitalist activists, with virtually no workers among them.

Shortly after the coup/countercoup, CBS News' *60 Minutes* (25 August) interviewed pro-Yeltsin Russian reporter Artiam Borovik. Speaking from a factory

floor, Borovik said: "The majority of the workers here supported the attempted coup. They're actually afraid of more perestroika. So far it's only brought them more misery." As for the activists who manned the barricades: "They were mainly young ones, like myself, students, intellectuals, professionals."

The British Workers Power group elaborated on this in an eyewitness account by a supporter of its League for a Revolutionary Communist International, which supported Yeltsin's countercoup:

"At the same time the 'heroic struggle of the masses of Moscow' to defend the Russian parliament is largely a myth. Firstly, the few thousand people who manned the barricades outside the

parliament itself were not, for the most part, the most audacious workers and students of Moscow.

"Rather they were in the majority small businessmen, speculators and owners of ["free enterprise"] co-operatives, the traditional base of the [Russian nationalist] 'Democratic Russia' demonstrators, plus a few hundred young enthusiasts. While there have been reports of strike action and mass mobilisations in other parts of the USSR, in Moscow at least the working class played little part in the resistance to the coup."

—*Workers Power*,  
September 1991

The observer goes on to describe how leaflets, posted by Boris Kagarlit-sky's pro-capitalist "Socialist Party" and the Green Party, which opposed the coup "but also criticised Yeltsin...were immediately ripped down by the Yeltsin-ites. This indicates the tensions within the anti-coup camp and the anti-democratic character of many of Yeltsin's supporters." It sure does!

Workers Power were not the only "leftists" to shamefacedly admit that the Yeltsin barricades were manned by utterly reactionary elements. A mem-

ber of the Green Party interviewed by the United Secretariat's *Inprecor* (29 August) added:

"During the power play, the mobilization was not very significant, and the people had extremely divergent views. The majority of the population seemed relatively indifferent. In Moscow no factory went on strike. There were miners strikes in the provinces, but they were not really massive. There were very few workers in front of the 'White House,' the Russian Parliament, during the construction of the barricades. The great majority of those who participated in these actions were youth and members of Democratic Russia, etc.; but some leftist militants also participated...."

"We distributed and pasted up our leaflets on the barricades, but the reception was generally rather negative because most of the activists were partisans of Yeltsin."

This did not deter the USec from standing with Yeltsin.

Another "socialist" outfit to join the barricades for counterrevolution outside Yeltsin's headquarters was the Moscow Socialist Workers Union, affiliated to Cliff Slaughter's Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain. Alexei Gusev, a spokes-

man for the group, described how "people were surprised to see a red flag" at the barricades. And while claiming, "The working class took part in the resistance; they were the real fighters in front of the White House," Gusev admits "the working class as an organised force...remained passive," and adds, "At a factory where we distributed leaflets some workers told us they didn't want to follow Yeltsin decrees" (*Workers Press*, 31 August).

If Gusev's "red flag" and leaflets were not ripped up as well by the Yeltsin-ites at the "White House," it is perhaps because these "reds" not only supported Yeltsin's counterrevolution but, in the words of WP's observer, "refused to carry any slogans or any positions in defence of planning against Yeltsin."

In their own words, these "leftist" apologists for capitalist counterrevolution confirm the urgency of our call on Moscow workers to sweep away the "counterrevolutionary rabble" manning Yeltsin's barricades, including the handful of latter-day Mensheviks like Workers Power and the WRP. ■



reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 546, 6 March 1992

# Soviet Union in the Balance

More than 12,000 militia (police) and OMON elite "anti-crime" units clad in riot gear were thrown at Moscow demonstrators marching to celebrate Soviet Army Day on February 23. As the protesters attempted to march through police barricades sealing off the city center, cops waded into them with batons flailing. A 16-year-old youth who stood atop a truck waving a red flag with Lenin's portrait was subjected to a particularly vicious beating. "I stood up there because I support communism, I support Lenin," he said. One demonstrator, 71-year-old retired Soviet Lt. Gen. Nikolai Peskov, died after being kicked by police.

While the series of demonstrations in Moscow since the January 2 price rises have remained limited to several tens of thousands, the Soviet working population grows increasingly restive and desperate over exorbitant food prices and shortages. Production is plummeting, falling by 17 percent overall and 27 percent in steel in January alone. The naked display of force on February 23 was a deliberate provocation by Russian president Boris Yeltsin and Moscow mayor Gavriil Popov aimed at intimidating the entire Soviet working people.

For the first time since the botched August coup and Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter-coup, the capitalist-restorationist forces have drawn blood on the streets of Moscow. A pro-Yeltsin Moscow television commentator felt compelled to deny any comparison to "Bloody Sunday," the tsarist police massacre of a January 1905 workers protest which triggered a revolutionary workers uprising. Even prominent pro-capitalist "democrats" like Yelena Bonner expressed alarm over Yeltsin/Popov's brutal tactics. The Soviet Army newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* was openly critical of the "politicians" who turn to the baton "to save Russia." Several hundred who turned out for Peskov's funeral were more forthright, denouncing Yeltsin and his gang as "bloody heirs of Hitler."

Yeltsin has been looking for a bloody provocation with the aim of testing the militia. The February 23 police assault came on the heels of a near-confrontation two weeks earlier, as some 40,000 turned out for an anti-Yeltsin protest in Manezh Square near the Kremlin. Moscow deputy police chief Leonid Nikitin was fired

## Moscow: Cops Unleashed Against Anti-Yeltsin Demonstrators



**Soviet Army Day, 23 February 1992: Pro-Communist demonstrator beaten by Moscow militia (police).**

after revealing that he had refused to obey orders to use special agents on February 9 to "provoke disorder" among the demonstrators and provide an excuse for sending in riot police. Meanwhile Yeltsin has been trying to buy off the officer corps by doubling military salaries and handing out *dachas* (country homes) to high-ranking officers. But this does nothing to improve conditions for the ranks of the army, who feel the brunt of the growing impoverishment and economic dislocation. On February 24-25, hundreds of desperate conscripts rioted at the Baikonur cosmodrome, launch site for the Soviet space program.

Nor is the military happy with Yeltsin's obsequious groveling before his American paymasters. When Yeltsin came begging for a miserly handout, Bush turned a deaf ear while continuing to spend billions on new Pentagon weapon development projects. The U.S. has even banned the import of military

technology from the USSR, part of an "Administration policy intended to force the Russian space and military industry into such a decline that it poses no future threat to the U.S." (*New York Times*, 1 March). The collision between a Soviet submarine and an American sub *inside Soviet waters* on February 11 indicates that, whatever the state of the Cold War, the U.S. continues to target the Soviet Union and the Soviet military. Yeltsin tried to play down the incident, but the Soviet naval command expressed its indignation in no uncertain terms.

In this context, reactionary Russian-nationalist forces are seeking to appeal to the military to oust Yeltsin and re-establish a "strong state" under the old tsarist watchword, "Russia, One and Indivisible." The fascistic Liberal-Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy featured prominently at the Army Day demonstrations. Zhirinovskiy was joined by the Russian Communist

Workers Party (RKRP) and other Stalinist "patriot" rumps. Among the speakers were such "hardline" military figures as anti-Semitic RKRP Central Committee member General Albert Makashov and "black colonel" Viktor Alksnis, who recently joined with the monarchist demagogue Nevzorov in forming a Russian-nationalist party called *Nashe* (Ours). But the chief aspirant for a new nationalist strongman to replace Yeltsin is his own increasingly critical vice president, Air Force General Aleksandr Rutskoi, who has become self-appointed spokesman for the military-industrial hierarchy. The ever more stridently nationalist Rutskoi was the main speaker at a right-wing nationalist conference in early February, where he declared:

"We have to restore the true face of Russia. We have to revive faith and spirituality. We have to revive the glory of the Russian army."

Last August's abysmal coup attempt by the "gang of eight" Gorbachevite officials—who resolutely turned their faces against any working-class mobilization to defend collectivized property—was little more than a vicarious dispute over who would get the (non-existent) cash flow from perestroika. Now, in the face of ascendant counterrevolution, many former Stalinist bureaucrats hope to get in on the ground floor and become the new capitalists. But Yeltsin economic

aide Anatoli Chubais vows that "privatization by nomenklatura is inadmissible." Yeltsin, and before him Gorbachev, found their main base of support among technocrats and intellectuals in the lower layers of the bureaucracy who want to live like yuppies in the West. But it won't be so easy to cash in on the counterrevolution—their careers have been built on managing (or, more to the point, mismanaging) the centrally planned economy, and if that goes, so will their jobs.

Yeltsin and his cohorts know they have to cohere a capitalist state apparatus and new, loyal agencies of anti-working-class repression if they are to consolidate their counterrevolutionary drive. While the military high command continues to keep its distance from Yeltsin and his counterparts in the other republics, the use of the militia in cracking down on anti-Yeltsin protesters marks a dangerous turning point in determining the fate of the Soviet Union. Our comrades of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) in Moscow responded with a leaflet (reprinted below), raising the alarm over this bloody escalation of Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary course and calling urgently for the formation of workers and soldiers soviets (councils) to repulse the capitalist-restorationist tide and seize power.



**Stalinist "patriots" push vile Russian chauvinism. RKRP spokesman Anpilov (right) shoulder to shoulder with openly anti-Semitic reactionary.**

Union on internationalist principles.

The crisis wracking the Soviet Union has reached a dangerous turning point. The collectivized economy is being dismembered. Production is disrupted and grinding to a halt in many enterprises. Rapacious price rises imposed by Yeltsin and his cohorts in other republics are reducing the working class to utter poverty and degradation. The lot of women, now being driven out of the workforce, is descent into a living hell. The dark forces of counterrevolution are fueling nationalist fratricide aimed at tearing apart and smashing the multinational Soviet working class.

Now we see blood on the streets of Moscow. And it will get only bloodier as the Yeltsin gang gains in confidence.

Some, like the Russian Communist Workers Party (RKRP), say the Soviet Army "is our last hope." Yes, many soldiers and officers within the Soviet armed forces remain loyal to the ideals of socialism and to the workers state. But to preserve the multinational Soviet state and army requires defending the socialized property upon which it was created. *The hope for reversing the tide of counterrevolution lies in organizing the workers, soldiers and collective farmers into soviets, and forging a revolutionary leadership which aims to return to the liberating and egalitarian goals of the October Revolution.* When the working class moves into struggle, pro-socialist sections of the army and

## Away With the Yeltsin Government! "White Tsar" Boris Wants a New Bloody Sunday

# Form Workers and Soldiers Soviets to Stop Capitalist Restoration!

FEBRUARY 25—The "democratic" counterrevolution has drawn its first blood. Called up by Mayor Popov, approved by Boris Yeltsin, thousands of militia were mobilized to stage a provocation against workers, pensioners, soldiers, officers and veterans honoring Soviet Army Day. Soviet working people be warned: they're trying to restore capitalism over your bodies!

From the moment the forces of capitalist restoration gained the ascendancy with Yeltsin's counter coup on August 22, the alternatives were sharply posed: either the proletariat reconquers political power, taken from it by the Stalin-led bureaucracy in 1923-24, or there will be the bloody consolidation of social counterrevolution and national disintegration. The weak Yeltsin government has re-

strained its bloodlust against the working class only because it lacks a loyal apparatus of repression.

With the assaults against Army Day demonstrators, the Moscow militia and OMON units allowed themselves, perhaps reluctantly, to be used against the working class. Chastised by outraged demonstrators, one militiaman defensively responded: "I'm just following orders. Why did you vote for these people? Next time elect better leaders."

But these "leaders," stooges of imperialism, won't be unelected by anyone. They must be swept away by the power of a mobilized working class. That is the proletarian political revolution that we Trotskyists call for, to stop the forces of counterrevolution, to prevent hunger, to reforge the Soviet

militia will certainly follow suit.

But in this crisis, sinister elements are seeking to appeal to the desperation of the working people. Beware of fascist Zhirinovskiy, who openly spews poisonous anti-Semitism! Beware of Makashov, whose presidential bid last year was endorsed by the fascist black-shirts of Pamyat! Beware of Nevzorov, whose populist words hide a program of monarchist reaction! Beware of Alksnis, who is no communist but wants to impose the market on the Soviet peoples, along the lines of the "Chilean model"—iron-fisted repression! They are organizing for Rutskoi, who would be bonaparte.

Beware all those who seek to divide the multinational working people through chauvinism and racism! The poison of anti-Semitism is the tool of the would-be bourgeois slavemasters to divide and cripple the workers' struggle. Was it a coincidence that on Army Day the militia aimed its truncheons against youth bearing red flags and portraits of Lenin? In the factories, in the mines, in the collective farms, there are workers of different nationalities. They must come together in proletarian unity, not be rent apart in nationalist feuding. Nationalism is the game of the parasites and capitalists!

The only way out of the current crisis is through revolutionary working-class action. In the summer of 1917, there was also a crisis of food supplies. The capitalists made their last-ditch effort to hold on to power and force the revolutionary workers into submission by starving them. Lenin advanced a way forward. In "The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It," he insisted that the only way to stop the capitalist sabotage was for the councils of elected deputies of the workers and soldiers to *take the power*, to take control of production and organize distribution of food. This pointed directly to the October Revolution, which swept away the exploiters.

Today new exploiters are trying to destroy the workers state. The question is: *Who will prevail?* The speculators, mafia parasites, entrepreneurs and the former partocrats seeking to become capitalists by selling off the economy to the imperialists? Or the working class which built it up at terrible sacrifice?

Through their own independent committees, composed of delegates elected by the enterprises, the working people must take control of food supplies and oversee distribution. What is needed once again is to form authentic soviets, not talk shops like the fake soviets



**Moscow, February 1992: Protesters carry portrait of Lenin in demonstration against Yeltsin's "free market" misery.**

and impotent parliaments of today, but organs for struggle composed of deputies elected by and recallable to the workplace and barracks. Formed into powerful soviets—internationalist, egalitarian, revolutionary—the working people will be able to sweep away the shaky regimes of the capitalist-restorationists with a flick of the finger. *No new tsars—away with Yeltsin—for a republic of the working people!*

There can be no return to the old crap of Stalinism. Out of yesterday's Stalinists come today's Yeltsinites. The era of Brezhnev paved the way for the market

reforms of Gorbachev, which in turn catapulted Yeltsin into power. The parasitic bureaucracy ran out of steam and is spinning off a layer which together with a new generation of yuppies wants to sell off the Soviet Union. And for that they need a strong state that can coin blood into profit.

Under the leadership of a new and genuine Bolshevik party, modeled on the party of Lenin and Trotsky, workers and soldiers soviets will ensure the fullest workers democracy, according full rights to all parties that would fight in the name of socialism. To build a genuinely collectivist society capable of using the creative forces of the working people, the planned economy must be reconstructed and revised from top to bottom, purged of all favoritism and privilege, of bureaucratism and arbitrariness. From the shopfloor to the highest echelons of the state, decisive power must rest in the hands of the workers and their elected representatives.

Workers: the moment is growing late. Do not wait until your children grow pale from hunger. The would-be bosses are taking the streets of Moscow away from you. Form authentic soviets now! Drive out the restorationist forces through workers political revolution! Defeat all attempts at nationalist fratricide—down with the poison of anti-Semitism! What is needed urgently is to bring together the cadre of a Leninist-Trotskyist party, dedicated to restoring the proletarian foundations upon which the multinational Soviet workers state was built. ■



Le Bolchévik

**ICL sign: "For Proletarian Political Revolution to Sweep Away Yeltsin Starvation Regime!"**

# Moscow—Patrice Lumumba University African Student Murdered by Yeltsin's Cops

## Capitalist Counterrevolution Unleashing Racist Terror

With the collapse of Stalinism and Boris Yeltsin's "countercoup" last August, the Soviet Union has been wracked by "all the old crap" of capitalist society surging to the surface. A storm of nationalist bloodletting has raged since Yeltsin seized the reins of power in the name of "free market" capitalism and Russian chauvinism.

At Moscow's Patrice Lumumba People's Friendship University, a 25-year-old Zimbabwean student, Gideon Chimusoro, was shot to death by a Russian policeman on the night of August 11. Militia were immediately dispatched to the campus after the murder to back up the killer. The next day, the OMON paramilitary units—a killer elite which first drew blood for the "democratic" counterrevolution at an anti-Yeltsin protest on Soviet Army Day in February—savagely attacked a student demonstration protesting the slaying of Chimusoro. Students carrying hand-lettered signs reading "We need police protection, not police murderers!" were chased, kicked

in the groin and beaten with rubber truncheons. One cop yelled, "I will kill you, swine!"

The Russian press "justified" the cop murder and rampage by inventing stories of a student "riot"—lies calculated to inflame racist fear and hatred of the African, Asian and Latin American students at this university. A *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (13 August) headline screamed "Only Machine Gun Fire Could Calm Down the Wild Running." *Moskovskii Komsomolets* invented stories of blacks burning cars and kiosks, of students hurling furniture, televisions and burning mattresses out of dorm windows. A TV anchorman closed the August 12 nightly news story by stating that the African students "promise to shoot down all of us tomorrow." This outrageous lie was nothing but sinister incitement to a pogrom!

Upon hearing of the cop murder, comrades from the International Communist League in Moscow immediately went to Patrice Lumumba University to express

their solidarity with the students. Our comrades saw with their own eyes what a pack of lies the Russian press reports were. The kiosks were all there and none were burned; the dorms were in normal condition, the rooms fully furnished. A student from Yemen, who was an eyewitness to the murder of Chimusoro and OMON's attack on the students, volunteered to tell everything to the press. He was interviewed. Shortly thereafter he was violently attacked in a predawn raid on his dorm room and remains hospitalized. A statement issued by the newly formed student Coordination Committee warned:

"We will hold [the press] responsible for anything that would happen to any African student in the future.... We will fight to the end until our rights are respected and recognized in this country where the African students in particular are constantly offended for having committed the only crime of being Black, being different, or simply being poor."

On August 19 the Coordination Committee organized a press conference and invited comrades from the International Communist League to participate. But the university president directly inter-



**Moscow, August 12:**  
Hundreds protest at  
Patrice Lumumba  
University against  
police murder of  
Gideon Chimusoro.



vened to cut us off as soon as our comrade drove home the point that this murderous attack on the foreign students was an example of the racism and nationalism unleashed by the counter-revolutionary Yeltsin government's drive to destroy the multinational Soviet workers state. Later the university president tried to get the militia to shut down our literature table, claiming that "political activity is forbidden at the school." The militia refused to follow his orders when we stood our ground and said, "We don't follow laws that allow racist murders and ban political activity."

### Capitalist Counterrevolution Means Racism and Impoverishment

Students interviewed by our comrades at Patrice Lumumba University described the devastating plunge in their living conditions in the last year. As stipends were slashed and prices soared, many students found themselves in abject poverty. But more than anything, it is the explosion of raw racism that has turned their world upside down. Selected for study at a prestigious university founded to train cadres for the Soviet Union's Third World allies, these students were once the honored guests of Moscow. Today they are reviled for the color of their skin and fear to go out in public at all.

A Moroccan student told our comrades, "I would say the changes started in 1985 when perestroika began. Now if you are a foreigner you aren't worth anything. They think you are the reason for the crisis. And they say this in the name of 'democracy'!" A Jamaican student told us he had been dragged off public buses, attacked on the street and in hotel lobbies. Even high-ranking diplomats have been targets of attack. Godfrey Chanetsa, a Zimbabwean diplomat, told of racial taunts and threats directed at himself and his family. He concluded, "I don't want to learn Russian, because the more you learn the more you understand what they are saying" (*Moscow Guardian*, October 1991).

Only a few years ago, racist outbursts would have been regarded with almost universal contempt. The Soviet Union was a deeply integrated society of over 100 nations. The very term "nationalism" was regarded as derogatory. The Bolshevik Revolution transformed what Lenin called the tsarist "prison house of peoples" into a multinational federation. It was only the Bolsheviks' internationalist program, asserting full and equal national rights for all peoples in order

to secure the fullest unity of the workers of all nationalities, which made this possible.

However, the administrative apparatus of the Soviet state and the Bolshevik Party were subverted into a narrow nationalist, bureaucratic caste headed by Stalin, who usurped political power in 1923-24. Stalin did not overturn the economic basis of the new workers state but consolidated his regime by reversing many of the liberating political gains of the Bolshevik Revolution. Anti-Semitism was revived to go after Trotsky as a Jew; Great Russian chauvinism was whipped up to keep the minority republics in line; the cult of the family was restored as a means of instilling respect for authority and stifling freedoms for women and youth. The internationalist policies of the Bolshevik Revolution were undone with the "theory" of "socialism in one country"—which led to a conscious policy of thwarting revolutions abroad in order to appease imperialism.

The ultimate "appeasement" of imperialism came with the bureaucracy's self-destruction and the rush by yesterday's bureaucrats, headed by Yeltsin and his cronies, to become part of a new capitalist ruling class. Across East Europe and the former USSR, weak counter-revolutionary governments, lacking capital, have substituted racism and nationalism as a tool to destroy the deformed workers states. "Ethnic cleansing" is the battle cry of the capitalist-restorationists, from the Serbian chauvinists and Croatian fascistic commandos who destroyed multi-ethnic Yugoslavia to neo-Nazis firebombing immigrant hostels in the former DDR.

In Moscow, the Pamyat fascists, who Yeltsin legitimized, openly describe themselves as "the last hope of white civilization." Yeltsin's "democratic intelligentsia" is shot through with Great Russian chauvinist racism. A common reaction among these "yupskies" is that the abandonment of Afghanistan was justified because "those Asians are not worth the blood of our Russian boys." This is the racist face behind the mask of Yeltsin's "democratic" counterrevolution.

### For Workers Political Revolution!

Led by the Bolsheviks, the young Soviet republic was a beacon of liberation, especially for the most oppressed peoples on earth. In a land that invented the word "pogrom," a Jew, Yakov Sverdlov, became the first president of the Russian Republic. Feliks Dzerzhinsky, a

Pole, became chief of the secret police. Imagine comparable steps for the liberation of mankind today: a victorious American workers revolution installs a black communist as president and a Hispanic woman as chief of police to clean out the remaining nests of KKK and Nazi scum.

Claude McKay, a Jamaican-born poet who addressed the Comintern's Fourth Congress (1922) in Moscow, wrote of the incredible reception he received as a black man in Soviet Russia:

"Never in my life did I feel prouder of being an African, a black, and no mistake about it.... From Moscow to Petrograd and from Petrograd to Moscow I went triumphantly from surprise to surprise, extravagantly fêted on every side.... I was the first Negro to arrive in Russia since the Revolution, and perhaps I was generally regarded as an omen of good luck! Yes, that was exactly what it was. I was like a black ikon."

—A Long Way From Home  
(1970)

Despite the degeneration led by Stalin, the planned, collectivized Soviet economy was the basis for a society where peoples of diverse races and nationalities lived in relative equality. In 1935, Paul Robeson sent his own son off to the Soviet Union to get an education where "he would not have to undergo the discrimination his father faced in the United States."

The Bolsheviks saw the Russian Revolution as the first step of a world revolution. They looked to extend proletarian power to Germany and the rest of Europe, and also to the East. In 1921 the Communist University for the Toilers of the East was founded in Moscow as a cadre school for internationalist revolutionaries. In *Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary*, Wang Fan-hsi recalls that after the defeat of the 1927 Chinese Revolution—a defeat sealed on Stalin's orders that the Chinese Communists lay down their arms before the bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang—many young exile revolutionaries in Moscow immersed themselves in the documents of the Left Opposition and went on to struggle as Trotskyist fighters for authentic communism.

Today the International Communist League is struggling to reforge a genuine Leninist-Trotskyist party to lead the working class in a fight for political power to oust the counterrevolutionary Yeltsin government. The horrifying murder of a Zimbabwean comrade at Patrice Lumumba University is one more compelling example of what the triumph of counterrevolution would have in store. ■



Dir Spiegel



Viktor Ivanov

Counterrevolutionary Yeltsin regime smashed August 1992 strike of Russian air controllers, and then prosecuted leaders on criminal charges.

# Yeltsin Breaks Russian Air Controllers Strike

MOSCOW—In its first direct assault on the workers movement here, the counterrevolutionary regime of Russian president Boris Yeltsin is engaged in a vindictive campaign to crush a union that crossed it. Last week, the government began criminal prosecution of the Federation of Air-traffic Controllers Trade Unions (FPA), which carried out a one-day strike on August 15, shutting down more than 40 of the country's airports. Union headquarters were raided and ransacked, documents seized and officials hauled in for questioning. The impact of this is all the more telling as the air controllers had actively aided Yeltsin's counter-coup in August 1991, supplying information about military movements. Now they're experiencing what capitalist counterrevolution is really about.

As reported below in an interview given by FPA vice president Vladimir Brodulev to representatives of the International Communist League in Moscow on August 25, the regime unleashed a full panoply of strikebreaking forces against the one-day walkout. KGB secret police and OMON special militia units were called out against the strikers and military personnel were ordered to act

as scabs. Faced with this onslaught and the danger of civilian aircraft catastrophes posed by the criminal use of untrained personnel to direct air traffic, the union called off the strike after one day on the basis of a personal assurance by Yeltsin's vice president Aleksandr Rutskoi that there would be no reprisals against the workers.

Rutskoi's promise to the air controllers was immediately revealed to be a lie, as the government launched criminal proceedings against the strikers. One union leader in Kursk was arrested the day after the walkout, and some 15 others have been victimized through transfers, demotions and firings. FPA president Vladimir Konusenko has threatened another strike, to be joined by the "free" miners, pilots and other unions, if the victimization continues.

Yeltsin and Rutskoi, as part of their drive to erect a capitalist state, are clearly intent on a calculated provocation against this union, which represents 7,000 of Russia's 8,000 air traffic controllers. With the prospect of mass unemployment in the coming months, as the capitalist-restorationist government begins its plan to privatize the bulk of Russian industry, the possibility of an

upsurge of mass workers struggles is evident to all. If the counterrevolutionary regime succeeds in crushing this relatively well-off workforce—remember Reagan's destruction of the American PATCO air traffic controllers in 1981!—this will set an ominous precedent, and put in place the legal machinery to take on the inevitable workers struggles to come.

The showdown over the air controllers strike is also important for the actors on the government side. Rutskoi has presented himself as a friend of the working people by demagogically denouncing the "free market" extremism of Yeltsin's economic policymakers, notably acting prime minister Yegor Gaidar. But during the August strike, Rutskoi called a press conference "at which he waved an air-traffic controller's payslip for 40,000 roubles, claiming bogusly that the union was striking for a wage of 70,000 roubles, 20 times the national average. In fact he had got hold of a payslip representing two and a half months back-pay" (*Guardian* [London], 19 September). Soviet workers should note well the actions of this phony "friend of labor."

The air controllers and other "free"

unions—which broke away from the official unions that in fact were an arm of the Stalinist bureaucracy—have been militantly pro-Yeltsin and openly support the restoration of capitalism. Their model is Lech Walesa's Polish Solidarność, favorite "union" of the CIA and the Vatican. The Independent Miners Union (NPG), the most important of them, is directly tied to the "labor" lieutenants of U.S. imperialism. When AFL-CIO chief Lane Kirkland visited Moscow in May 1991, the air controllers informed him that they would have guided his plane even if they had struck. The *AFL-CIO Bulletin* (May 1991) reported that, "at a dinner at Spaso House, the American Ambassador's residence, President Kirkland saluted the leaders of the Independent Miners Union, the air traffic controllers, and air line pilots." Yet now the air controllers are threatened with the PATCO treatment by Yeltsin, another favorite of the "AFL-CIA."

Except for the coal miners, these unions are based on the labor aristocracy (air controllers, pilots, railwaymen, etc.), highly skilled workers in strategic sectors of the economy. They thought they would have considerable economic leverage in a capitalist market economy. For their part, the coal miners have a central role in the Soviet industrial economy and were recognized as the heart of the workers movement by the old Stalinist rulers. Thus many miners, too, believed they would have a strong bargaining position in a capitalist labor market. In reality, capitalist restoration will bring massive *deindustrialization*, reducing Russia, the Ukraine and other former Soviet republics to neocolonial suppliers of raw materials to West Europe, North America and Japan.

Miners—who had economic security in the planned, collectivized Soviet system—would find themselves competing with the highly mechanized strip mines in the western U.S. and Australia as well as South African coal extracted by super-exploited black workers. Key to the economic viability of Aeroflot—the largest civilian air carrier in the world—is that aviation fuel was made available at a small fraction of the world-market price. Now, the IMF (the world bankers' cartel) is demanding that Russia *increase* the internal price of oil *five-fold*, which among other devastating effects would ground most of Aeroflot's planes. Thousands of Soviet air controllers would find themselves without a job. Meanwhile, the unions set up to carry out counter-revolution are now finding out that capitalism means union-busting.

In his interview with the ICL, Brodlev emphasized that the air controllers were not demanding higher wages, their main concern was improved flight safety. But if the Yeltsin-Rutskoi regime met this union's demands, it would encourage other Russian workers to strike against the restorationist regime as their living conditions are ravaged by hyperinflation and mass unemployment looms. We Trotskyists support the air controllers strike, whose pro-Yeltsin leaders are now up against the Yeltsin regime, while we underline the need for a genuinely communist vanguard that fights Yeltsin-Bush counter-revolution down the line. Such a leadership would seek to expand strikes into a working-class offensive throwing up soviet organs of proletarian power to restore the USSR on the basis of Leninist principles.

Criminally, the various has-been Stalinist losers, who masquerade as "communists" while tying themselves to the most reactionary nationalist and outright fascist forces, *have lined up with Yeltsin and Rutskoi in opposing the strike*. A representative of Toiling Russia, the coalition dominated by the Rus-

sian Communist Workers Party of Viktor Anpilov which has been behind the anti-Yeltsin protests in Moscow and elsewhere, also denounced a similar strike in the Ukraine in early September of miners, railway engineers, pilots and air traffic controllers because the leadership of the "independent" unions which called them is anti-Communist and pro-Yeltsin.

The old official trade unions, led by entrenched Stalinist hacks, tell the workers not to make trouble but rather to support the more nationalistic and conservative figures in the new regime like Rutskoi and Arkady Volsky, head of the Union of Industrialists (ex-Stalinist managers seeking to become capitalists). In an interview with the ICL, a spokesman for the independent railway drivers union remarked about the official unions, "the prevailing sentiment among them is conservatism and embarrassment." The resulting opposition to strikes plays into the hands of the counter-revolution, and is an important factor in explaining the passivity and disorientation of the Soviet workers in the face of Yeltsin's catastrophic assault on their livelihoods.

It is necessary for workers in the "free" unions to draw the lessons of Yeltsin-Rutskoi's breaking the air controllers strike. Capitalist restoration will bring not prosperity and freedom but Third World-level poverty and police-state repression. Workers in the old Stalinist-led unions must understand that the differences between Rutskoi and Yeltsin, between Volsky and Gaidar, are squabbles over *who* will serve as agents of Wall Street, Frankfurt and Tokyo in exploiting and degrading the workers of Russia and other former Soviet republics. At a recent demonstration against the privatization of the mammoth Zil auto plant in Moscow, a spokesman for the ICL told the assembled workers:

"I'm from the former DDR where a counterrevolution took place already two years ago. I want to tell you that as a result of that 50 percent of the workers are now unemployed and 80 percent of the women. We see racist terror against immigrants, with almost daily fascist attacks against immigrant hostels.

"I'm a member of the International Communist League. We are against the privatization and against the counterrevolution. We fight to bring the workers into power. For that we have to unite all the workers. The multinational Soviet working class has to fight.

"The workers have to take the power into their hands in a fight against counter-revolution. For that they have to build workers and soldiers soviets. And the



**American PATCO air traffic controllers dragged off in chains in 1981 as Reagan government smashed their strike.**

workers need a leadership which is opposed to all forms of nationalism, racism and fascism! [applause]  
 "We have to return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky! Down with the Yeltsin government! For proletarian internationalism!" [applause]

\* \* \*

*Following are excerpts of an interview with Vladimir Brodulev, vice president of the Federation of Air-traffic Controllers Trade Unions of Russia, conducted on August 25 in Moscow.*

**Q:** I represent the International Communist League. I would like to learn what happened exactly.

**A:** We appealed to the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, with our demands on July 4. Our demands did not imply the improvement of social facilities or any change in the existing social conditions. Nor did we require any rise in wages. However strange it may sound, our major concern, the cornerstone, is now flight safety. Some people don't quite understand why the trade union seeks not wage raises nor the improvement of its conditions, but the enhancement of flight safety in the skies of Russia.

The means of communication, radar and navigation facilities used by the air controllers are very worn out and outdated. No modernization is undertaken, our channels of communication permanently go out of order, there are also constant failures in control of the situa-

tion in the air. In general, there's a direct threat to the safety of flights; while we are at control panels and radars, controlling the air traffic, there's stress, permanent nervousness.

**Q:** Where did the strikes take place, and what was the military doing to replace the air controllers?

**A:** August 15 came. The strike started at 10 a.m., Moscow time. Before the strike started, we had received confirmations from 97 participating air traffic control centers from different cities—telegrams, protocols of secret ballot, etc. There were 97 air traffic control centers out of 130 in Russia.

However, developments took such a turn that the state machine—you can't call it any other way: the government, the attorney general, the judicial bodies, the KGB, the Ministry of the Interior—came together and formed a single front to fight the 8,000 air controllers of Russia. What did it mean in practice? Vice President Rutskoi immediately sent government telegrams to local authorities ordering criminal prosecution of the strikers. Heads of the Department of Air Transport, in their turn, instructed the local bosses to keep the airports and air sectors open by all means.

**Q:** So they mobilized the militia and forces of the KGB against the workers on strike?

**A:** They presented this as maintaining order at the airports, but as a matter of fact, in certain cases OMON [special

militia teams] forced our leaders out of flight control rooms, saying "you have nothing to do here." The strike committees were also forced out, in the presence of procurators [state attorneys].

What else happened during the strike? First, the chairman of the air controller union of the Kursk airport had to undergo such an ordeal—very much like in 1937 [during Stalin's purges]. On August 16, at 11 p.m., when the strike was already over, militiamen came to his place, showed him a warrant for his arrest, and he spent two days in prison pending trial.

The military, with no special training, were ordered to take places at air control panels usually operated by civil air controllers. They were not licensed to control air traffic in these air sectors. It was done by order. And it's mere luck there were no accidents. It's just luck people were not killed, and there are no coffins.

We understand that in calling a strike the air controller union took all passengers captive. But we did not expose their lives to danger. Rutskoi and his men took the passengers captive, too. But they *did* expose their lives to danger, and, as a matter of fact, they potentially sentenced all passengers to death. Making the crews board the planes and fly to the closed air zones and airports, and even more, placing untrained personnel at flight control panels. I think they are criminals. There's no other word: they are criminals. ■

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## ICL Leaflet in Ex-USSR

# Stalinist Has-Beens: Left Wing of Nationalist Counterrevolution



Remnants of Stalinist bureaucracy now calling themselves patriots (left) bloc with anti-Semitic Russian fascists such as Pamyat (right).

*The following leaflet was produced in Russian by the International Communist League for distribution in the former USSR.*

**For the Communism of  
Lenin and Trotsky!**

**Why Haven't the  
Workers Risen Up?**

It is now more than a year since the forces of counterrevolution led by Boris Yeltsin and orchestrated by Washington gained the ascendancy and launched a forced draft march toward capitalist restoration. Hunger and home-

lessness stalk the land. Pensioners line the street, selling their possessions to survive. Thousands of factories face liquidation. Fratricidal wars rage. The counterrevolutionary drive could have been spiked through concerted workers' mobilization against the Yeltsinites at the outset, against the devastating price rises in January, against the threat of mass unemployment which has been looming for months. But this has not happened. Why? At bottom it is a question of proletarian leadership.

The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) said in August 1991 that a mobilization of Moscow

workers should have swept away the counterrevolutionary scum on Yeltsin's White House barricades. We issued an urgent call, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" At the same time, the botched putsch by the GKChP ["Emergency Committee"] sought to enforce "perestroika without glasnost" by imposing the heavy hand of repression in order to continue on Gorbachev's road to capitalism. We raised a program to mobilize the working class in struggle against the restorationist drive: for independent workers committees in all enterprises to prevent layoffs and privatization, through



**Counterrevolutionary rabble manning barricades at Yeltsin "White House" in August 1991 should have been dispersed by working-class mobilization under genuinely communist leadership.**

seizing control of production; against the witchhunting ban on the CPSU; for multinational workers defense guards to prevent intercommunalist fratricide and nationalist and anti-Semitic pogroms.

Following the imposition of Yeltsin's "shock treatment," in our leaflet "Form Workers and Soldiers Soviets to Stop Capitalist Restoration!" we raised the call for workers committees to seize control of food distribution, backed up by workers defense guards. "There can be no return to the old crap of Stalinism," we stressed. "Out of yesterday's Stalinists come today's Yeltsinites."

Throughout, the ICL has fought for proletarian political revolution to restore the multinational Soviet state on the basis of its Leninist foundations, to drive out the capitalist-restorationist governments of Yeltsin, Kravchuk & Co. and replace them with the rule of democratically elected soviets of workers and soldiers deputies, and for a Leninist-Trotskyist party to lead the workers struggle to victory. In this, we continue the struggle of the Left Opposition of Leon Trotsky, for which countless numbers of Bolshevik-internationalists went to their deaths at the hands of Stalin's assassins. The program of the Left Opposition was the program of the Bolshevik victory in October 1917. Stalinism, which trampled on that program, received its death blow in August 1991, but the communism of Lenin and Trotsky lives in the international class struggle.

Now with the demise of the CPSU, there are more organizations than one can count which call themselves "com-

munist" or "socialist": the Russian Communist Workers Party (RKRP) of Viktor Anpilov and General Albert Makashov, the All-Union Communist Party (VKPB) of Nina Andreyeva, the Russian Party of Communists (RPK) of Anatoly Kryuchkov, the Union of Communists (SK) of Alexei Prigarin, the Socialist Party of Labor (SPT) of Roy Medvedev and A. Denisov, and the Socialist Party of the Ukraine (SPU), as well as Boris Kagarlitsky's Labor Party (PT). They claim to represent significant forces within the working class. Yet they have not organized a hint of serious working-class resistance to the ravages of capitalist restoration.

From "hardline" Stalinist leftovers like Anpilov and Andreyeva to pro-Gorbachev social democrats like Medvedev, these organizations have been a roadblock to struggle by the multinational Soviet working class. The reason: these organizations continue the Stalinist policies of nationalism and blocs with bourgeois forces which paved the way for counterrevolution. The workers, not only here but throughout the entire world, have paid dearly for this.

Nearly seven decades of Stalinist bureaucratic rule politically paralyzed and atomized the Soviet proletariat. Today the numerous decomposition products which emerged from the collapse of the bankrupt Stalinist apparatus aid the consolidation of the counterrevolution by sowing passivity and criminally fanning chauvinism within the multinational proletariat. One and all, they have blocked with reactionary

nationalist and other pro-capitalist elements who are no less committed to counterrevolution than Yeltsin.

### **"Red-Brown" Coalition: Betrayal of the Working Class!**

The demonstrations of Anpilov's RKRP invariably include the fascist Pamyat and a gaggle of supporters of the rabidly anti-Semitic Zhirinovskiy, while Anpilov's *Molniya* (No. 39) calls on its readers to subscribe to that Pamyat-loving chauvinist rag *Dien*. The RKRP is prominent in the disgusting "red-brown" coalition with outright Great Russian chauvinists like the anti-Semitic writer V. Rasputin and Zhirinovskiy, the monarchist Alexander Nevzorov and the Russian National Synod (*Sobor*) of General Alexander Sterligov. On the RKRP Central Committee sits Makashov, who calls Yeltsin "Zionists" and regularly denounces "cosmopolitans"—Stalin's anti-Semitic code word for Jews—and was elected to the presidium of the *Sobor*. It is no accident that Pamyat endorsed Makashov for president in June 1991.

The June 12 conference in Moscow of the *Sobor*—including monarchists, black-shirted fascists and Cossacks in full regalia, as well as the RKRP—marked an important stage in the strengthening of fascist-corporatist forces. The *Sobor* railed that the Yeltsin regime is an "administration of national treason" which is "Russophobic and Jew-loving." Sterligov is just as fanatic an anti-communist as Yeltsin or Gaidar. Sterligov denounces communism as "hostile to the old national traditions of Russia...so it is quite impossible to collaborate with people who are carriers of this ideology." Both Sterligov and his deputy Ilya Konstantinov, who parades as head of the "All-Russian Toolers Assembly," sided with Yeltsin in August 1991. But while Anpilov rails against Yeltsinite "demofascists," this does not prevent him from licking Sterligov's boots. The Leningrad RKRP's *Narodnaya Pravda* (No. 24) featured the full text of Sterligov's June 12 speech to the *Sobor*. *Molniya* (No. 40) published another speech by Sterligov and hailed it as an example of the "intellectual might of the opposition."

Sterligov/Zhirinovskiy try to poison the Russian workers with chauvinism, the better to lead them to the capitalist slaughter. And they are aided in their efforts by those, like the RKRP, who stand at their side obscenely waving red flags. This is a cynical operation. Anpilov & Co. call the Yeltsin gang "demofascists" in order to justify

unity with "national patriots" against Western influence. This harks back to the supposed "national unity" against the Nazi invaders in 1941, when Stalin resurrected the tsarist watchword of the "strong state" (*derzhava*). What a perversion of history! It was neither Stalin's chauvinist propaganda for a "Great Patriotic War" nor the alliance with the "democratic imperialists" which defeated the Nazis, but the heroic effort and sacrifice of the *multinational Soviet proletariat*. The "red-brown" coalition spits on the memory of that struggle.

The *Sobor*'s only difference with Yeltsin is in wanting to restrict a new class of capitalist exploiters to purebred sons of the Rus. Konstantinov calls for "Russia, one and indivisible; equal rights for all forms of property; a mixed economy." Sterligov rails that property must not be allowed to pass into the hands of Jews and foreigners, but only "those whose ancestors built Russia." In other words, he wants to restore Russia's factories, collective farms, mines and oil fields to those who would follow in the footsteps of tsarist capitalists and landlords and the rest of the old Russian nobility, who will be no less servants of imperialism than is Yeltsin. In reality, the pre-1917 tsarist autocracy—for all its reactionary Russian nationalism—served as agents of Western finance capital, especially the Paris *bourse*, in exploiting Russia's toilers.

Meanwhile the RKRPer and others join in every sinister chauvinist crusade, as over Moldova, falling in line behind the



Sovietist



Keller/NY Times



AP

From left to right: Viktor Anpilov, Nina Andreyeva and Albert Makashov, leaders of Stalinist "patriots" aligned with anti-communist Russian nationalists.

fascists and other counterrevolutionaries. In doing so they claim to be defending Russian-speaking minorities against nationalist assaults. As Leninists we oppose *all* national privilege and *all* nationalisms. To support either the Slavic or Romanian side in Moldova will only escalate the inter-ethnic bloodletting, further inflame murderous nationalism and lead to an endless series of communalist massacres and counter-massacres. Look what has happened in the Caucasus; and in Yugoslavia the workers state was destroyed in all-sided nationalist fratricide!

It was only through the most ruthless struggle against all national oppression that Lenin created the basis for the multinational Soviet workers state. While recognizing the right to self-determination for all nations, Lenin opposed even "the 'most just,' 'purest,' most refined" nationalism ("Critical Remarks on the National Question," 1913). He denounced as Black Hundreds propaganda

any taint of anti-Semitism or Great Russian chauvinism. And not only before but also after October. In his struggle, in league with Trotsky, against Stalin and Ordjonikidze over the Georgian question, Lenin declared "war to the death on dominant nation chauvinism" (October 1922).

Yet today the Black Hundreds chauvinism denounced by Lenin is propagated by those falsely claiming his mantle. A recent issue of the Toiling Russia newspaper *Shto Delat* ("What Is To Be Done") carried a rehash by Yakushev of the anti-Semitic tsarist secret police forgery, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion." *Molniya* (No. 39) then defended Yakushev as a "leader of the workers movement." The June 12 demonstration at Ostankino to demand a chauvinist "Russian Hour" on television, built through the efforts of Toiling Russia, was an orgy of chauvinism and anti-Semitism dominated by Sterligov and Zhirinovsky, with signs proclaiming, "Russian TV Means TV Without Jews."

As Lenin said, "*Kto kovo?*" (who does what to whom?). Elements of the RKRPer may try to fool themselves that they are only "temporarily" using the Sterligovs and his ilk to further the struggle against Yeltsinite counterrevolution. Others, like the RKRPer whose letter was published in *Glasnost*, worry about "too close contact with national-patriots." But Ostankino shows who is using whom. Any bloc with, any conciliation of these reactionary "national patriots," no matter how many red flags are present, only furthers their goal of bloody fascist counterrevolution.

### Allying with Capitalists to Fight Capitalism?

The Ostankino demonstration was so flagrantly reactionary that some have sought to take their distance from it. Medvedev and Denisov even held a press conference on June 23 to announce that "only a few [!] isolated provocateurs" shouted "beat the yids." But the



Der Spiegel

Woman scrounging for food in Moscow garbage dump. Yeltsin's capitalist-restorationist regime is starving Soviet working people.

journal *Glasnost*, on whose editorial board Medvedev and Denisov sit, praises the *Sobor* of anti-Semitic provocateur Sterligov.

And the SPT—along with the RKR, VKPB, RPK and SK—joined with such reactionary outfits as the *Sobor*, the “Union of Cossacks” and the “Fund for the Restoration of the Shrine of Christ the Savior” in signing the “Declaration on the Founding of the United Opposition” last March which formalized the “red-brown” coalition. This statement proclaimed: “We, representative of the ‘left’ and ‘right’ oppositions, have come to the conclusion that the salvation of the Fatherland is only possible through joint action on the basis of civil peace and national trust.” The declaration insists on “the impermissibility of confrontation between ‘whites’ and ‘reds’.”

In other words, this was an appeal for the workers to maintain “class peace” while the fascists march with impunity and the counterrevolution rages triumphantly. The “red-brown” coalition is simply the most grotesque form of the class-collaborationist People’s Front policy proclaimed by Stalin/Dimitrov in 1935. Then as now, the popular front subordinates the workers movement to a section of the bourgeoisie. Today there is not even the old Stalinist fig leaf justifying support to “democratic” capitalism as a supposed stage on the road to socialism, but rather an open bloc with the more nationalist wing of the counterrevolution.

No different in substance is the support given by many of these same elements around the SPU and SK in the Ukraine to Kravchuk in last year’s presidential elections as the “lesser evil” against the fascist Chornovil. The ram-paging Ukrainian fascist bands see no need to “unite” with the left. But no less



**Cossacks, descendants of shock troops of tsarist autocracy, reappear at Congress of People’s Deputies.**

than Yeltsin, Kravchuk is administering the restoration of capitalism, which will necessarily proceed to a fascist or bonapartist stage in order to crush the workers.

*Is it not obvious that one cannot fight against capitalist counterrevolution by joining with capitalist forces?* The truth of the matter is that none of these organizations are opposed to the reintroduction of capitalism. The SPT, SK and RPK all support a “mixed economy,” which in the context of raging counterrevolution means support to capitalist restoration.

The RKR occasionally makes “left” noises against privatization, while regularly proclaiming the “equality of all property forms.” *Molniya* (No. 39) reprints a statement from the “Federation of Communists of Educational, Scientific and Creative Organizations” which calls for “destatification” through “the

establishment of self-management of people’s enterprises.” The same issue includes remarks by Buzgalin of the PT, which explicitly models itself on the pro-capitalist British Labour Party, calling for the “transfer of property to the work collectives.” All of these, in one form or another, amount to calls for illusory “workers’ privatization.”

Even if such a system could be set up, ownership by work collectives would only be a brief transition to neocolonial capitalist exploitation. Such collectives would be *competing against one another* under conditions of hyperinflation, total disruption of the supply system and mass unemployment. Most enterprises would go bankrupt even if they cut wages to the bone. Desperate worker collectives would then have to sell the enterprises to foreign investors or well-heeled members of the Russian mafia. Even in Yugoslavia, where limited “workers self-management” existed on the basis of *state-owned* property, this undermined working-class solidarity, increased inequality in all spheres and widened economic divisions between the constituent national republics, setting the stage for the bloody counterrevolutionary breakup of the country.

We Trotskyists oppose the reactionary utopia of “workers’ capitalism” and stand for a *planned collectivized economy under a workers government based on democratically elected soviets*. Genuine soviets would be organs of mass struggle and proletarian rule rather than the bureaucratic apparatuses under Stalinism (or the artificial concoctions of the rump Stalinists today).

Stripped of “left” phrasemongering, in Russia today the call for privatization



**Aleksandr Rutskoi (far left) and Arkady Volsky (above), leaders of corporatist faction of capitalist counterrevolution.**

through the "work collectives" is nothing more than the program of the industrialist Volsky and would-be strongman Rutsloi for factory managers to take ownership of the means of production under a corporatist "strong state." They understand that the restoration of capitalism cannot be carried through democratically, but requires the strong hand of a bonapartist, i.e., dictatorial, regime.

The "Russian Communists" of the RKRK et al. are in fact the left flank of the counterrevolutionary faction of Volsky/Rutsloi/Sterligov. When Rutsloi deployed the forces of the state to attack the air traffic controllers strike in August, the Stalinists stood aside. They justify their own hostility to the strikers by pointing to the fact that the "free trade union" leaders are pro-Yeltsin, even though these unions were now pitted *against* the Yeltsin regime. By arrogantly blaming the workers for the crimes of their leadership, the Stalinists serve only to drive these workers deeper into the arms of their reactionary leaders. And where have the arrogant supposed workers' leaders of the RKRK, Toiling Russia

et al. ever led any strikes against Yeltsin's starvation policies?

### **The Anti-Leninist Lie of "Socialism in One Country"**

Behind the capitulation by these self-styled "communists" to nationalist counterrevolution is their fealty to Stalin/Bukharin's nationalist lie of "socialism in one country." Lenin concluded his brief address to the Petrograd Soviet announcing the workers' seizure of power in 1917 with the words: "Long live the world socialist revolution!" Time and again, Lenin—expressing the view of all Marxists—insisted that socialism could triumph only through international proletarian revolution. But in 1923-24, the Bolshevik Party of October was strangled and the program of Lenin was thrown overboard. The political counterrevolution led by Stalin transformed the CPSU into a bureaucratic apparatus and proceeded to betray one revolutionary opportunity after another—from China to Spain to post-war Western Europe—in the name of "socialism in one country."

From the RKRK to the SPT, the various degeneration products of the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy all trace their origins to this bankrupt, treacherous program. Thus RKRK "ideologue" Sergeev dismisses the idea of "international collectivism" while claiming that "the idea of Russian, or Great Russian, if you please, collectivism will work." And Medvedev echoes: "We have to say...of Leninism, that too much importance was placed on the idea of world revolution." We have to say of Sergeev, Medvedev and their kind, that those who repudiate the Leninist perspective of world revolution are necessarily incapable of combatting the counterrevolution.

In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky explained that even a healthy revolutionary workers state could not for long escape the pressures of the imperialist world market. The choices: either the promotion of socialist revolution to eliminate capitalism internationally, or conciliation of imperialism abroad and concomitant rehabilitation of domestic nationalist reaction. The Leninist-



Trotskyists fought for the former program; Stalin and his heirs promoted the latter. And when the bankruptcy of their bureaucratic-commandist system became apparent, Stalin's heirs saw no alternative but to accept the development of capitalism.

### **"Workers Democracy" Group = Yeltsinite "Democrats"**

The grotesque character of the "red-brown" coalition provides an open door for some to offer a seemingly "left" alternative as a halfway house to authentic Leninism-Trotskyism. This is the role of the Workers Democracy group of Sergei Beits, associated with the British Militant group. Despite their economist demands and workerist rhetoric, they have *not* opposed capitalist restoration. On the contrary, in August 1991, they joined the forces of capitalist restoration in the defense of the White House with the rest of the Yeltsinite "democrats." Likewise, Alexei Gusev's Socialist Workers Union (affiliated to the British Workers Revolutionary Party of Cliff Slaughter), Dmitri Zhvania's Proletarian Revolutionary Cells (connected to the British anti-Soviet Socialist Workers Party of Tony Cliff) and Workers Power all stood with Yeltsin in August 1991.

Workers Democracy actually hails Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary counter-coup as the beginning of "the revolutionary anti-bureaucratic process," grotesquely paraphrasing Lenin in proclaiming: "The revolution that gave power to the bourgeoisie has finished, the next revolution will put power in the hands of the workers." These people have nothing to do with Trotskyism, but rather represent a strain of Stalinophobia. Behind their talk of "democratic socialism" is support to not-so-democratic capitalism against the Stalinist degenerated workers state. They supported Lech Walesa's Solidarność, financed by the Vatican and the CIA, during its drive for capitalist restoration in Poland in 1981. They welcomed the destruction of the USSR, absurdly denying that "the liquidation of the USSR weakened the position of socialism in the world" (*Workers Democracy*, April-May 1992). They are not Fourth Internationalists, but Second International social democrats: the Militant group in Britain was for four decades buried deep inside the pro-imperialist, anti-Soviet Labour Party, to which they remain loyal.

But in the classical manner of opportunists, when they found there was no gain to be derived from tailing the Yeltsinite "democrats," they sim-

ply switched over to tailing after the "red-brown" coalition. In a front-page appeal to Toiling Russia over fighting privatization, *Workers Democracy* (April-May 1992) in no way denounced Toiling Russia's chauvinist position—not even mentioning the words "chauvinism" or "anti-Semitism." Now *Workers Democracy* has finally mustered up the courage to say, at least in the abstract, "Down with nationalism and chauvinism! Long live the October of Lenin and Trotsky!" But what can such words mean coming from people who invited

no attempt to come to grips with the degeneration of the Bolshevik Revolution, and thus it is only a cover-up for the policies which led to Gorbachev and Yeltsin.

At the CPSU conference itself, held on October 10, Prigarin, one of the authors of the *Pravda* declaration, continued to defend blocs with "patriots" and called for an all-inclusive party containing those who see "Stalin as a criminal" and those who see him as a "savior," those who want a centralized economy and those who favor "market



**Protest against privatization by workers at Moscow Zil auto factory in September 1992 was addressed by spokesman of the International Communist League.**

outright monarchists for "comradely" discussion at an August 29 meeting in Moscow, and stood with Yeltsin on the barricades of counterrevolution?

### **Reforge the Communist Party of Lenin and Trotsky!**

There is much talk today of reconstituting the CPSU. But what is decisive is the question of program—a fighting strategy to mobilize the proletariat in struggle for its own power. We are for the reconstitution of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky. The draft "Programmatic Declaration of the 20th All-Union Conference of the CPSU," published in *Pravda* (8 September), concedes "large-scale miscalculations, abuse of power and crimes against the positions and the very lives of people" under the Stalin era, as Khrushchev already admitted in 1956. But despite its denunciation of "betrayal by the Gorbachev-Yakovlev group," there is

socialism." Such a Kautskyan mishmash is a recipe for a social-democratic party which at best would confuse and disorient those workers over whom it might exercise influence. What these former bureaucrats fear above all is a clear, revolutionary program.

Seven decades of Stalinism perverted the conception of revolutionary leadership into one of bureaucratic fiat, buttressed by the constitutional enshrinement of the "leading role of the party." Revolutionary leadership is the struggle to break the working masses from the misleaders who foster bourgeois and nationalist ideology, and to mobilize them around the genuine interests of the international proletariat. What is needed today is the genuine unity of all who seek the communism of Lenin and Trotsky around the Bolshevik program of world socialist revolution. That is the only way forward.

## Stalinism—Gravedigger of the Revolution

# How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled

November 7 marked the 75th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. But the workers state erected by the Bolshevik power, far and away the greatest conquest of the international proletariat and a momentous leap forward for humanity, did not survive its 75th year. The period of open counterrevolution ushered in by Boris Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter-coup in August 1991 has, in the absence of mass working-class resistance, culminated in the creation of a bourgeois state, however fragile and reversible. The task facing the Soviet proletariat today is socialist revolution to restore proletarian power and reforge the Soviet Union on the foundation of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik internationalism.

The ascendancy of Yeltsin and capitalist-restorationist forces backing him was a pivotal event in determining the fate of the Soviet Union, but it was not conclusive. In our August 1991 article, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!", which was immediately translated into Russian and distributed in over 100,000 copies throughout the Soviet Union, we wrote that workers mobilizations should have cleaned out the counterrevolutionary rabble on Yeltsin's barricades, thus opening the road to proletarian political revolution. As a result of Yeltsin's victory:

"The first workers state in history, sapped and undermined by decades of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, lies in tatters. The state power has been fractured, the Communist Party—its bureaucratic core—shattered and banned from the KGB and armed forces, the multinational union is ripping apart as one republic after another proclaims secession.

"But while Yeltsin & Co. now see a clear field to push through a forced-draft reintroduction of capitalism, the outcome is not yet definitively decided....



Spartacist

## For Socialist Revolution to Sweep Away Yeltsin Counterrevolution!

Opposition from the factories against the ravages of capitalist assault could... prevent the rapid consolidation of counterrevolution."

—WV No. 533, 30 August 1991

In the interim there was no decisive action to stop that consolidation. Politically atomized by nearly 70 years of Stalinist usurpation of political life, paralyzed by the CIA-supported pro-Yeltsin "free trade unions" and the virulent chauvinist poison of numerous Stalinist remnants, the multinational Soviet working class has been overwhelmed by the counterrevolutionary tide. The Yeltsin regime seized the advantage to tear away at every vestige of the Soviet

degenerated workers state and push through the piecemeal consolidation of the counterrevolution. Quantity has now turned into quality.

But the situation cannot long continue as it is. For Yeltsin and other restorationists to nail down a solid capitalist regime, sooner rather than later a bloody reckoning is likely, signaling to the masses that there is a new order. With explosions of struggle by workers driven to desperation, or even without them, the nascent bourgeois forces will move to impose heavy-handed order through a "strong state." The recent vicious crack-down, using Russian OMON riot police,



decomposes, the bulk of the population teeters on the brink of outright starvation. Any spark could set off the tinderbox on which Yeltsin and his cohorts sit.

We Trotskyists of the International Communist League, who have fought tooth and nail against ascendant counterrevolution, say: Stalinism is dead, but communism lives—in the class struggle of the world proletariat and in the program of the revolutionary vanguard. The internationalist program through which the Soviet Union was created has been carried forward under the banner of the Fourth International. It is the Trotskyists uniquely who warned that the continued stranglehold of the Stalinist bureaucracy over the Soviet workers state would lead to the destruction of October, who fought for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism and counterrevolution, and called on the Soviet proletariat to sweep away the Stalinist excrescence through political revolution while there was still time.

The “Russian question” has been the touchstone for revolutionaries and the defining political question of the 20th century. Leading up to the Second International Conference of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) earlier this autumn, discussion focused on an assessment of the developments in the former Soviet Union since August 1991. The main conference document described the piecemeal consolidation of a capitalist state:

“Recent developments continue to point in a dire direction. Stories abound in the press of ‘primitive capitalist accumulation,’ i.e., theft: Managers and former bureaucrats are scrambling, using all manner of shady practices to get their hands on socialized property—encouraged, abetted and advised by international imperialism. The recent strike by air traffic controllers in the Russian federation was decisively broken by the Yeltsin government using the OMON and elements of the MVD and KGB. An African student at Patrice Lumumba University was shot down by the Moscow militia amidst a hysterical racist press campaign. Tons of volumes of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin are being destroyed in a pure ideological anti-communist frenzy.”

—“For the Communism of Lenin and Trotsky”

The conference drew a balance sheet on these events and unanimously endorsed a 26 September document which said: “The August 1991 events (‘coup’ and ‘countercoup’) appear to have been decisive in the direction of development in the SU, but only those who are under the sway of capitalist ideology or its material perquisites would have been hasty to draw this conclusion at that

time.” It resolved “to note and draw conclusions from the position that the degenerated workers state of Stalin and his heirs has been destroyed.”

In the founding program of the Fourth International, written on the eve of World War II, Leon Trotsky wrote: “The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.” This crisis of proletarian leadership is no less acute today. To the beleaguered multinational proletariat in the ex-USSR and socialist-minded elements in the army and intelligentsia, we say: the key task facing you is to cohere



Der Spiegel

**Bloody ethnic conflicts fueled by advancing counterrevolution. Above: Burial of an Armenian worker massacred in Yerevan.**

a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, forged in struggle around the internationalist program which led your forebears to victory in 1917.

### Why Didn't the Workers Rise Up?

The working class of the ex-USSR and the world proletariat as a whole must digest the lessons of this bitter defeat. Since 1917, the social democracy has served its bourgeois masters by directly aiding and abetting imperialist revanchism in seeking to destroy the conquests of October. Since rising to power over the backs of the Soviet working class through a political counterrevolution in 1923-24, the Stalinist bureaucracy imposed a suffocating isolation on the first workers state, suppressing one international revolutionary opportunity after another. In the name of building “socialism in one country,” the Stalinists—through terror and lies—methodically attacked and eroded every aspect of the revolutionary and internationalist consciousness which had made the Soviet working class the vanguard detachment of the world proletariat.

The isolated workers state was subjected to the unrelenting pressures of

imperialism, not only military encirclement and an arms buildup aimed at bankrupting the Soviet economy, but also the pressure of the imperialist world market. As Trotsky wrote in *The Third International After Lenin*: “it is not so much military intervention as the intervention of cheaper capitalist commodities that constitutes perhaps the greatest immediate menace to Soviet economy.” Although the planned economy proved its superiority over capitalist anarchy during its period of extensive growth, as the need for quality and intensive development came to the fore the bureaucratic

stranglehold more and more undermined the economy. Finally, through his perestroika “market reforms” and acquiescence to capitalist restoration throughout East Europe, Gorbachev opened wide the floodgates to a direct counterrevolutionary onslaught by Yeltsin & Co.

The bourgeoisie and the Stalinists alike have long sought to identify Lenin's October with Stalin's conservative bureaucratic rule. But nationalist Stalinism is the antithesis of Leninist internationalism. The Soviet degenerated workers state (and the deformed workers states which later arose on the Stalinist model) was a historic anomaly, resulting from the isolation of economically backward Russia and the failure of proletarian revolution to spread to the advanced imperialist countries. Stalinism represented a roadblock to progress toward socialism. As Trotsky wrote in “Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?” (November 1937):

“That which was a ‘bureaucratic deformation’ is at the present moment preparing to devour the workers' state, without leaving any remains, and on the ruins of nationalized property to spawn a new propertied class. Such a possibility has drawn extremely near.”

While the Stalinist regime was able to



May 1991:  
German and  
Polish comrades  
of the ICL  
address 300  
Soviet officers  
and soldiers  
commemorating  
Red Army victory  
over Nazi Third  
Reich, at air base  
in East Germany.



prolong its existence as a result of the heroic victory of the Soviet masses over the Nazi invasion in World War II, Trotsky's Marxist analysis has ultimately, unfortunately, been vindicated in the negative.

Why did the Soviet working class not rally to defend its gains? How did the counterrevolution triumph and destroy the workers state without a civil war? In his seminal 1933 work laying out the perspective of proletarian political revolution, Trotsky polemicized against social democrats and proponents of various "new class" theories who claimed that under Stalin's rule, the Soviet Union had imperceptibly changed from a workers to a bourgeois state without any qualitative transformation of either the state apparatus or the property forms:

"The Marxist thesis relating to the catastrophic character of the transfer of power from the hands of one class into the hands of another applies not only to revolutionary periods, when history sweeps madly ahead, but also to the periods of counterrevolution, when society rolls backwards. He who asserts that the Soviet government has been *gradually* changed from proletarian to bourgeois is only, so to speak, running backwards the film of reformism."

—"The Class Nature of the Soviet State" (October 1933)

There was certainly nothing gradual or

imperceptible about the social counterrevolution in the ex-USSR, which has been extremely violent and convulsive throughout the former Soviet bloc. However, Trotsky also advanced the *prognosis* that a civil war would be required to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union and undo the deepgoing proletarian revolution.

In a wide-ranging discussion in the ICL two years ago on the counterrevolutionary overturns in East Europe and the DDR (East Germany), it was noted that Trotsky had overdrawn the analogy between a social revolution in capitalist society and social counterrevolution in a deformed workers state (see Joseph Seymour, "On the Collapse of Stalinist Rule in East Europe," and Albert St. John, "For Marxist Clarity and a Forward Perspective," *Spartacist* No. 45-46, Winter 1990-91). Where the capitalists exercise direct ownership over the means of production, and thus are compelled to violently resist the overthrow of their system in order to defend their own property, the preservation of proletarian power depends principally on *consciousness* and *organization* of the working class.

Trotsky himself emphasized this point in his 1928 article "What Now?":

"The socialist character of our state industry...is determined and secured in

a decisive measure by the role of the party, the voluntary internal cohesion of the proletarian vanguard, the conscious discipline of the administrators, trade union functionaries, members of the shop nuclei, etc."

—*The Third International After Lenin*

And again, in "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism" (February 1935), he stated: "*In contradistinction to capitalism, socialism is built not automatically but consciously.*"

When Trotsky wrote these articles, the memory of the October Revolution was still a part of the direct personal experience of the overwhelming mass of the Soviet proletariat, albeit already considerably warped by Stalinist falsification and revision. In the intervening decades, the nationalist bureaucracy did much to extirpate any real understanding of what came to be iconized as the "Great October Socialist Revolution." In Soviet mass consciousness, World War II, dubbed by the Stalinists the "Great Patriotic War" and suffused with the Russian-nationalist propaganda Stalin churned out during the war, came to supplant the October Revolution as the epochal event in Soviet history. In the end, Stalin and his heirs succeeded in imprinting their nationalist outlook on the Soviet peoples; proletarian internationalism came to be sneered at as an obscure "Trotskyite heresy" of "export of revolution" or, at best, emptied of any content while paid cynical lip service.

With Gorbachev's "new thinking"—i.e., his cringing capitulation to each and every imperialist ultimatum—even lip service to the ideals of the Bolshevik Revolution went by the boards. The Soviet soldiers who had been told, and believed, that they were fulfilling their "internationalist duty" in fighting against the reactionary Afghan mujahedin on the USSR's border, were then maligned for perpetrating "Russia's Vietnam" against Afghanistan. Gorbachev's ignominious pullout from Afghanistan and his green light to the imperialist annexation of the DDR served only to further a sense of defeatism and demoralization among the Soviet masses, while the so-called Stalinist "patriots" who denounced Gorbachev's concessions did so only to beat the drums for Great Russian imperial ambitions, explicitly harking back to the time of the tsars.

Even so, the spontaneous strikes which erupted in the Soviet coal fields in the summer of 1989 against the ravages of Gorbachev's "market socialism" dramatically demonstrated the potential for militant working-class struggle. As Russian social democrat Boris Kagarlit-

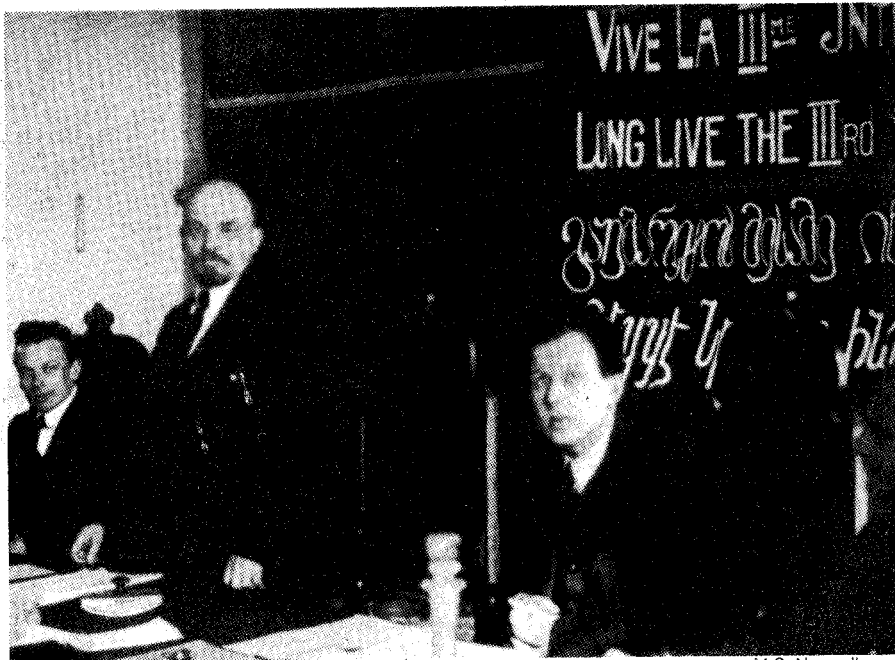


sky documents in his book *Farewell Perestroika* (1990), the strike committees in many areas became "the actual centre of popular power," organizing food distribution, maintaining order, etc. As we pointed out at the time, the Kuzbass strikes "have quickly generated organizational forms of proletarian power, including strike committees and workers militias" ("Soviet Workers Flex Their Muscle," WV No. 482, 21 July 1989).

These developments pointed to the possibility of authentic soviets, which—by drawing in collective farmers, women, pensioners, soldiers and officers—could have served as the basis for a new proletarian political power, ousting the bureaucracy through a political revolution. But when the Gorbachev regime reneged on its promises to the miners, pro-imperialist agitators trained by the "AFL-CIA" moved into the vacuum of leadership and set up the Independent Miners Union, organizing an activist minority of the miners as a battering ram for Yeltsin.

However, a majority of the miners as well as the rest of the Soviet working class remained passive in the three-sided contest between the Yeltsin-led "democrats," Gorbachev and the more conservative wing of the Stalinists. The mass of workers were wary, if not outright hostile, to the pro-Western advocates of a "market economy." Unlike in Poland during the rise of Solidarność, the forces of capitalist counterrevolution were not able to mobilize the Soviet masses in the name of anti-Communism.

At the same time, the bureaucratic elite (the so-called nomenklatura) was



M.S. Nappelbaum

**Lenin at First Congress of the Communist International, March 1919.**

totally discredited by the flagrant corruption and cynicism of the Brezhnev era. Occasional appeals to defend "socialism" made by the more conservative elements of the Gorbachev regime, such as Yegor Ligachev, fell on deaf ears. The Stalinist "patriots," organized for example in the United Front of Toilers (OFT), were able to mobilize only a relatively small number of worker activists.

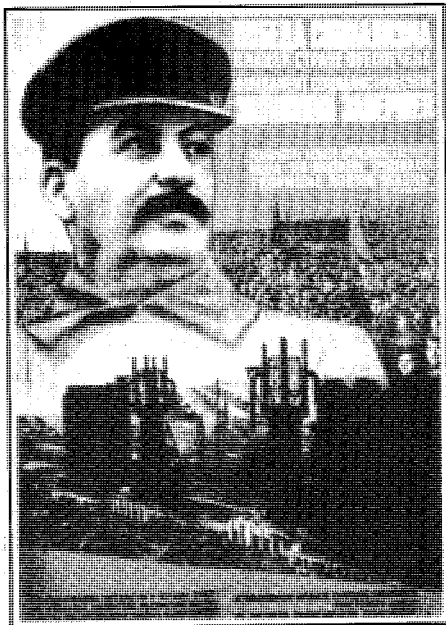
Atomized and bereft of any anti-capitalist leadership, lacking any coherent and consistent socialist class consciousness, skeptical about the possibility of class struggle in the capitalist

countries, the Soviet working class did not rally in resistance against the encroaching capitalist counterrevolution. And, as Trotsky noted in *The Third International After Lenin*: "If an army capitulates to the enemy in a critical situation without a battle, then this capitulation completely takes the place of a 'decisive battle,' in politics as in war."

### **The Army and the Bureaucracy**

What then happened to the armed forces, the core of the state in the Marxist understanding? In *The State and Revolution* (1917), written against the reformist view that the working class could simply appropriate the bourgeois state for its own purposes, Lenin emphasized: "Revolution consists not in the new class commanding, governing with the aid of the old state machine, but in this class *smashing* this machine and commanding, governing with the aid of a new machine." Similarly, social counterrevolution requires the smashing of the proletarian state and the creation of a new state machine serving the bourgeoisie. This task was vastly facilitated by the Stalinist political counterrevolution, which effected a qualitative degeneration in the workers state issuing out of the October Revolution.

At the base, the Soviet military was affected by the same pressures and paralysis as the rest of society. The upper strata of the military command, on the other hand, were a component of the Soviet bureaucracy. Trotsky explained that the bureaucracy was a brittle, contradictory caste whose role was that of an



**Stalinist myths: Poster proclaims that "Victory of Socialism in Our Country Is Guaranteed." Leonid Brezhnev and Henry Kissinger celebrate "détente."**



**Gorbachev's treacherous withdrawal from Afghanistan emboldened U.S. imperialism and demoralized Soviet masses.**

intermediary between the workers state and hostile imperialist encirclement. This contradictory position generated within the bureaucracy a range of contradictory political impulses: "all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko)" (Transitional Program). Reiss was a leading cadre of the Soviet intelligence service who declared for the Fourth International and was murdered by Stalin in 1937; Butenko was a Soviet diplomat who defected to Mussolini's fascist Italy.

The dual character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the conflicting political appetites it harbored, remained even after the bloody purges of the 1930s exterminated any remnant of the Bolshevik "Old Guard." But while resting on and deriving its privileges from proletarian property forms, the Stalinist bureaucracy was not irrevocably committed to their defense. It could play no independent role in society. Under the impact of any sharp frontal assault, either from the revolutionary proletariat or the counterrevolution, the bureaucracy would shatter. As Trotsky wrote:

"When the proletariat springs into action, the Stalinist apparatus will remain suspended in midair. Should it still attempt to resist, it will then be necessary to apply against it not the measures of civil war, but rather the measures of a police character....

"A real civil war could develop not between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the resurgent proletariat but between the proletariat and the active forces of the counterrevolution. In the event of an open clash between the two mass camps, there cannot even be talk of the bureaucracy playing an independent

role. Its polar flanks would be flung to the different sides of the barricade."

—"The Class Nature of the Soviet State"

In the case of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the bulk of the bureaucratic stratum went over to the side of the insurgent pro-socialist proletariat. In contrast, more recently in the Soviet Union, the steady pressure of conciliation to imperialism and internal market forces pushed ever-greater sections of the bureaucracy into the camp of capitalist restoration, for whom Yeltsin early on became the chief spokesman.

The utter incapacity of the bureaucracy to play any independent role was forcefully demonstrated in the events of August 1991. Behind the seeming incompetence of the "Emergency Committee" (made up of Gorbachev's chief lieutenants)—its failure to arrest Yeltsin or even to cut off his direct line to Washington—lay the fact that these stodgy bureaucrats had no alternative to the program of restoration and their refusal to in any way antagonize the imperialist powers. Had the workers sprung into action, mobilizing to clear out the despised profit-gouging "cooperativists," speculators and rube millionaires who manned Yeltsin's barricades, this would have indeed directly posed a civil war between the proletariat and the active forces of counterrevolution, and marked the beginning of a *proletarian political revolution*. Fearing proletarian mobilization far more than counterrevolution, not a single element of the so-called "hardline" Stalinist "patriot" opposition to Gorbachev/Yeltsin tried to organize resistance to the Yeltsinist forces, hiding instead behind the

impotent proclamations of the coup committee.

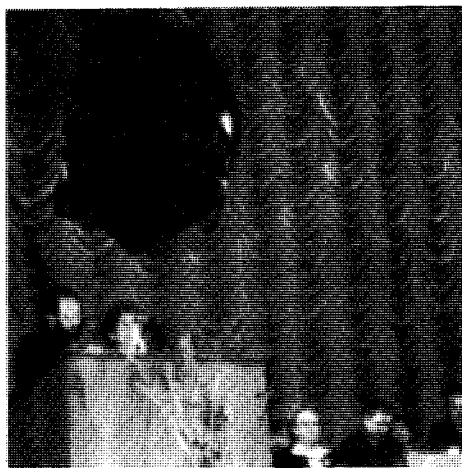
Having seized the reins of power, the Yeltsin regime immediately moved to reorganize the top echelons of the military, putting in a layer of younger officers who were marked either by subservience to Yeltsin (e.g., Shaposhnikov) or by strident Russian nationalism, while seeking to buy off broader layers of the officer corps with salary increases. At the same time, there was a self-purge, as numbers of pro-socialist officers left the army in disgust over the anti-Communist ban. In any case, as Trotsky remarked in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937): "a bourgeois restoration would probably have to clean out fewer people [from the state apparatus] than a revolutionary party."

The juridical dissolution of the USSR in December 1991 left the all-Union armed forces—nominally under the command of the stillborn "Commonwealth of Independent States"—suspended in midair, a "sixteenth republic," as some dubbed it. An officers conference in the Kremlin the following month registered overwhelming sentiment for maintaining the military as a multinational institution. But, as we warned at the time, "to preserve the multinational Soviet state and army requires salvaging the socialized property upon which it was created." Had the working class moved, sections of the military would undoubtedly have gone over to its side. Instead the centrifugal forces set into play by Yeltsin's counter coup and formalized by the December 1991 decree moved to tear the military apart and eliminate what remained of the workers state. Nationalism, as in the chauvinist drum-beating over Moldova, has been a driving force in cohering an armed force loyal to the new capitalist order.

The use of Russian OMON forces to break up an anti-Yeltsin protest in February marked the emergence of a repressive apparatus loyal to the new regime. With the Ukraine and other republics creating separate armies and demanding loyalty oaths from Soviet troops stationed on their territory, in May Yeltsin decreed the formation of a distinct Russian Army, appointing the relatively young general Grachev, a strident Russian nationalist who proclaimed his allegiance to Yeltsin during the coup, as the new Russian defense minister. An article in the CIA's "Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty" *RFE/RL Research Report* (21 August) observed:

"In many important respects, the appointment of General of the Army Pavel Grachev to the post of Russian

**Spartacists fought to defend October Revolution: our comrade Martha Phillips addressing delegates at July 1991 Moscow Workers Conference, and (at far right) protesting against closing of Lenin museum.**



Spartacist photos

defense minister on 18 May 1992 marked the beginning of the post-Soviet period in the security sphere, much as the creation of the CIS in December 1991 had marked the end of the Soviet period in the political sphere."

Navy Day, on July 26, was marked by the hoisting of the old tsarist naval emblem, the St. Andrew's Cross, throughout the fleets, while Navy chief Admiral Chernavin proclaimed: "The Russian fleet must retrieve its flag, not because Soviet sailors were ashamed of the old flag but because it no longer corresponds to the spirit of the Russian navy" (*Independent* [London], 27 July). The flying of the tsarist banner over the Kronstadt naval garrison, a bastion of Bolshevism in the October Revolution, and atop the cruiser *Aurora*, whose fusillade against the Winter Palace signaled the victory of the Petrograd proletarian insurrection, aptly if grotesquely symbolized the dismantling of the Soviet workers state by the triumphant forces of counterrevolution.

Yeltsin and his counterparts in the other republics now have the beginnings of bourgeois armies. But the loyalty of these armed forces to capitalism has yet to be tested in blood. Noting that "the entire military could fragment along political or ethnic lines," one observer noted that "Russian leaders will be extremely wary of using the army to maintain domestic order" (Mark Kramer, "The Armies of the Post-Soviet States," *Current History*, October 1992).

### **Who Is Guilty for the Catastrophe?**

There was no lack of "Trotskyists" who took their stand on Yeltsin's barricades (in some cases, literally) and/or moved with shameless haste to declare

the Soviet Union dead and buried. Thus they finally disencumbered themselves of the albatross of (ever more formal and empty) defense of the Soviet Union, which the bourgeoisie has hated and sought to destroy since the October Revolution.

In his 1933 article, Trotsky warned of the "tragic possibility" that the Soviet workers state "will fall under the joint blows of its internal and external enemies":

"But in the event of this worst possible variant, a tremendous significance for the subsequent course of the revolutionary struggle will be borne by the question: *where* are those guilty for the catastrophe? Not the slightest taint of guilt must fall upon the revolutionary internationalists. In the hour of mortal danger, they must remain on the last barricade."

—"The Class Nature of the Soviet State"

And that is what the International Communist League has done. To the extent our limited forces permit, we have

fought to provide a revolutionary pole to win the Soviet working class to a program to reverse and defeat the counter-revolution. Our comrade Martha Phillips, murdered in Moscow last February, made the ultimate sacrifice in fighting for that cause.

Five years ago, when the first openly counterrevolutionary force—the anti-Semitic nativist fascists of Pamyat—reared its head in Moscow and Leningrad, we called for proletarian-centered mass mobilizations to crush these latter-day Black Hundreds in the egg. When, in August 1990, Gorbachev endorsed a plan for full-fledged capitalist restoration drawn up by Yeltsin, our first Russian-language leaflet raised the call "Soviet Workers: Smash Yeltsin/Gorbachev 500-Day Plan!" (WV No. 510, 21 September 1990). That November, at the Revolution Day commemoration in Leningrad, the banner of the Fourth International was openly unfurled for the first time in the Soviet Union.

**Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev signs treaty with German chancellor Helmut Kohl in November 1990, accepting capitalist reunification of Germany.**



Despite our meager resources and limited Russian-language capacity, we sought to intervene directly in the turbulent situation which opened up after Gorbachev took over. Following the dramatic coal miners strikes in the summer of 1989, we sought to get our Trotskyist propaganda into the hands of these combative workers, whose struggle had electrified the Soviet working class and shaken the Stalinist bureaucracy. ICL representatives intervened in a miners conference in Donetsk in October 1990, where they succeeded in temporarily spiking a CIA-orchestrated effort to enlist Soviet workers in a redbaiting witchhunt against British miners leader Arthur Scargill.

During the 1989-90 upheaval in the DDR, as part of the ICL's struggle to effect a *proletarian* political revolution in East Germany, we issued Russian-language propaganda addressed to and widely disseminated among Soviet troops stationed there, and later spoke to assemblies of Soviet officers and soldiers. In 1991, on the anniversary of the Red Army's victory over Nazi Germany, the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany and the Spartakusowska Grupa Polski held a joint forum for several hundred Soviet military personnel at an air base outside Berlin (see WV No. 526, 10 May 1991). Then, a month before Yeltsin's counter coup, ICL representative Martha Phillips addressed the Moscow Workers Conference, calling for the formation of genuine soviets to stop capitalist counterrevolution, for opposition to all forms of chauvinist reaction, and for international socialist revolution.

Our August 1991 call, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!", was the first statement widely distributed throughout the Soviet Union in opposition to Yeltsin's restorationist drive. We advanced a program for independent working-class struggle against capitalist restoration and for genuine soviets as organs of a new proletarian political power:

*"Independent workers committees must be formed in factories, mines, railroad yards and other enterprises to prevent layoffs and privatization by taking over the plants and controlling production.... Committees of soldiers and officers must be formed to oppose the purges and prevent the army from being used to attack the workers' interests.... Workers militias must be formed...to defend against and crush the lynch mobs and pogromists.... In this hour of dire need more than ever, the key to successful defense of the Soviet proletariat is the forging of a new, authentically communist vanguard party of the working class. Return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky!"*

We sharply opposed resurgent anti-Semitism and Great Russian chauvinism and warned that women have the most to lose under capitalist restoration.

Following Yeltsin's unleashing of the OMON and Moscow militia (police) against protesters in February 1992, we issued an urgent statement: "White Tsar Boris Wants a New Bloody Sunday." With the threat of widespread hunger posed by draconian price increases on food and other necessities, we raised a fighting program:

*"Through their own independent committees, composed of delegates elected by the enterprises, the working people must take control of food supplies and oversee distribution. What is needed once again is to form authentic soviets, not talk shops like the fake soviets and impotent parliaments of today, but organs for struggle composed of deputies elected by and recallable to the workplace and barracks. Formed into powerful soviets—internationalist, egalitarian, revolutionary—the working people will be able to sweep away the shaky regimes of the capitalist-restorationists with a flick of the finger. No new tsars—away with Yeltsin—for a republic of the working people!"*

These demands retain their full force today, though the consolidation of a bourgeois state poses the struggle not for political revolution but for *socialist* revolution to sweep away the nascent capitalist class.

Who is guilty for the catastrophe? First and foremost it is the Stalinists who bear responsibility. Beginning with the political counterrevolution led by Stalin in 1923-24, the state apparatus was, as Trotsky wrote, "transformed from a weapon of the working class into a weapon of bureaucratic violence against the working class, and more and more a weapon for the sabotage of the country's economy" (Transitional Program). By the later Brezhnev years, bureaucratic mismanagement of the planned, centralized economy had resulted in a sharp decline in Soviet economic growth, while rampant corruption fueled the appetites of the pampered children of the bureaucracy to live like Western capitalists. Given its mortal dread of workers democracy which would abolish their privileged positions, the only option the bureaucracy saw for intensive economic growth was to experiment with a neo-Bukharinite program of market-oriented "reforms"—Gorbachev's perestroika.

While the August 1991 "Emergency Committee" offered nothing but "perestroika without glasnost," today Stalinist leftovers like Viktor Anpilov's RKRP, Kryuchkov's RPK, Prigarin's SK and Nina Andreyeva's VKPB et al., who today posture as an opposition to Yeltsin, offer nothing but a "red" cover for



Red Army's International Iron Battalion honors German Spartakists Luxemburg and Liebknecht after their murder in January 1919. Proletarian internationalism was the cornerstone of the Soviet Union under Lenin and Trotsky.

TASS

capitalist counterrevolution. They have made no attempt to mobilize *class struggle*, not only because their chauvinist politics make them incapable of appealing to the still multinational proletariat, but because they are *opposed* to any struggle which would disrupt capitalist class "peace." This was explicitly stated in the March 1992 "Declaration on the Founding of the United Opposition," signed by all the Stalinist left-overs as well as Medvedev and Denisov's SPT—formalizing the repulsive "red-brown" coalition with Great Russian chauvinists, monarchists and out-

right fascists—which called for "salvation of the Fatherland...on the basis of civil peace and national trust." Thus all these groups *opposed* the recent air traffic controllers strike.

With their call for privatization through the "work collectives," the Stalinist has-beens seek to be the "left" flank of the counterrevolution's corporatist wing, whose most powerful representative is the Volsky-Rutskoi Civic Union bloc. Aligned with them is the former official trade-union bureaucracy, now calling itself the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia

(FNPR). Where Yeltsin's prime minister Gaidar grovels to the West for infusions of capital and promotes a fantastical scheme for privatization through distribution of shareholding vouchers to the entire population, the Volsky/Rutskoi faction hopes to maintain a strong military-industrial sector by placing ownership directly in the hands of the former managers.

In the name of building the *derzhava*, the tsarist watchword for a Russian strong state, the RKR & Co. have willingly submerged themselves in every reactionary lash-up, from the

## Soviet ICL Supporter on Demise of USSR

# "Destruction of Workers' Consciousness Was Key"

*We publish below a translation of the remarks at the Second International Conference of the International Communist League by comrade Volodya K.*

I think the key reason for the destruction of the Soviet workers state has been the destruction of the consciousness of the proletariat, a process that began with Stalin's liquidation of Leon Trotsky's Left Opposition, which represented the consciousness of the working class. The tragedy is that the breakdown of Stalinist control was exploited not by the working class for its own end, but by the bourgeoisie for its own purposes, purposes for which they actually today have precious little support.

In August 1991 we saw some decisive events. The question was posed: whether the bourgeoisie, or perhaps more accurately, whether parts of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which received a death blow, would go forward to consolidate a bourgeois state, or whether the working class would step in for its own. In that moment the working class could have used the opportunity to take the power, but instead the "red-brown" coalition formed an obstacle to that; the "red-brown" coalition, which in no way is opposed to counterrevolution, but instead is against the liberalization of Stalinist rule.

In this situation, as Trotsky predicted, no section of the bureaucracy was capable of opposing the restoration of capitalism. Instead, they simply maneuvered to be able to occupy the best place within the restoration of capitalism. It's very

important to acknowledge that a bourgeois state has been established in the Soviet Union. But it's also important to realize that this is far from stable, it's very weak. This represents a transitional moment, but a transition to what?

Today there is massive opposition to the post-countercoup period. The immiseration and the impoverishment of the population evokes the sharpest hatred toward Yeltsin, but there is no left opposition to guide this. The opposition that does exist today only stands for a strong state. They share the idea that communism is an impossible utopia. They are orienting for a strong state, a strong state based on capitalism.

But as the Yeltsin regime is incapable of introducing stable capitalism, the bourgeoisie is very weak. Weak, because it's without capital backing. The only way that strong capitalism can be established is through nationalism and vicious anti-working-class repression, as we have just seen in connection with the air traffic controllers. The creation of this National Salvation Front that the comrades know about—should that Front come to power, that would represent another decisive blow against the working class.

All these Stalinists who think that it's they who are manipulating the nationalists, the so-called "patriots," in a temporary bloc, a bloc by which they can simply turn the clock back to before perestroika, are deluding themselves. In fact what they are doing is paving the way for the establishment of a corporate

and fascistic dictatorship. It's a very dangerous illusion to delude oneself into thinking that there are forces now in the territory of the former Soviet Union capable of fighting against this counterrevolution. In fact, all of these coalitions delude themselves with the fact that after the National Salvation Front comes to power, then they can resurrect their own power. It repeats the bragging of the German CP in 1933, who said, "After Hitler, us." It's a suicidal policy.

What is the real perspective that we see before us? Concretely, we have a task—to coalesce the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party. This means a battle against the capitalists, the existing bourgeois government. This means a socialist revolution. Otherwise, if we fail in this, there will be consolidated a bourgeois corporatist state. The key thing is to explain to the working class that this policy of supporting the "national patriots" as a temporary tactic is suicidal. Once these "national patriots" come to power, the working class will get nothing, will get shit from these people. If we don't succeed in our propaganda in this, then this is what the working class will receive.

Now just a few words about timing. I believe that prior to the unification of Germany, in the Soviet Union there was a possibility for ICL intervention, at the time when the debates and discussions were about the true heroes of the Soviet Union and of the October Revolution, and not today's idiocy about how all is swell in the West. ■







**Spartakists initiated January 1990 demonstration of 250,000 in Treptow Park, East Berlin protesting Nazi desecration of Red Army monument. Spartakist Workers Party poster in March 1990 East German elections: "No to Capitalist Reunification!"**

## Wählt SPARTAKIST

### Nein zur kapitalistischen Wiedervereinigung!

- Für Frieden und Friedensverträge: Stoppe die kapitalistische Überproduktion, um den Weltfrieden zu sichern! Gegen die imperialistische Überwachungsarmee: Keine Nato- und Sowjetarmee, um unsere kolonialen Märkte zu verteidigen!
- Kämpft den D-Mark-Angriff! Für das Recht auf Arbeit: In der Vereinigte Staaten besitzen Arbeiter\*innen mehr Macht auf den kapitalistischen Schandtag eines Jahres: Märzrevolution, die alle anderen Revolutionen überlebt!
- Für eine internationale Finanzmacht: Keine des internationalen, des internationalen der internationalen politischen Macht!
- Für proletarisches Internationalismus:
- Für Arbeiterrechtstreue: Keine, um die Feindstaaten zu zwingen: Keine mit Sozialismus, Imperialismus, Faschismus gegenüber völkerverhetzung und Antisemitismus!
- Keine antikapitalistische Revolution gegen imperialistische oder imperialistische SED-Mitglieder!
- Keine Sozialistische Revolution für alle Ausbeuteten!
- Keine Revolution für die Arbeiter!
- Keine der internationalen Revolution der Zukunft!
- Keine für die Arbeiter!
- Für einen internationalen Internationalismus!
- Für einen internationalen Internationalismus!
- Für einen internationalen Internationalismus!

**Wählt die drei „J“: Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg!**  
**Wählt die Spartakist-Partei Deutschlands!**  
 Wir kämpfen für die Verteidigung der DDR, die zu einem roten Deutschland in einem sozialistischen Europa führt!

**Für ein Arbeiter\*innen-Deutschland!**  
**Spartakist-Partei Deutschlands**

Spartakist: Kreschauerhaus Treptow, Puschkinstr. 5, Berlin 1093, 1. Stock, Raum 19

moralism. In contrast, Trotsky's dialectical and materialist analysis of the Soviet degenerated workers state, elaborated in *The Revolution Betrayed* and other writings, has stood the test of time and provides a program for action for the proletariat. Basing ourselves on this Marxist understanding, we pointed to the contradictory character of the initial Gorbachev reforms: "Gorbachev's *perestroika* not only goes against the immediate material interests of most workers but also affronts their deep reservoir of collective feeling. At the same time, the regime's call for *glasnost* permits a degree of organized dissent against official policies" (Spartacist League/U.S. conference document, "Toward Revolutionary Conjunction," June 1987).

For the first couple of years, Gorbachev's neo-Bukharinite reforms had some effect in reviving the Soviet economy. Harvard economist Marshall Goldman, in his book *What Went Wrong with Perestroika* (1991), notes of Gorbachev's 1985-86 program of "intensification" and "acceleration" that "initially these reforms seemed to be working" and "industrial growth seemed to rebound." He even achieved the largest grain harvest in Soviet history (240 million tons in 1990). But the subsequent introduction of enterprise self-management on New Year's 1988 proved to be the decisive step finally leading to collapse. The abandonment of planning in a planned economy led to a breakdown in economic administration and widespread shortages and looting. The result, Goldman writes, was "the undermining of the planning system and the collapse of the economy." As perestroika reforms failed,

in August 1990, Gorbachev openly declared his support to capitalist restoration by endorsing the "500-Day Plan," only to back away from it later in his constant zigzagging.

Gorbachev's evolution from "market socialism" reforms to a program of outright capitalist restoration proved yet again the impossibility of "reforming" the Stalinist regime, a conception advanced by the likes of Ernest Mandel in his book *Beyond Perestroika* (1989). Whatever their quibbling differences, support for Yeltsin counterrevolution brought together all of these revisionists, from Cliff to North to Mandel—as well as the Militant group in Britain (formerly led by Ted Grant), associated with Sergei Beits' Rabochiya Demokratiya (Workers Democracy) in Russia. The bottom line for all of these outfits has been capitulation to social-democratic anti-Sovietism, just as a decade ago they were all united in their cheering for counterrevolutionary Solidarność in Poland and their denunciations of the Red Army intervention into Afghanistan.

In contrast, the Spartacist tendency proclaimed "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and declared "Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!" in Poland. In response to Gorbachev's 1989 pullout from Afghanistan in order to appease Washington, we warned it is far better to fight imperialism there than within the borders of the Soviet Union. But the Gorbachev regime didn't want to fight imperialism anywhere. "The decision to leave Afghanistan was the first and most difficult step," remarked Gorbachev's foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze

recently, "Everything else flowed from that." A year after the Afghanistan withdrawal, Gorbachev gave the green light to capitalist reunification of Germany.

The ICL was unique in its unambiguous and forthright opposition to imperialist annexation of the DDR: the power of the Trotskyist program to show the way out of the collapse of Stalinism found a massive expression in the 250,000-strong anti-fascist, pro-Soviet demonstration on 3 January 1990 at Berlin's Treptow Park, which was initiated by the German Spartakists. The Stalinists, for their part, thought they could have counterrevolution in one country. But the sellout of the DDR directly prepared the destruction of the Soviet Union.

## Reforge the Fourth International!

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing sharpening of interimperialist rivalries have made the world a far more dangerous place. The "New World Disorder"—proclaimed during the U.S.-led imperialist slaughter in the Persian Gulf, to which Gorbachev gave his approval—has the hallmarks of the old world order which led to the slaughterhouse of World War I, but this time posing the threat of a nuclear conflagration. Imperialist unity, maintained for decades by the "Communist menace," has broken down as the contending powers fall upon each other, and vie to carve up the former Soviet bloc into neocolonies.

At the same time, there is opening up a new period of intensified class struggle. The semicolonial peoples of the

world, now that the imperialist powers do not feel constrained by a Soviet counterweight, are being subjected to outright starvation. In the imperialist West, growing trade war and exploitation have already led to major class battles in Germany, Italy and Greece. The multi-racial upheaval in Los Angeles following the verdict freeing the racist cops in the Rodney King beating testifies to the social instability in the United States. In East Europe and the ex-USSR, the working class will soon recover from the numbing experience of counterrevolution and begin to fight against the ravages of capitalist exploitation. Poland already has been swept by one major strike after another over the past year.

The workers of Russia, the Ukraine and the other former Soviet republics still have time to regroup and strike back before anything approaching a viable system of capitalist exploitation is congealed. Hatred and bitterness toward Yeltsin and his ilk are seething. Unlike in the ex-DDR, where masses of working people bought the lie that D-mark *Anschluss* (annexation) would bring prosperity, in the former USSR there are few such positive illusions. There is, however, a widespread view that there is no alternative to the "market," for which the bankrupt Stalinists bear the main responsibility.

The road to recreating a full-fledged capitalism is not as smooth as the Nevsky Prospekt. To free itself of its would-be exploiters and oppressors, the working class must also assert itself as a "tribune of the people," opposing every manifestation of anti-Semitism and anti-woman and anti-homosexual

bigotry, rising to the defense of all those—including African and Asian students, and the Central Asian peoples in Russia—who are increasingly exposed to violent racist terror. What is required above all is a revolutionary leadership capable of overcoming the divisions inspired by chauvinism and nationalism, clearing away the decades of false consciousness fostered by Stalinism, and linking the struggles in the ex-USSR to that of the world proletariat.

While social democrats squeal that "Soviet Communism" discredited socialism in the eyes of the masses, an even greater crime of Stalinism was the way it warped the consciousness of *pro-socialist* workers, filling their heads with anti-Marxist illusions such as "building socialism in one country," the "popular front" and the utopia of "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism. "Socialism in one country" meant not only the suppression of revolutionary struggle abroad, but the isolation of the Soviet working class from any connection with the international class struggle. For more than 60 years, Soviet workers were submerged in a cocoon walling them off from political developments around the world. In the course of fighting to reverse the counterrevolution which has plunged it into poverty and misery, the Soviet working class will necessarily have to reappropriate the revolutionary heritage which has been taken from it.

The proletariat which made the October Revolution learned from Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks that it was part of an international struggle. It understood that its only prospect for survival lay in the extension of the revolution to more

advanced industrial powers, chiefly Germany. The opportunities were manifold, but the revolutionary parties outside Soviet Russia were too weak and politically immature to pursue them. The German Spartakist uprising of 1918-19 and the 1919 Hungarian Commune went down to bloody defeat. The possibility of the Red Army marching to the aid of the German workers in 1920 by unleashing proletarian revolution in Pilsudski's Poland was foiled. Finally, with the defeat of the German October in 1923, the Soviet proletariat succumbed to the demoralizing prospect of a lengthy period of isolation, which allowed the bureaucratic layer headed by Stalin to usurp political power. Thus was the revolution betrayed.

But this betrayal did not go unchallenged. The Left Opposition of Leon Trotsky continued the struggle for the authentic program of Leninism. In its struggle to defend and extend Soviet power, the Left Opposition urged a policy of planned industrialization to revive the enervated proletariat and enable the isolated workers state to hold out against imperialist encirclement. The Trotskyists fought uncompromisingly against the nascent bureaucracy's Great Russian chauvinism. They fought against the treacherous policies emanating from "socialism in one country," in the first instance the subversion of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 and the Anglo-Russian trade-union bloc which led to the knifing of the 1926 British General Strike. This led to the subordination of the German working class to Hitler's jackboot, to the outright suppression of the Spanish revolution in the late 1930s. By selling out revolutionary opportunities at the end of World War II, particularly in Italy, France and Greece, Stalinism enabled capitalism to survive, and thus prepared the way for its own ultimate demise.

With the utter liquidation of the Communist International as an instrument for world revolution, Trotsky organized the founding of the Fourth International in 1938. Today the International Communist League fights for the rebirth of the Fourth International, whose cadre were decimated by Stalinist and Hitlerite terror and which finally succumbed in the early 1950s to an internal revisionist challenge which denied the need for an independent revolutionary leadership. Only as part of the struggle to reforge an authentic world party of socialist revolution can the workers of the former Soviet Union cohere the leadership they need to sweep away the grotesque horrors they now confront. ■

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# Russia's New Exploiters

The American press has painted the standoff between Russian president Yeltsin and the Russian Congress as a battle between capitalist "free marketeers" and recalcitrant "Communists." In fact, both the Yeltsinites and their opponents denounce each other for "Bolshevism." Yeltsin press secretary Vyacheslav Kostikov railed that the Congress' decisions in early March signaled a "slide back to Soviet communist power," while parliamentary leader Ruslan Khasbulatov attacks Yeltsin's "pathological" desire to eliminate the parliament as a "genetic link with Bolshevism." More importantly, both sides are for a capitalist market economy, which means utter impoverishment for the working people of the former Soviet Union.

The restoration of capitalist rule has put the very existence of the Soviet proletariat at stake. If the Yeltsinites have their way, it will lead to a shutdown of vast sections of industry. Following dictates of the IMF, government plans call for privatizing over 5,000 medium and large-scale enterprises, employing seven million workers, in 1993 alone. Part of the purpose is to cut these plants off from state credits, which would mean that most would go under (unless they can get foreign financing). The industrial managers grouped around Arkady Volsky (allied with Russian vice president Aleksandr Rutskoi) denounce the Yeltsinites' plans for "Kuwaitization" of the economy, in which Russia would only produce raw materials like oil for export to the West.

The Volskyites demagogically appeal to workers' legitimate concern for their livelihoods. Marxists fight to defend the industrial base of the country, and thus oppose the wholesale "privatization"—meaning shutdown—of productive capacity. We are outraged at the tearing down of a modern industrial economy and military powerhouse built up through decades of sacrifice by the multinational Soviet working people. Despite the warping influence of Stalinist bureaucratic arbitrariness, in many areas Soviet technology and science—especially in basic research and military-related fields—is as good as or better than anything in the West. The MIG-29, for instance, is superior to the *planned* next-generation European fighter jet. Today major sci-

## Capitalism Without Capital



Marc Garanger

**Moscow stock exchange, where yuppie entrepreneurs dream of becoming junior partners of Wall Street, Frankfurt bankers and Japan Inc.**

tific institutions are being dismantled and sold off for a song to Western firms.

But the national—"patriotic" forces around Volsky/Rutskoi are no less committed to capitalist restoration than are the Yeltsinite "democrats." They too are subordinate to the laws of the capitalist world market, and they (along with the yuppie "entrepreneurs") are massively looting state property in cahoots with Western imperialists. *All* the contending factions derived from the disintegrated Stalinist bureaucracy are the *enemies* of the working people. The key to saving industry and the proletariat is a struggle for state power—socialist revolution to establish effective centralized planning in a reformed Soviet federation based on proletarian democracy and socialist internationalism.

### Yeltsin's "Shock Therapy": Third World Immiseration

What is behind the political crisis in Russia is not a struggle between socialism and capitalism, nor between democracy and totalitarianism, but the utter failure of Yeltsin's economic policies and, more broadly, the dilemma of a counterrevolutionary regime seeking to impose capitalism without capital. Acquiescing to Washington's diktat in

the futile hope of securing a massive infusion of Western aid and investment, the Yeltsinites imposed an economic "shock treatment" crafted by Harvard boy Jeffrey Sachs. Since Yeltsin's January 1992 decree "freeing" prices on basic commodities, the working masses have been plunged into unprecedented impoverishment.

Three months later, the government statistical agency reported that 90 percent of workers in Russia were earning below the then subsistence wage of 1,500 rubles a month. Per capita income in real terms at the start of 1993 was 43 percent of what it was two years ago, and even this figure disguises the Third World poverty facing millions of the most downtrodden. A handful of speculators have become overnight dollar millionaires (or ruble billionaires!), and certain sectors of the proletariat, like miners and transport workers, have been granted wage increases to keep up with the galloping inflation. But the average worker in Russia today receives two-thirds of the 6,000 rubles a month considered the bare survival minimum. Even *Time* magazine (22 March) concedes:

"Yeltsin and his team of shock therapists have been at the task since the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991,

producing few successes and much turmoil, hardship and anxiety."

Today Russian workers can survive only by also engaging in petty trade and deal-making or, if they have a *dacha* (house in the country), by growing food crops in their backyard. An engineer recently quit his job at a Moscow nuclear power station in order to protect the potato crop on his *dacha* from thieves! An 84-year-old pensioner stands on the freezing streets to sell a carton of milk or a pack of cigarettes at a markup to people who don't want to wait two hours on line. The official unemployment rate is 1.5 percent, but many workers are sent home on "forced vacation" on as little as one-fifth of their normal wage.

And the hardest hit have been women, who formerly made up 51 percent of the workforce. Yeltsin's labor minister Melikyan declaims, "I seriously don't think women should work while men are doing nothing." Many women are being driven into prostitution to support themselves and their children. ABC News' *Prime Time Live* (18 March) reported on a doctor in Moscow who became a prostitute because it was the only way to provide for her seven-year-old son.

Yeltsin's opponents point to the widespread devastation his policies have wrought on the entire Russian economy, warning that this level of immiseration could set off a social explosion that would sweep away the fledgling "market economy." Inflation has climbed to nearly 50 percent a month, with the price of a standard basket of goods having increased almost a *hundredfold* in the past two years. Production dropped by 24 percent last year alone. Yeltsin's scheme to privatize the entire economy in one quick fix by distributing 10,000-ruble shareholding vouchers to the population has been a scam from start to finish. In February, angry protesters blocked the streets of Leningrad to demand their money back from fly-by-night con artists who ripped off at least 350,000 vouchers by promising an instant return on their "investment."

While the Yeltsinites' social base is in the new "robber baron" entrepreneurial elite, the opposition—centered on the Civic Union bloc of "industrialist" Volisky and militarist vice president Rutskoi—draws its support from the country's factory managers. Appealing to the old "military-industrial complex," Volisky & Co. vow to maintain a strong Russian state and demand the continued flow of government subsidies to the country's key heavy industries.

Last summer Volisky, who heads the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs

**Old-age pensioner begging in Red Square.**



and was a former adviser to Gorbachev, declaimed that Yeltsin's "democrats have already shown they are unable to ensure a decent existence for the people 80 percent of whom today live below the poverty line" (Moscow *New Times*, July 1992). Vladimir Ovchinnikov, general director of the Aleksandrov Radio Factory, Russia's largest producer of TV sets, declared that "real power is in the hands of directors because the livelihoods of tens of millions of people depend on them, and their workers believe in them."

This was not mere demagoguery. Many fearful workers now look to the managers—most of them derived from the former *nomenklatura* (Stalinist bureaucratic elite)—to restore a semblance of the "good old days" under Brezhnev, when Soviet enterprises provided their workforce with low-rent housing, inexpensive meals in the factory cafeteria as well as meat to take home, summer vacations on the Black Sea, etc. As one woman who now makes 3,000 rubles a month as a cook in a children's hospital said, "We worked hard, and now we have nothing. With pleasure, I would go back to the old days" (*Washington Post*, 27 January).

But the factory managers are no less intent than Yeltsin's sycophants on being the new exploiters of Russia's proletariat in collaboration with international capital. Where the Volskyites differ with Yeltsin is in *how* to develop Russian capitalism. They look to Deng's China as a model, where the bureaucracy maintains firm political control and continues

to cultivate a strong heavy industry and military sector while gradually shifting vast chunks of the economy over to capitalism. But where China remains a deformed workers state, Russia has a (weak) capitalist state.

Volisky & Co. argue that, particularly in the absence of significant Western investment, it is necessary for the new state to directly oversee the development of a capitalist economy through a *corporatist* policy not dissimilar to that carried out by Mussolini in Italy in the 1920s and '30s. This policy was already advanced in the waning days of the Gorbachev era by "black colonel" Viktor Alksnis, who called for the introduction of capitalism through a Pinochet-style regime.

In *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), Trotsky noted: "Stalinism and fascism, in spite of a deep difference in social foundations, are symmetrical phenomena. In many of their features they show a deadly similarity." In effect, the corporatist wing of the counterrevolution seeks to resurrect Stalin's heavy-handed bonapartist regime on capitalist social foundations, maintaining a streamlined state sector as a motor force for a new capitalist economy.

No less than the Yeltsinites, the corporatists see the need to use the whip of repression to discipline the proletariat in order to facilitate the primitive accumulation of capital. To make Russian industrial goods cheap enough to compete on world markets, such a regime would



lay off millions of "redundant" workers, while those who remained on the assembly lines would be subjected to harsh speedup. The slashing of real wages brought about under the Yeltsin/Gaidar "shock treatment" would be maintained and likely intensified by police-state regimentation of the labor force. Trade unions would be permitted only as pliant tools of the corporatist state, and strikes would be suppressed as "unpatriotic." Notably, it was Rutskoi, Volsky's main political ally, who played hard cop in smashing the Russian air controllers strike last summer.

### Gorbachev's Perestroika: First Stage of Descent into Chaos

The Soviet economy was integrated on an all-Union basis and enterprises were designed to take maximum advantage of economies of scale. In some cases, to be sure, the Stalinist technocrats indulged in industrial gigantism for its own sake, going beyond the limits of economic rationality. But whether economically optimal or not, in many industries just a few factories supplied vital inputs for scores of enterprises from eastern Siberia to the Baltic republics. For example, 70 percent of all the different types of machine tools made in the USSR were produced in one enterprise and in no other.

Clearly, such a system could work only under centralized direction where a given enterprise was ordered to supply other enterprises at a set price. Otherwise managers could ruthlessly exploit their monopoly position, selling to the highest bidder while enterprises which could not afford to pay would have to cut back their output. That is exactly what happened when Gorbachev scrapped centralized planning in January 1988 and decreed that all Soviet enterprises were to become self-financing on the basis of *khozraschet* (cost accounting). Consumer goods managers cut back shipments to state shops, where prices were still fixed, diverting output to private "cooperatives" where mafia-like entrepreneurs practiced price extortion. Producers of industrial and intermediate goods likewise jacked up their prices.

By 1990-91, as inflation was eroding the value of the ruble, the industrial supply system degenerated into crude barter deals negotiated on the basis of economic blackmail. For example, the managers of the Sverdlovsk transformer factory refused to deliver transformers to the huge Uralmash engineering complex unless the latter provided them with a list of items including piping, scrap

metal, kitchen fittings, rest home passes and a telephone for the apartment of the doctor looking after the director's wife! Managers were no longer concerned about their enterprises' long-term development because they doubted whether they had a future themselves.

Growing nationalist disintegration added another element to the economic chaos, as factories dependent for parts and supplies upon warring republics like Armenia and Azerbaijan ground to a halt. National republics also imposed export restrictions on goods in short supply, especially if they could be sold on the world market for hard currency. Simultaneously, the new nationalist regimes, spearheaded by Yeltsin as president of the Russian republic, started refusing to turn over the central government's share of tax collections, causing the burgeoning inflation of the final Gorbachev period. *Less than 30 percent* of all taxes collected in the first nine months of 1991 went to the central government. To make up the shortfall of rubles, the Gorbachev regime ran the printing presses overtime.

In other words, Yeltsin *deliberately sabotaged* the Soviet economy and then exploited popular discontent over rising prices and shortages to push through the counterrevolution. By the summer of 1991, most working people were indifferent to the fate of the Gorbachev regime. Many believed *falsely* that things could not get worse. And some bought the line that only a rapid move to a full-fledged market system could restore the health of the economy.

### IMF Orders Surgery Without Anesthesia...

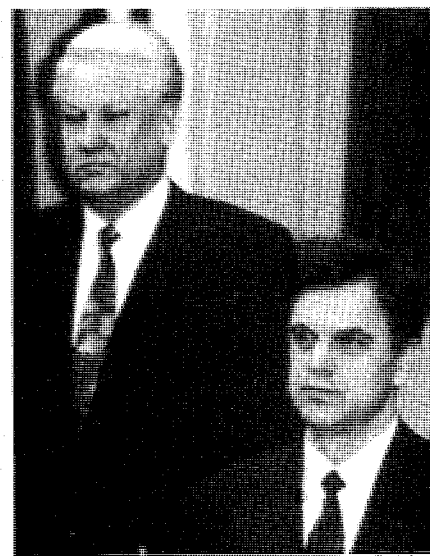
The collapse of the industrial supply system, which began under Gorbachev, was greatly accelerated with the breakup of the USSR formalized in December 1991. A month later, Yeltsin lifted controls on consumer prices, implementing the IMF "shock therapy" under his economic "expert," the obscure academic Yegor Gaidar. A year after Yeltsin seized power in the August 1991 countercoup:

- Industrial production in Russia had fallen 27 percent.
- Investment in plant and equipment had fallen 55 percent.
- Prices had increased 1,560 percent.
- Real wages had fallen 32 percent.

While working people are struggling to survive in an increasingly ugly and violent society, the new entrepreneurs flaunt their wealth: "Representatives of the New Class can be seen waving their gold cards in Western-style grocery stores, dining at hard currency restaurants, and driving around town in Mer-

cedes and BMWs" (*Washington Post*, 1 February).

The *New York Times* (2 August 1992) painted a glowing portrait of a typical new entrepreneur, Natalya Maloletneva, a manager of a Moscow clothing store who bought a controlling interest when the shop was privatized last spring. She claims she purchased her share for 60,000 rubles from personal "savings." The *Times'* glorification of Mrs. Maloletneva provoked a biting letter to the editor from an émigré Soviet academic, who pointed out that as a highly paid university professor he would have had



Der Spiegel  
**Would-be Tsar Boris with Ruslan Khasbulatov, speaker of Russian parliament, a former Yeltsinite.**

to save every last kopek of his salary for ten years to amass 60,000 rubles. Clearly Maloletneva was skimming off the profits of the enterprise she was entrusted to manage on behalf of the Soviet working people. No wonder Russia's new capitalists are known as the mafia.

But the new "biznez" barons and "brokeri" fear that the hatred of the masses will lead to a new regime that will confiscate their ill-gotten wealth. As a self-described "middleman" in Lenin-grad put it: "Everything we do is aimed at a quick profit. We buy, we sell, and we get out. Only a fool would invest his money in a long-term business in Russia" (*Washington Post*, 30 September 1992). Wall Street and Frankfurt bankers, German and Japanese industrialists, and Texas oilmen are not fools. And they aren't investing their money in Russia either.

On the contrary, there has been massive looting of the Russian economy in the past couple of years. One out of every three barrels of oil and one out of every

two tons of nickel leaving Russia is smuggled out, while fully 80 percent of the raw materials ticketed for the Baltic port of Kaliningrad never arrives there. Marc Rich, the strikebreaking owner of Ravenswood Aluminum in the U.S. (currently living in Switzerland to evade tax and fraud charges), boasts trading revenues of \$2.5 billion per year in natural resources from the former Soviet Union.

Everything in Russia is for sale for hard currency these days, from religious icons peddled by Orthodox priests to high-tech weaponry supplied by financially strapped arms factories. Iran is rumored to have acquired two Soviet-made nuclear warheads. Last year as much as \$15 billion in hard currency was siphoned out of Russia into private bank accounts in the U.S. and West Europe. This is more than twice the \$7 billion in net aid and credits which the Yeltsin regime got from Bush's America, Kohl's Germany and its other imperialist godfathers. Meanwhile, the scramble for dollars which can be safely stashed in foreign bank accounts continues to drive down the value of the ruble at Moscow's limited currency exchange. In the past six months, the exchange rate has gone from just over 200 rubles to the dollar to nearly 800, figures wildly out of kilter with the actual state of the Russian economy.

### ...But Refuses to Pay the Bill

Yeltsin, Gaidar & Co. expected to be rewarded with \$24 billion in IMF aid as a first installment for torturing the working masses through economic shock treatment. But the IMF demanded as a condition for disbursing funds that Russia raise its internal price of oil to world-market levels while exporting more to repay its foreign debt. This would mean instant bankruptcy for most of Russia's industrial enterprises, which were geared to consuming energy for a small fraction of the cost extorted by the Seven Sisters cartel and the Arab oil sheiks.

The London *Economist* (24 October 1992), the house organ of international financiers, argued half seriously that "Russia would be economically better off if every Russian worker, except those in the country's mining, oil and transport industries (who would be needed to ship raw materials to the West) simply stopped working"! Western bankers are demanding that Yeltsin reduce the post-Soviet Russian economy to conditions *structurally more primitive* than that of tsarist Russia, where foreign capital promoted heavy industry.

The Kohl regime initially rewarded

Gorbachev for selling out East Germany to the Deutsche Bank in early 1990 with \$47 billion in "aid," promising more to come. The rulers of the Fourth Reich envisioned their own neocolonial empire in the former Soviet bloc, extending from Siberia to the Balkans. But with its vindictive destruction of the East German economy following capitalist reunification, the Bonn government went heavily into debt as millions of unemployed East Germans were put on the dole. Last spring Kohl announced, "we Germans have reached the limit of our capacity to help" Russia and the other former Soviet republics. Since then Germany has entered a deepening recession, widening its budget deficit and making large-scale aid to Russia even less likely.

As for Washington, Reagan/Bush transformed the U.S. into the world's largest debtor to pay for the massive military buildup against the Soviet Union. Now Clinton is pushing to subsidize high-tech industry while raising taxes and cutting social programs for the poor and elderly. Aside from a \$1.5 billion *credit* to buy U.S. grain and other goods in 1992, what Washington has allocated to promoting capitalism in Russia is truly peanuts. Even a relatively modest shift of 10 percent of U.S. imperialism's Cold War military budget would mean some \$35 billion a year in aid to Russia. But with the American rulers intent on maintaining their military hegemony at any expense, no less a White House crook than Richard Nixon today appears as about the only farsighted representative of this ruling class in arguing for aggressive aid to Russia.

Japan—the only major imperialist power with a large financial surplus—has not and will not give the Moscow regime any yen at all unless it gets back the Kuril Islands, which the Red Army took at the end of World War II. But for Yeltsin to sell Russian territory to an imperialist power and historic enemy would enormously intensify nationalist and popular opposition to him. In any case, while Tokyo might cough up \$5 or \$10 billion to grab the strategic Kurils, Japan Inc. is not presently interested in making Russia as such a subsidiary. Japan's empire-building ambitions remain focused on the Far East, above all the reconquest of China.

The bottom line is that Yeltsin did not get the deutschmarks, dollars and yen he was counting on.

### Factory Managers Ignite Hyperinflation

Yevgeny Yasin, a prominent economist in the "industrialist" camp, de-

scribed Russian society under Yeltsin as well as in Gorbachev's last years as a pyramid with the top broken off. Power descended to the next highest level, mainly made up of managers in big enterprises. The vice general director of the huge Vaz Auto Works in Togliatti—which produced 60 percent of all cars in the USSR—states: "Management, in a sense, has become the owner of Vaz... we run the company as if we owned it, although we don't really." But as Trotsky wrote in *The Revolution Betrayed* of the capitalist aspirations of sectors of the Stalinist managerial bureaucracy: "It is not enough to be the director of a trust; it is necessary to be a stockholder."

While many factory managers denounced Gaidar as the archenemy, bent on bankrupting their enterprises on orders from the IMF, the main beneficiaries of the "shock treatment" were in fact the managers in consumer goods and food processing. Since their prices were increasing 50 percent faster than the wages they paid, they were swimming in profits. Managers in heavy industry and munitions got around Gaidar's attempt at tight money by granting open-ended credit to one another. In the first five months of 1992, inter-enterprise debt increased from forty billion to *two trillion* rubles. The managers also wielded the threat of massive social unrest should a cutoff in industrial subsidies lead to widespread layoffs, arguing that only they could contain workers' anger. As Volsky put it, "they keep the people from taking to the streets."

So that the managers would keep on keeping the people from taking to the streets, Yeltsin abandoned any attempt to control the money supply. In April he offered an additional 200 billion rubles in enterprise credits. The following month three stalwarts of the "industrialist" party were appointed to key economic ministries. In June the managers placed their man, Viktor Gerashchenko, in charge of the central bank. Gerashchenko in turn extended 1.5 trillion rubles in credit to the managers, *an amount greater than the entire money supply generated by all Soviet governments over the previous 40 years*. The resulting hyperinflation has all but destroyed the ruble as a medium of exchange. Increasingly, Russians speak of two classes in their country: those who have access to dollars or other hard currencies, and those who earn rubles.

In the present conditions of counter-revolutionary chaos, curbing inflation means first of all slashing enterprise payrolls through mass layoffs. This is already beginning to happen. In Ivanovo,

a textile center northeast of Moscow known as the "city of single women" for its predominantly female labor force, output has been cut in half by the shortage of cotton due to the breakdown in the transport system and the civil war in the Central Asian republic of Tadzhikistan. On paper 6,500 are still employed by the Frolov textile factory, but only 2,000 of them come to work. The other 4,500 are told to stay home, where they receive 1,035 rubles a month, about \$1.50 at the rapidly depreciating exchange rate.

### Only Socialist Revolution Can Save the Soviet Working Class

Such desperate conditions can easily and suddenly produce an angry explosion among the toiling masses. To prevent this, the capitalist-restorationist forces of *all contending factions* seek to erect a strong state capable of crushing popular unrest before it gets out of hand. What exists today, in Russia as in the other former Soviet republics, is not a counterrevolutionary order but rather counterrevolutionary chaos. The restorationist forces—both the pro-Western "democrats" around Yeltsin and the nationalist-corporatist camp of Volsky/Rutskoi—are weak and internally strained. There is no cohered capitalist class. The armed forces are rife with discontent, and it is uncertain that they could be used effectively to suppress mass struggle.

The consolidation of the counter-revolution therefore depends on the continuing passivity, paralysis and misleadership of the working class. The Stalinist "patriots" join hands with outright fascists in a "red"-brown coalition, while giving a left cover to the Volsky/Rutskoi corporatists. This is expressed, for example, in their call for "workers' privatization." Thus Vladimir Isakov of the Russian Communist Workers Party demanded that parliament pass legislation "so that work collectives can become the owners of their workplace." Boris Kagarlitsky's Labor Party, a social-democratic outfit deliberately modeled on its British namesake, likewise calls for the "transfer of property to the work collectives"—which in the mouths of these "leftists" includes managers having a majority of the shares (see "Stalinist Has-Beens: Left Wing of Nationalist Counterrevolution," reprinted on page 25).

The main trade-union federation, the FNPR led by Brezhnev-era Stalinist hacks now reinforced by social democrats like Kagarlitsky, also supports the corporatist faction. Meanwhile, the CIA-sponsored "free" trade unions, embrac-



**Workers at huge Vaz auto plant in Togliatti, where old Stalinist managers want to become new capitalist owners.**

ing a section of the coal miners as well as air controllers and railway engineers, have supported Yeltsin under the illusion that capitalist restoration will lead to living standards comparable to those in the imperialist West of which they have an idealized picture. Strikes and threats of work stoppages by coal and oil workers have in recent years focused on securing better selling conditions for "their" products. But while these workers are for the moment better off, the counterrevolution has already reduced Russia to conditions of neocolonial degradation comparable to, say, Mexico or Brazil.

With the collapse of Stalinist rule in the Soviet bloc, most of the left internationally has bought the bourgeois line that centralized planning is inherently inefficient and bureaucratic, and that a market system is the only viable way to organize an economy. In Latin America, petty-bourgeois nationalists out of power, like the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, are now calling for worker participation in privatized factories and farms, i.e., the utopia of a "people's capitalism."

While historically associated with anarcho-syndicalism, calls for giving property rights to work collectives in Russia today are not merely utopian but are above all intended to give pseudo-populist legitimacy to a nationalist-corporatist regime. Volsky himself proposes "to encourage collective ownership by workers" (*Izvestia*, 30 September 1992), and the government even refers to this as a "fourth variant of privatiza-

tion." In many large enterprises, such as the Vaz Auto Works, 25 percent or more of the stock has already been given to the work collectives under the Yeltsin/Gaidar regime in order to make privatization more palatable. This translates into zero influence on enterprise policy, which remains firmly in the hands of the old management. In any case, what would "workers' privatization" mean under conditions of hyperinflation, economic disarray, mass unemployment and nationalist fratricide?

We want a modern economy in place for the Soviet working people to take over when they regain power. But that economy will not be preserved through corporatist capitalism in the epoch of imperialism's decay. A few hard-fought strikes where the workers win something would do much to reverse the demoralization and atomization of the Soviet proletariat and provide an opening for revolutionary intervention. The situation cries out for a genuinely Bolshevik party, based on the principles of Lenin and Trotsky, to lead the multinational working class of Russia and the other former Soviet republics against the mafioso entrepreneurs, the managers who would be stockholders, and their imperialist godfathers.

Down with Yeltsin and the Russian parliament—For a workers government based on soviet democracy as in October 1917! For a planned, collectivized economy based on a reformed Soviet Union! ■

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# Usec's Labourite Nationalization Fetish— Camp Followers of Counterrevolution

"Yeltsin's coming to power in Russia heralded the spread of restorationist 'shock therapy' in the former Soviet republics," warns Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat (Usec) in *International Viewpoint* (March 1993). "Down with Yeltsin's Coup!" proclaims the British Workers Power group, in a March 23 resolution of its League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) on Yeltsin's abortive bonapartist power grab last month (*Trotskyist Bulletin*, April 1993). Strange noises are emanating from the fake-leftists who fell over each other trying to scramble (mostly vicariously) onto the Yeltsin barricades in August 1991. What's going on?

Now that the Soviet workers are being plunged into dire poverty by capitalist restoration, these groups are desperate to "disappear" their former support to the Yeltsinite "democrats." At a recent talk in New York, Mandel volubly denied that his organization had sided with Yeltsin in August 1991 (see WV No. 571, 12 March). And Workers Power would now have us believe that it took no side between Yeltsin and the "Emergency Committee": "Just as Russian workers should have opposed both Yannaev and Pugo's August 1991 coup and Yeltsin's previous coups [in August and December 1991], so now they should oppose Tsar Boris' latest measures."

But they weren't screaming "Down with Yeltsin!" when he seized on the botched August 1991 coup attempt by Gorbachev's former lieutenants to seize the reins of power and usher in the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state. When it counted, the Usec, WP and their ilk all lined up with Yeltsin and the forces of capitalist counterrevolution.

The Usec loudly proclaimed: "It was necessary without hesitation to oppose the coup, and in this respect to struggle alongside Yeltsin" (*International Viewpoint*, 16 September 1991). *Workers Power* (September 1991) wrote, "Revolutionary Marxists should have stood in the front ranks of those fighting to smash the 19 August coup," while a 22 August 1991 LRCI resolution stated baldly: "Yeltsin's call—for active resistance against the coup and for a general

strike—should have been supported and taken up by the workers organisations."

On every front—from East Germany to Poland, the Baltics and Russia—these groups gave open or back-handed support to the forces of counterrevolution. Even now, the Usec's *International Viewpoint* (March 1993) provides a platform for erstwhile idol Jacek Kuron—who as Walesa's labor minister is

Counterrevolution!" We fought for the Trotskyist program of proletarian political revolution, from East Berlin to Warsaw and Moscow, to defeat the counterrevolutionary onslaught and oust the bankrupt Stalinist bureaucracies.

And when it was clear that the forces of capitalist restoration had succeeded in destroying the workers state, we told the bitter truth: "The period of open coun-

— September 1991

**workers  
power**

*Revolutionary Marxists should have stood in the front ranks of those fighting to smash the 19 August coup. At the same time there could be no political support for Yeltsin. With*

— 16 September 1991

**International  
VIEWPOINT**

... of this mutation, Yeltsin will be without doubt its midwife. It was necessary without hesitation to oppose the coup, and in this respect to struggle alongside Yeltsin, but beyond this it is also necessary to say in advance what the effects would be of the application of the 500 day reform he supports and to judge him on his acts.

**Workers Power (top), Usec (above) and other fake-Trotskyists took their place with Yeltsin on barricades of capitalist restoration in August 1991.**



chief strikebreaker for the Solidarność regime—to pontificate on the question of "social justice"!

Uniquely, we of the International Communist League opposed capitalist restoration across the board. Against Walesa's bid for power in 1981, we demanded: "Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!" In Germany in 1989-90, we alone unambiguously proclaimed: "No to Capitalist Reunification!" At the time of Yeltsin's August 1991 countercoup, we declared, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush

terrevolution ushered in by Boris Yeltsin's pro-imperialist countercoup in August 1991 has, in the absence of mass working-class resistance, culminated in the creation of a bourgeois state, however fragile and reversible" (see "How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled," reprinted on page 31). We raised the call, "For Socialist Revolution to Sweep Away Yeltsin Counterrevolution!"

In the difficult conditions of counterrevolutionary chaos, we Spartacists have sought to cohere a Soviet nucleus

Sygm

around the banner of Trotsky's Fourth International.

## "Disappearing" the Counterrevolution

To cover the tracks of their treachery, the fake-Trotskyists hide in a fantasy world which denies that the counter-revolution has conquered in East Europe and the former Soviet Union. Workers Power insists that "Russia remains a degenerated workers' state." Mandel continues to call the East European countries "bureaucratic post-capitalist societies."

How do they pull off this sleight of hand? On Russia, as elsewhere, the Mandelites claim that the Stalinist bureaucracy remains in place, and talk of "the rule of the old nomenklatura." The Polish Mandelites vituperate against the "red bourgeoisie." Likewise the followers of the late Nahuel Moreno argue, in their journal *Correo Internacional* (September 1992), that "to the extent that the relations of property and production haven't changed, the bureaucracy cannot renounce power, from which it is directing the transition."

The idea that the Stalinist bureaucracy remains intact in the wake of—and indeed presides over—capitalist counter-revolution is of a piece with the view that Stalinism is "counterrevolutionary through and through," or in the Workers Power version, "invariably a counterrevolutionary force." Such Stalinophobic arguments were used to justify the refusal to defend the Soviet Union wherever it was concretely posed. Trotsky, in contrast, characterized the bureaucracy as a brittle, contradictory caste, parasitically resting on the proletarian property forms of the degenerated workers state.

But the bureaucracy as a caste has now been shattered. Yeltsin himself demonstratively broke from the Communist Party—the bureaucracy's "apparatus of domination," as Trotsky called it—well before becoming Russian president. He offered himself up as spokesman for the new layer of yuppie speculators and Western-oriented entrepreneurs.

So on what basis do these pseudo-Trotskyists claim that East Europe and the ex-USSR are still workers states? Their bottom line is that nationalized property remains. The USec takes this to its logical absurdity when it comes to the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany).

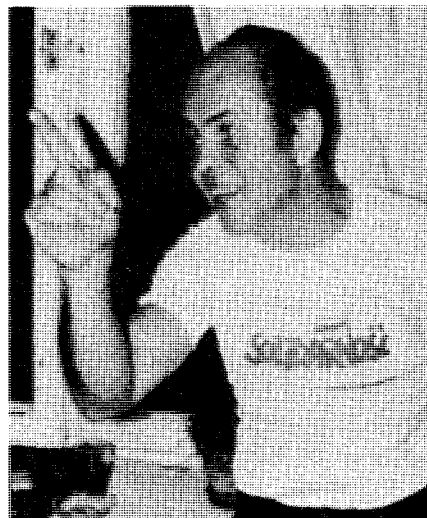
The East German economy was formally subordinated to Bonn and the Frankfurt bankers on 1 July 1990, when the D-mark became the common currency. Later that year, East Germany's

state apparatus was literally dissolved and its territory bodily incorporated into the Greater German imperialist state. More than half the population in the east is now unemployed, the planned economy is gone, virtually every social service created by the workers state has been swept away, and the *Treuhand* which oversees the "sale" (read: destruction) of industry is a direct agency of the capitalist banks. Yet Mandel & Co. still insist, "Even in the former GDR

We have described the situation in the ex-USSR and East Europe as "capitalism without capital." But the absence of significant imperialist investment does not in itself make a country non-capitalist, as much of neocolonial Africa shows. Nor does the presence of widespread nationalizations—by the logic of these arguments, Third World nationalist regimes (which use state action to build up a domestic bourgeoisie) might have been labeled workers states. Indeed, in



USEC pushed "Solidarity with Solidarność" and hailed "socialist" Jacek Kuron (right), now chief strikebreaker for Walesa's clerical-nationalist regime.



Der Spiegel

capitalism has not yet prevailed" (*International Viewpoint*, March 1993).

In Walesa's Poland, the private sector accounts for almost half of all non-agricultural production and employs 42 percent of the labor force. Yet the Polish Mandelites around the newspaper *Dalej!* speak of "our economy" and raise as their maximum demand: "An immediate program for rescuing the economy and defending state industry" (*Socialist Action*, June 1992). So they want to "rescue" the new bourgeoisie's economy! Meanwhile the Catholic church is the predominant social force in society, dictating religious indoctrination in the schools and a sweeping ban on abortion (to which the Mandelites capitulate with a lame call for "the right to choose motherhood"!).

Arguing that foreign capital is "essential to any restorationist project," *International Viewpoint* continues its obfuscation:

"It is not necessary for all the means of production to be privatized for this to be achieved nor that the only logic at work is capitalist. But capitalist logic must prevail. Such a state of affairs does not exist in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union now and there is no inevitability that it will exist."

the mid-1960s, Italian USec leader Livio Maitan foresaw the "passage to a workers state" through a "cold" process (not involving revolutionary mass mobilization) in Nasser's *Egypt* and *Burma*—and even the West African states of Guinea and Mali, which hardly had the beginnings of a proletariat!

State-owned collectivized property, central planning and state monopoly of foreign trade are indeed the defining features of proletarian property forms—the necessary economic foundations for the development of a classless, socialist society on an international scale. But to the extent state property remains predominant in the former Soviet-bloc countries, it is not organized through a central plan (in the USSR, the planning principle was done away with in 1988) nor is there a state monopoly of foreign trade. Even in state enterprises in the ex-USSR, the factory managers act more and more like outright owners, with decisions relating to production and pricing being made autonomously and inter-enterprise relations based more on barter than on central directives.

In our recent article "Russia's New Exploiters" (reprinted on page 43) we noted: "Marxists fight to defend the



industrial base of the country, and thus oppose the wholesale 'privatization'—meaning shutdown—of productive capacity." But only through the prism of social democracy, which claims that the bourgeois state is "class-neutral" and promises a gradual, parliamentary road to "socialism" through incremental nationalizations, is the question of nationalized industry per se primary. As we recently noted in regard to the Revolutionary Workers League, which likewise argues that the ex-USSR remains a workers state on the basis of nationalized property: "Like the Labourite social democrats, the RWL elevates nationalized property to the highest pedestal—and remains utterly indifferent to the key question of *which class rules*" ("RWL: Mitosis of a Cult," WV No. 570, 26 February).

In positing nationalized property as defining a workers state, these groups fundamentally *deny the Leninist understanding of the state*. As Lenin explained in *The State and Revolution*, "the state is a 'special coercive force'.... And from it follows that the 'special coercive force' for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, of millions of working people by handfuls of the rich, must be replaced by a 'special coercive force' for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat)."

Today we are talking of counterrevolution. Let's look at the question from the other end. The Bolsheviks seized power in Russia on 7 November 1917, yet major industry was not nationalized until late in 1918. In the interim, as Lenin noted, "petty-bourgeois capitalism prevails in Russia" ("Left-Wing Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality," May 1918). So what was the class nature of the Soviet state between November 1917 and the autumn of 1918? Lenin was categorical, declaring in his October 1919 article, "Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," that 8 November 1917 was "the first day of the dictatorship of the proletariat."

The key question was who held state power, whose class interests did their armed bodies of men serve? If industry remained under the ownership of the bourgeoisie, albeit under workers control, for a period of time, there was no doubt that from day one of its rule, revolutionary soviet power served to *suppress* "the profiteer, the commercial racketeer, the disrupter of monopoly"—the forces Lenin termed "our principal 'internal' enemies." The Red Guards in power served the interests of the work-



**The dictatorship of the proletariat: Red Guards and Baltic fleet sailors in Moscow, October 1917.**

ers. In Yeltsin's Russia, the new counterrevolutionary *bourgeois* state seeks to suppress the proletariat in the interests of the profiteer and commercial racketeer.

If nationalization is the *sine qua non* of a workers state, then those who claim that Russia today is still a proletarian state must perforce hold that Bolshevik Russia was *not* one before the autumn of 1918, or, for that matter, after the introduction of widespread petty capitalist commodity production with the New Economic Policy of 1921.

The Bolsheviks, as the conscious vanguard of the proletariat, made clear their *intent* to collectivize the economy from the outset. But even in the case of social overturns led by petty-bourgeois Stalinist forces, the nationalization of the means of production did not necessarily mark the creation of a (deformed) workers state. In China and South Vietnam, protracted and bloody civil wars meant that by the time the peasant-based Stalinist forces took power, there was no viable section of the bourgeoisie left with which they could form a popular front and they were thus forced to rule in their own name. Yet those remnants of the Chinese bourgeoisie which did not immediately flee to Taiwan were not expropriated until late in the Korean War (1953). The Hanoi regime did not collectivize the South until three years after its 1975 victory.

One instance where nationalization of the economy was decisive in determining the class character of the state was

Castro's Cuba (see "Cuba and Marxist Theory," *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8). Castro's victory in 1959 led to the crumbling of the corrupt Batista dictatorship and its armed force, and brought to power a peasant-based guerrilla movement. In the absence of a proletariat politically organized as a class for itself and with its ties to the old bourgeois order ruptured, the petty-bourgeois Castro regime was initially autonomous from the two major classes in society. A state in the Marxist sense—armed bodies of men committed to the defense of a definite set of property forms—did not exist. Faced with the relentless pressure of U.S. imperialism, which effectively demanded that the new regime commit suicide, the Castroites were compelled in the fall of 1960 to expropriate the U.S. sugar companies, the Cuban bourgeoisie and its Mafia patrons, thereby defining the new Cuba as a deformed workers state.

In general, in periods of revolution or counterrevolution, economic forms can be, and often are, at variance with the political character of the state, of the *ruling class* in society. Trotsky explicitly addressed this question in "Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?" (November 1937):

"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."

In his decisive analysis of Stalinism, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky likewise emphasized that denationalization would not follow immediately on the heels of a counterrevolutionary victory, laying out a scenario which fairly accurately depicts what is now taking place:

"In the sphere of industry, denationalization would begin with the light industries and those producing food. The planning principle would be converted for the transitional period into a series of compromises between state power and individual 'corporations'—potential proprietors, that is, among the Soviet captains of industry, the émigré former proprietors and foreign capitalists."

## Tailing the Corporatist Wing of Counterrevolution

The logic of fetishizing nationalized property leads the USec to tail after those forces who appear to be defenders of state property against the pro-IMF monetarist policies of Yeltsin and his former economic adviser Yegor Gaidar—notably the Civic Union bloc of militarist vice president Aleksandr Rutskoi and industrialist power broker Arkady Vol'sky, which represents the powerful factory managers. In her article in the March 1993 *International Viewpoint*, USec Soviet "expert" Catherine Samary sees "a tense but real convergence of interests between workers and managers."

The same issue has an article by Russian USec supporter Alexander Buzgalin, a leading light in Boris Kagarlitsky's social-democratic Labor Party. The Labor Party braintrusts the Moscow bureaucracy of the former official trade-union federation (FNPR), which is a bloc partner of the Civic Union, and it joined with Rutskoi's Free Russia party in a recent "Congress of the Democratic Left." Buzgalin hails this as a "real breakthrough" and explicitly lauds the Civic Union: "The economic programme worked out by experts close to the GC [Civic Union] would indeed be far more helpful in getting the country out of the crisis than Gaidar's monetarist experiments." Samary and Buzgalin don't bother to mention that Civic Union leader Rutskoi ran point for the Yeltsin regime in breaking last summer's strike by Russian air traffic controllers.

Workers Power similarly argues in the March LRCI resolution that the parliamentary opposition to Yeltsin is somehow anti-capitalist:

"Yeltsin wants to destroy the rival power of the Congress and the Supreme Soviet. As long as this alternative power exists it will obstruct his programme of mass

privatisation of industry and agriculture, it will impede the emergence of the mass unemployment and factory closures that Yeltsin knows are necessary if Russia is to go back to capitalism."

WP ludicrously paints the ragtag Russian Unity bloc (the parliamentary voice of the fascist-infested "red"-brown coalition) as a powerful force seeking a "restoration of bureaucratic central command planning," while claiming the Civic Union is a confused and "heterogeneous" formation: "Either they would have to adopt the very measures over which they brought down Gaidar or they would have to roll the restoration process backwards and restore key elements of the central command economy."

In effect, both the USec and Workers Power argue that Yeltsin/Gaidar represent the *only* program for bringing capitalism to Russia and thus any opposition, however hesitant or contradictory, is objectively anti-capitalist. In fact, there is *no* significant political force in Russia today which argues for a return to bureaucratic central planning. Where Yeltsin/Gaidar, based on the new layer of yuppie "entrepreneurs" and speculators, seek to ram through rapid privatization of large state enterprises, which in practice would mean an end to state subsidies and thus widespread closures, the factory managers call for privatization under the enterprise "work collectives," over which they exercise control. They seek to maintain state subsidies

because they aim to be the *new owners* of the factories. The Civic Union has a well-worked-out program for *corporatist capitalism*, aiming to maintain a streamlined state-subsidized heavy industry sector as the motor force for building a strong Russian capitalist state (see "Russia's New Exploiters," reprinted on page 43).

Volsky/Rutskoi seek to emulate fascist dictator Mussolini's corporatist state, which boasted of controlling three-fourths of the Italian economy. In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky cites a mouthpiece for the Mussolini regime: "The corporative state directs and integrates the economy, but does not run it, which with a monopoly of production, would be nothing but collectivism." The Russian corporatists seek to make the factory managers the *legal* captains of industry, while maintaining a strong state and state subsidies to "direct" and "integrate" the new capitalist economy. This too will require imperialist investment, massive layoffs and the whip of repression to regiment the working class. That is hardly an alternative to capitalist restoration.

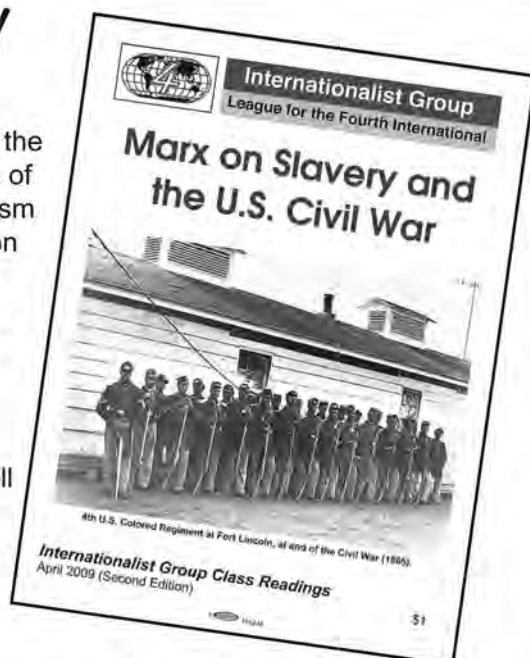
## The Bankrupt Methodology of Bankrupt British Labourism

The political methodology and program underlying the position of the USec and the other fake-Trotskyists is not crypto-Stalinism, however, but

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the "Clause IV socialism" of the British Labour Party. This called for "common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange" under the auspices of the British Crown. When Labour was swept into power under Clement Attlee in 1945, the working class entertained enormous illusions that "its" government would implement socialist measures. In the U.S., the right wing of the Shachtmanites argued that Britain in the late 1940s was becoming incrementally socialist.

The Attlee government was faced with a British capitalism which had been in a state of decline for decades and had emerged from World War II with its empire looted and in the process of disintegration. Industries vital to the economy, such as the mines and railroads, were bankrupt and falling apart. Attlee proceeded to nationalize—by and large with broad acceptance by the capitalist class—only the most inefficient and failing industries, which then continued to operate through heavy subsidies extracted from more productive sectors of the economy and, ultimately, from the pockets of the working class. The end result was the continued impoverishment of the British workers, whose standard of living over the years was to sink to one of the lowest in West Europe.

Originally adopted to counter the influence of the Bolshevik Revolution on the British proletariat, Clause IV was ultimately watered down to the point where today's Labour Party does not even promise to reverse most of the denationalizations carried out by the Thatcher government. We of course oppose the denationalization of industry under capitalism when, as is almost always the case, it means an attack on the union organization, working conditions and living standards of the workers. In neocolonial countries, revolutionaries defend nationalizations which are directed against imperialist holdings, such as Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal in Egypt and Cárdenas' nationalization of oil in Mexico. But we do not defend bourgeois nationalizations in principle (see "Chrysler and the Bankruptcy of Social Democracy," *WV* No. 247, 11 January 1980).

Yet the perspective of Labourite nationalizations remains the lodestar of the British fake-left and other social democrats who masquerade as "Trotskyists." Indicatively, the USec's British affiliate is today buried deep inside the Labour Party. In the case of the Morenoites, what's behind their nationalization fetish is their support to Argentine bonapartist general Juan Perón in the

1950s, who had carried out extensive nationalization of foreign-owned railroads, oil and slaughterhouses. At bottom, what motivates these pseudo-Trotskyist outfits is support to their own bourgeoisie.

It was their fealty to the social democracy which led the USec and the rest to tail behind the imperialist anti-Soviet war drive and to cheer on the same counterrevolutionary forces whose victory they now seek to hide under a rug. The USec rejoiced over the victory of Mitterrand's anti-Soviet popular front in France, which became the ideological spearhead for Cold War II. The Mandelites glorified the Nazi-collaborationist Estonian Forest Brothers and idolized Solidarność ideologue Jacek Kuron. In Czechoslovakia, USec supporter Petr Uhl was even a member of Vaclav Havel's capitalist-restorationist government. For its part, Workers Power solidarized with anti-Communist mobs in East Berlin, called on Thatcher's Britain to aid the ultra-nationalist Lithuanian Sajudis against the Soviet degenerated workers state, and sponsored a speaking tour by a fascist-connected, pro-Yeltsin Russian miner.

Having repudiated the Trotskyist struggle for an independent proletarian vanguard party, these opportunists are driven by inveterate tailism, capitulating to any force that seems momentarily popular. Twenty years ago, the Mandelites were the loudest cheerleaders for Third World Stalinism, only to flip over a decade later to slavishly tailing anti-Soviet social democracy. Two years ago, they hailed the struggle for "democracy" spearheaded by Yeltsin & Co. and every counterrevolutionary nationalist who claimed to be fighting "Russian domination." Today, with Yeltsin discredited in the eyes of the Soviet masses, they bloc with the corporatist faction of the counterrevolution which claims to be opposed to Western imperialist domination.

From pushing "solidarity with Solidarność" to metaphorically climbing atop Yeltsin's barricades of counterrevolution, the Mandelite United Secretariat—which abuses the name of the Fourth International—bears its fair share of political responsibility for the final destruction of the greatest gain yet of the international proletariat, the USSR, the homeland of the October Revolution. This crime will not be forgotten as a new generation of militants goes on to reforge a genuine Fourth International, one Trotsky would have recognized as his own. ■

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# Russian Referendum: The Morning After

## Yeltsin's Bloody May Day

Less than a week after his victory in an April 25 vote of confidence put the wind in Russian president Boris Yeltsin's sails, Moscow militia (police) and special OMON anti-riot troops provoked a bloody clash with several thousand anti-Yeltsin protesters in Moscow on May Day. Earlier in the week, Yeltsin had decreed that the traditional rally site at Red Square be sealed off to all street protests. But police trucks and horse-mounted cops, wielding batons and water cannon, moved to block demonstrators when they tried to march to another site in the university area near the Lenin Hills. The anti-Yeltsin demonstrators responded with a hail of rocks and masonry.

Some 70 protesters and a larger number of police were wounded in the bloodiest street fighting seen in Moscow since Yeltsin seized the reins in August 1991. Demonstrators responding to the call of the "red-brown" National Salvation Front (NSF) chanted "Death to Yeltsin!" Moving to the Russian parliament's "White House," the headquarters for Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter-coup in 1991 and now the center of the anti-Yeltsin bourgeois opposition, demonstrators raised barricades and hoisted red banners and monarchist white-yellow-black tricolors.

NSF spokesman Ilya Konstantinov, connected to the fascistic Russian National Sobor, warned of a sharper clash next week on Victory Day, commemorating the Soviet defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II (portrayed by Stalin as the Great Patriotic War): "This is the beginning of the real resistance. We can say that on May 9, the OMON will be met differently. Motherland or Death!"

At the head of the march were several of the failed putschists from the August 1991 "Emergency Committee," whose trial finally went to court last month and has now been indefinitely suspended. While their botched "perestroika coup"

made no attempt to go after the Yeltsinite counterrevolutionaries but rather opened the way to Yeltsin's seizure of power, we Marxists condemn this anti-Communist trial by the nascent bourgeois state against the losers at the bureaucratic trough.

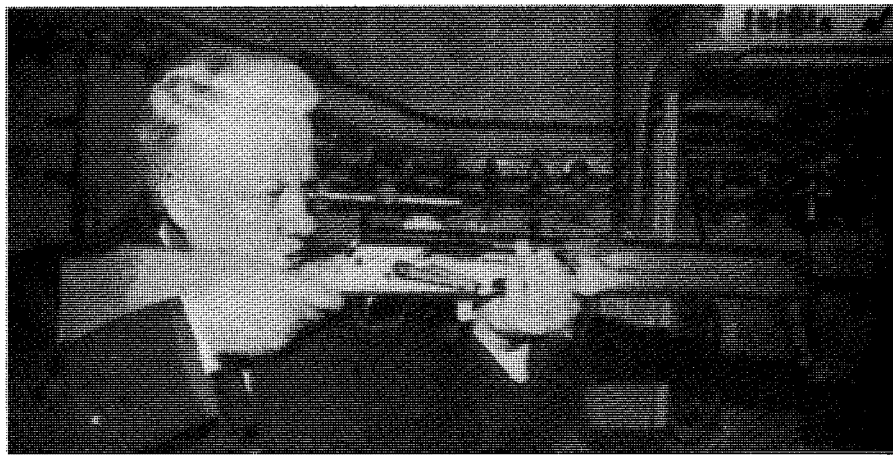
The bloody May Day clash capped a week of moves by would-be Tsar Boris aimed at consolidating power in the wake of last Sunday's referendum victory, including a ban on Communist Party activity in all state enterprises and a decree outlawing the nationalist newspaper *Den*. The National Salvation Front's blustering notwithstanding, it is not this ragtag coalition of Stalinist has-beens and anti-Semitic Great Russian chauvinists which is presently Yeltsin's main concern, but the corporatist-nationalist Civic Union parliamentary bloc for whom the "red"-browns serve as shock troops.

Two weeks before the referendum, Yeltsin publicly humiliated his vice president, Civic Union spokesman Aleksandr Rutskoi, stripping him of his government Mercedes and bodyguards, and removing him from his post overseeing agriculture. Rutskoi in turn accused the

regime of being rife with corruption, claiming that defense minister Pavel Grachev had illegally sold Soviet military property in East Germany. After the vote, Yeltsin declared his rival was no longer in charge of the government's anti-corruption investigations.

Yeltsin's victory in the referendum certainly gave the would-be strongman what he wanted, a vote of "Da, Da, Nyet, Da" on the four questions posed in the vote: 58 percent "yes" to his presidency, an unexpectedly high 53 percent approval of his "shock treatment" economic policies, just under half were for new presidential elections, with 64 percent in favor of new elections to the Congress. Yeltsin's imperialist paymasters whooped for joy. "This is a very, very good day," burred Clinton. A *New York Times* (27 April) editorial gushed that "Yeltsin's trust in the people was overwhelmingly reciprocated." To produce this result, Yeltsin's Western backers pulled out all the stops.

New York ad agency Saatchi and Saatchi "covertly" ran Yeltsin's media campaign, which harnessed the state-run TV for an "unrelenting stream of government propaganda" (London *Guardian*, 26 April). Yeltsin was shown "at home" with his wife in a modest three-room apartment—while the government spends 100 million rubles a month to



Campaigning for vote of confidence, would-be Tsar Boris takes aim at his opponents. Above: touring weapons plant where AK-47s are made.

build him a lavish new penthouse suite complete with tennis court and swimming pool. In the days before the vote, Yeltsin doubled old-age pensions, canceled rent increases, raised subsidies to the mining industry and promised more money for veterans. He also promised to restore the Cossacks' privileges and lauded these tsarist pogromists as "one of the most important entities of the new democratic Russia."

Meanwhile the Group of Seven imperialist powers did their bit by promising a new \$28 billion aid package, while the World Bank threw in a billion more to keep Russia's oil wells pumping. Even then, many people voted for Yeltsin only because they were even more fed up with the Congress' shenanigans and wanted a "strong hand."

On the eve of the referendum, the International Communist League took the position that it was in the workers' interests that Yeltsin suffer a resounding defeat, calling for a vote of "Nyet, Nyet, Da, Da" on the four questions. In an earlier article ("Yeltsin Meets His Paymaster," WV No. 573, 9 April), we noted that "the implicit alternative offered is to support the nationalist-corporatist policy of the Civic Union opposition," and wrote, "Russian workers have no stake in the outcome of this referendum, the continuation of a power play between two wings of the capitalist counter-revolution." While the working class cannot give political support either to the imperialist stooge Yeltsin or to his corporatist-capitalist opponents, this



**Bloody May Day in Moscow as Yeltsin's cops provoke clash with anti-Yeltsin protesters.**

general statement did not adequately address the *specific* questions posed in the referendum.

The *New York Times* (26 April) observed that "Nyet, Nyet, Da, Da" was how anti-Yeltsin voters "who tended to be from the pox-on-all-their-houses school" voted. Any class-conscious worker would certainly say "nyet" to Yeltsin and his economic policies, which amount to the immiseration of the population and the destruction of industry. And, while we do not fetishize abstract democracy, when posed with the question of new elections for president and parliament our answer could only be yes. With Russia now a capitalist state—moreover one in which all the contending bourgeois forces seek to establish bonapartist rule—it is necessary for the revolutionary party to maintain the utmost vigilance with respect to democratic forms.

Marc Cooper in the *Village Voice* (4 May) caught the flavor of the Russian referendum in declaring the winner to be... "General Augusto Pinochet," the Chilean military dictator. As one street-wise Muscovite interviewed by Cooper said of Yeltsin: "After the referendum, be careful. With a vote of confidence in his back pocket, and unable democratically to implement his revolution, he could decide to call in the army and try to do it by force." Five days after the vote, Yeltsin summoned 88 regional leaders to Moscow to endorse his draft for a new constitution, which would enshrine a semi-bonapartist "presidential republic," replacing the legislature with a toothless bicameral "representative" body, whose lower house would, appropriately, be called the State Duma. The

Duma was an impotent "advisory" council set up (and repeatedly disbanded) by the last tsar, Nicholas II, as a "democratic" sop following the 1905 Revolution.

To get the support of regional leaders, Yeltsin is prepared to intensify the centrifugal forces tearing the country apart and sharply limiting the central government's writ. A number of districts had already added a fifth question to the referendum, promoting regional autonomy or independence, and some, like secessionist Chechnya, boycotted entirely. Meanwhile, Yeltsin's "privatization" scheme would destroy the country's industrial base, turning Russia into a neocolonial supplier of oil and other raw materials to the imperialists. But while corporatists like Rutskoi talk of preserving the country's heavy industry and a strong Russian state, they would be no less dependent upon imperialism. Meanwhile, Rutskoi openly appeals for bonapartist rule, vowing that "law and order must be restored in a strong state."

As we wrote in "Dogfight in Moscow" (WV No. 572, 26 March): "*The working class must oppose moves from any corner to place its neck in the yoke of a bonapartist dictatorship.*" Nothing short of socialist revolution to sweep away all the contending factions of the nascent bourgeois state can save the Soviet working people, whose very existence is threatened by the ravages of counterrevolution. The key lies in the formation of a genuinely communist party, based on the principles of Lenin and Trotsky, to lead the multinational working class of Russia and the other former Soviet republics to power. For a planned, collectivized economy based on soviet democracy and revolutionary internationalism! ■

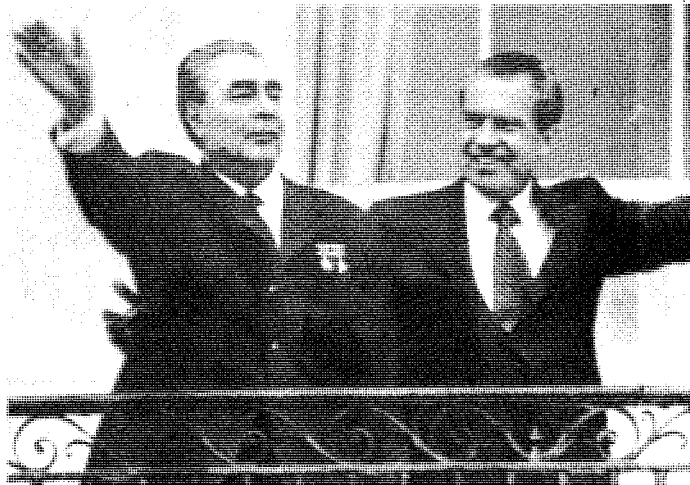


**Scenes from the counterrevolution: Old-age pensioner passes swank boutique.**





Camera Press



Lefont/Sygma

## Stalin Drowned the Communist Party...

(continued from page 64)

to perish," Trotsky insisted, as he set out to build a new Bolshevik party and International over the corpses of the old.

Bereft of a proletarian party, the Soviet degenerated workers state did indeed ultimately perish, drowned—in the absence of organized working-class resistance—in the counterrevolutionary flood tide unleashed by Boris Yeltsin's August 1991 pro-imperialist counter-coup and prepared by decades of appeasing imperialism by Stalin and his heirs. And literally overnight, the CPSU collapsed under its own weight, demonstrating that without the lure of privilege and the power of repression this "party" of 18 million members was simply a bureaucratic shell. Out of the cadaver crawled all sorts of maggots, from pro-imperialist "democrats" to neo-tsarist fascists. Meanwhile, a plethora of organizations sprang up—Viktor Anpilov's RKR, Alexei Prigarin's Soyuz Kommunistov, Anatoly Kryuchkov's RPK, Nina Andreyeva's VKPB, Roy Medvedev and A. Denisov's SPT and numerous others—all claiming the threadbare mantle or, more to the point, the vast properties of the old CPSU.

What would it mean to revive the CPSU? Whether they look to the CP of Brezhnev, of Khrushchev or of Stalin, the Stalinist leftovers are not calling for a revolutionary internationalist workers party but for the restoration of a bureaucratic apparatus. Certainly, amid the all-sided economic and social devastation, the wars of nationalist fratricide, the skyrocketing crime and impoverishment which now beset the peoples of the ex-USSR, the days not long past when there was order and the factories worked can



Der Spiegel

look pretty good. But whatever nostalgia for the old order they may feel, it is not *communism* which these discredited apparatchiks and "academicians" seek to salvage, but the sinecures and perks they enjoyed as cogs in the bureaucratic machine which administered the degenerated workers state. And today they couldn't care less whether their perquisites derive from a proletarian or a bourgeois state.

Indeed, today they act as the "left" wing of the corporatist faction of the counterrevolution. The February 1993 founding conference in Moscow of the KP-RSFSR, the most ambitious effort in the various projects to reconstitute the "CPSU," was graced by the presence of several leaders of the GKChP, the "Emergency Committee" whose botched "coup" provided the opportunity for Yeltsin's ascendancy. These former Gorbachev lieutenants were wildly applauded. For what? They wanted to *continue* perestroika—only without glasnost. In the aftermath, Yeltsin has sought to convict the failed putschists for "treason" (to whom—George Bush?). We Marxists condemn this anti-Communist trial by the nascent bourgeois state against the losers at the bureaucratic trough.

But despite the claims of the capitalist

Above left: Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta (1945). Above right: Brezhnev with Nixon (1973). Left: Yeltsin with Bush (1991) at U.S. White House. Decades of Stalinist capitulation to imperialism in guise of "peaceful coexistence" paved the way to Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter-coup.

media and Yeltsin's capitalist "court," the GKChP made no attempt to go after Yeltsin—for fear it would ruffle the imperialists' feathers. And this "refounded" CP idolizes them not because they fought capitalist counterrevolution, but *because they didn't*. Leading KP-RSFSR spokesman Valentin Kuptsov declares: "We want a union of left forces and democratic patriots." What that means is a bloc of Stalinist has-beens with the would-be military bonaparte Aleksandr Rutskoi and his corporatist-industrialist Civic Union partner Arkady Volsky.

The chairman of the new party, Zuganov, is virtually an embodiment of the "red-brown" coalition—co-chairman of the fascistic Russian National Sobor of Sterligov and a leading figure in the "left-right" National Salvation Front. Already in 1922, Lenin looked at Stalin and saw in him the spectre of a *dzerzhymorda*, a Great Russian bully. Stalin's latter-day heirs, who openly rally around the tsarist watchword *derzhava* (strong state), truly deserve their fascist bloc partners. At the time of Stalin's blood purges, Trotsky noted: "Stalinism and fascism, in spite of a deep difference in social foundations, are symmetrical phenomena. In many of their features they show a deadly similarity" (*The*

*Revolution Betrayed*). With the social foundations of the workers state now ripped away, what indeed is there to distinguish between the anti-Semitic ravings of "red" general Makashov and fascistic general Sterligov, between the Great Russian chauvinism of the "proletarian communist" Anpilov and the populist-tsarist Nevzorov? As we noted in "Soviet Workers Bleed" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 557, 7 August 1992), "The rump Stalinists have increasingly taken on the political coloration of the openly pro-capitalist nationalists they tail," overlapping and interpenetrating with fascists and anti-Semitic chauvinists.



**Moscow,  
7 November 1991:  
Trotskyists  
protest closing of  
Lenin Museum.  
ICL sign calls  
for "Return to the  
Road of Lenin  
and Trotsky!"**

What do such types want to "reconstitute"? They have nothing but contempt for proletarian political power based on soviet democracy and the revolutionary internationalism which was the bedrock of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party. They denounce in the vilest anti-Semitic terms the Trotskyist Left Opposition, which fought unrelentingly and uniquely against the party's degeneration. What they want to recreate is not the party of October but the bureaucratic machine which *destroyed* it.

In raising the call, "It Is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Anew," after a decade of struggle against Stalinist degeneration, Trotsky wrote in July 1933: "The present CPSU is not a party but an apparatus of domination in the hands of an uncontrolled bureaucracy." And again: "To speak now of the 'reform' of the CPSU would mean to look backward and not forward," insisted the co-leader of the October Revolution. "In the USSR, it is necessary to build a Bolshevik party again" ("It Is Impossible to Remain in the Same 'International' with Stalin, Manuilsky, Lozov-

sky and Company," July 1933).

Those who today try to follow in Stalin's footsteps grotesquely lie that Trotsky was "anti-party." Yet the fact is that Trotsky and the Left Opposition refused to abandon the CPSU to Stalin as long as there appeared even the slightest possibility of reversing the bureaucratic degeneration from within, even after their expulsion in 1927. In numerous polemics, Trotsky argued against those, like the Democratic Centralist tendency of V.M. Smirnov and T. Saprionov, who claimed that the workers state had been destroyed and that "the party is a corpse." Trotsky was adamant that as long as the

party retained its proletarian core, it was necessary to intervene from the inside to oust the conservative-bureaucratic faction of Stalin:

"Naturally, such intervention is out of the question if the point of departure is that the party as a whole has degenerated, that the party is a corpse. With such an evaluation of the party, it is absurd to address oneself to it, and still more absurd to wait for it, or for this or that section of it, that is, primarily, for its proletarian core, to heed or to understand you. To conquer this core, however, is to conquer the party. This core does not consider itself—and quite rightly—either dead or degenerated."

—"Our Differences with the  
Democratic Centralists"  
(November 1928)

Trotsky insisted that until a decisive historical test proved that the CPSU was dead as a proletarian party, to prematurely renounce it necessarily meant appealing to more backward layers outside the party. Responding in 1933 to the "left" critics of the Left Opposition, he wrote: "During the last few years—appropriately enough—our opponents have told us more than once that we 'are

losing time in vain' by occupying ourselves with curing the Comintern. We never promised anybody that we would *cure* the Comintern. We only refused, until the decisive test, to pronounce the sick as dead or hopelessly ill." Stalin's refusal to block Hitler's rise to power was the decisive test:

"Only after the German Communist Party, which had been gathering millions of votes, proved incapable of offering even the least resistance to Hitler, and after the Comintern refused to recognize not only the erroneousness of its policy but even the very fact of the defeat of the proletariat (in reality the victory of Hitler is the greatest defeat of the proletariat in the history of the world!) and replaced the analysis of its mistakes and crimes by a new campaign of persecution and slander against real Marxists—only after this did we say: nothing can save these people any more.... The historical judgement on the Comintern has been pronounced. There is no appeal from this verdict."

—"The ILP and the  
New International"  
(September 1933)

The verdict of history, pronounced 60 years ago, was sealed by the CPSU's utter collapse in the face of a counter-revolutionary ascendancy within the Soviet Union itself. The RKR, RPK, KPSFSR, etc. are not parties based on the working class, but fragments of the bureaucracy, which had contempt for, and above all feared, the working class. None of these self-styled "Communist workers' leaders" tried to mobilize the proletariat in struggle against Yeltsin counterrevolution. The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), representing the continuity of Trotsky's struggle for Leninism, did. "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" we proclaimed in an August 1991 leaflet that was distributed in the tens of thousands in the Soviet Union. And today we continue to fight for an authentic vanguard party of the working class to unite the Soviet proletariat in the struggle for socialist revolution against all the would-be exploiters.

### **Thermidor: The Decisive Degeneration**

To explain how, when and why the CPSU degenerated is crucial for anyone who seeks to regenerate an authentic communist party. Today's Stalinist has-beens don't even attempt a materialist analysis: at most they give a date for when "traitors" took over.

• Anpilov's RKR claims the 1961 CPSU "program erroneously proclaimed the rejection of the dictatorship of the proletariat and announced the all-people nature of such specially class institu-

tions as the party and the state, thus creating a cover for their petty-bourgeois degradation."

• **Sidorov's** *Kontrargumenty i Fakty* (No. 2 [24], February 1993) likewise pins the blame on Khrushchev, claiming that the 20th Congress in 1956 ushered in a "constantly emerging class of a new Soviet bourgeoisie." *KiF* even extensively quotes from Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Thermidor and the Stalinist bureaucracy, only to label it "slandorous" without even an attempt at serious rebuttal, instead ludicrously trying to equate Trotskyism with Khrushchev's tepid denunciation of "the cult of personality" and Gorbachev's later pro-market attack on "bureaucratic commandism."

• **Prigarin**, one of the authors of the September 1992 "Programmatic Declaration of the 20th All-Union Conference of the CPSU," echoes Khrushchev's denunciation of "large-scale miscalculations, abuse of power and crimes against the positions and the very lives of people" under the Stalin era, while pointing the finger at "betrayal by the Gorbachev-Yakovlev group."

• **Kryuchkov's** RPK locates "the causes of the crisis of Soviet society" in a "bureaucratic tendency" which "grad-

ually began to take the ascendancy" after Lenin's death: "At the end of the '20s, the beginning of the '30s, this led the party-state bureaucracy, headed by Stalin, to reject the Leninist policy of NEP" (*Rossiskaya Pravda*, No. 5-6 [12-13] 1993).

So some of these characters stand with Bukharin's Right Opposition against the Stalin of the late '20s and early '30s, while others stand with Stalin against Khrushchev, and still others heap all the blame on Gorbachev. These cynical after-the-fact alibis have nothing to do with either a Marxist analysis or with any history of struggle for Leninism. Until Stalin lashed out against the Right Opposition and its base of kulaks (wealthy peasants) and Nepmen (petty capitalists), Bukharin had been his chief henchman and ideologue, and he continued to lick Stalin's boot until it came crashing down on his neck. As for rejection of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the 1936 Stalin constitution (drafted by Bukharin) decreed its juridical liquidation in favor of a "people's" dictatorship based on (the lie of) "universal, equal and direct" suffrage; even in 1931, Stalin boasted that the USSR had "entered the era of socialism," a classless society.

Meanwhile, Khrushchev served his apprenticeship under Stalin, Gorbachev served his under Brezhnev, and Yeltsin and Kravchuk were formed from the same mold. They all came out of the same Stalinist pigsty. Indeed it is notable that while the various capitalist-restorationist leaders were all once in the top echelons of the CPSU leadership, the moving spirits behind the new "Communist" parties were until a couple of years ago third-rate non-entities. The Stalinist leftovers were the losers at the bureaucratic trough, but *they and the restorationist tops were all responsible for strangling the Soviet workers state*. Sidorov's *KiF* even supported Yeltsin's August 1991 counter coup! When they place the turning point at 1931 or 1956 or 1961 or 1987, they are covering up for Stalin's criminal betrayal of the October Revolution, and their own role.

Trotsky, in fighting to defend the Bolshevik-Leninist program, emphasized: "The smashing of the Left Opposition implied in the most direct and immediate sense the transfer of power from the hands of the revolutionary vanguard into the hands of the more conservative elements among the bureaucracy and the upper crust of the working class. The year 1924—that was the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor" ("The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism," February 1935). The decisive degeneration of the CPSU came in 1923-24 when a conservative layer in the party and state apparatus usurped control from the working class and throttled its Bolshevik vanguard in a *political counterrevolution*.

How did this occur? Lenin had earlier voiced grave concerns over the possibility of the party's bureaucratic degeneration under the combined impact of a backward, largely peasant mass and imperialist encirclement. The most advanced layers of the working class had been decimated in the Civil War. At the 11th Congress of the Bolshevik Party in March-April 1922, Lenin observed:

"If we take Moscow with its 4,700 Communists in responsible positions, and if we take that huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap, we must ask: who is directing whom? I doubt very much whether it can truthfully be said that the Communists are directing that heap."

The "Workers and Peasants Inspection" (Rabkrin) was set up in 1919 in order to curb bureaucratic abuses. But under the control of Stalin and his cronies, the Rabkrin itself became a source of bureaucratism. When Stalin was appointed party general secretary following the 11th Congress, he wasted no time in transforming this administrative position into a personal power base, creating

a parallel hierarchy with a separate Organization Department under Kaganovich, and cultivating a layer of the apparatus. That July an Orgburo resolution granted party functionaries wages several times higher than those of the average worker, and various bonuses and perks on top of that. The inchoate bureaucratic faction began manifesting the Great Russian chauvinism which was later to become a hallmark of Stalinism. On Stalin's instructions, Ordjonikidze and Dzerzhinsky came down heavily-handedly against the Georgian Communist leaders, with Ordjonikidze even launching a physical assault.

Barely nine months after appointing Stalin general secretary, Lenin now called for his removal, warning that Stalin "had concentrated an enormous power in his hands." In his letters to the 12th Congress (his "Testament"), Lenin outlined the central issues in what was to be his last struggle: defense of the state monopoly of foreign trade, curbing the abuses of the Rabkrin and combatting Stalin's high-handed treatment of the non-Russian nationalities. Bedridden, Lenin formed a political bloc with Trotsky and implored him to accept no compromises with Stalin and his then-allies Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Lenin was soon incapacitated by another stroke. Trotsky, meanwhile, pulled back from the sharp struggle which Lenin urged, accepting the *troika's* assurances of agreement on all the political issues and acquiescing to their pleas that the Testament not be read to the congress. At that point Trotsky did not know where Stalin was going (Stalin probably didn't know himself), and was probably overly concerned not to appear to push himself as Lenin's successor. Years later, Adolf Joffe in his suicide note chastised Trotsky

for not having "enough in yourself of Lenin's unbending and unyielding character," a criticism which Trotsky evidently took to heart. But it is the most grotesque cynicism for latter-day hack "historians" (like erstwhile Gorbachev toady and current Yeltsin aide Volkogonov) to criticize Trotsky for not fighting Stalin hard enough while simultaneously denouncing him as a would-be Stalin, "the dictator who never was."

By late 1923, the defeat of the German Revolution had led to widespread demoralization in the Soviet proletariat, while the economic "scissors crisis" (the gap between high industrial prices and low agricultural prices, which induced peasants not to produce for the market) of which Trotsky had warned was creating massive urban unrest. Meanwhile, the apparatus moved to strengthen its organizational control over the party ranks; increasingly, party secretaries were no longer elected but appointed. Trotsky fought for a two-pronged policy: a program of *planned industrialization* to strengthen the Soviet state in the face of temporary international isolation, to reinforce the *smychka* (union) of the workers and peasants and, not least, to revitalize the proletariat; and the *revival of internal party democracy*. Trotsky's position was echoed later that month in the "Platform of the 46," signed by an authoritative array of party leaders.

When a campaign to discredit the Opposition among the party ranks backfired, the *troika* was forced to open the pages of *Pravda* one last time for a candid party discussion. In his pamphlet *The New Course*, Trotsky warned that "if the old course should seek to maintain itself at all costs by tightening the reins, by increasingly artificial selection, by intimidation, in a word, by procedures indicating a distrust of the party, the actual danger of degeneration of a considerable part of the cadres would inevitably increase."

As preparations proceeded for the 13th Party Conference in January 1924, it was clear that the reins *were* being tightened. When cell discussions didn't go to their liking, Stalin's appointed secretaries made sure to pack the meetings or to bury pro-Opposition resolutions. *Pravda* falsified reports of the discussions (as Stalin's personal secretary later admitted) to downplay Opposition support, particularly in urban proletarian centers. In Moscow the Opposition carried a solid majority among military trainee and student cells (which consisted largely of demobilized veterans of the Civil War), a third of all military cells and, at least initially, a majority of workers' cells,

with similar support in Petrograd. But when the conference opened, five days before Lenin's death, the Opposition was allowed only *three* of 128 delegates.

Having shaken its fist at the party, the nascent bureaucracy now moved to consolidate its control. Where the living Lenin had ordered a purge to weed out corrupt, careerist or politically incompetent elements under the watchword "Better Fewer, But Better," the "Lenin levy" which followed the conference opened the gates wide to 240,000 raw recruits who promised subservience to the bureaucratic regime which had elevated them into the ranks of the ruling party. "The political aim of this maneuver was to dissolve the revolutionary vanguard in raw human material, without experience, without independence, and yet with the old habit of submitting to the authorities," explained Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed*.

### The Nationalist Lie of "Socialism in One Country"

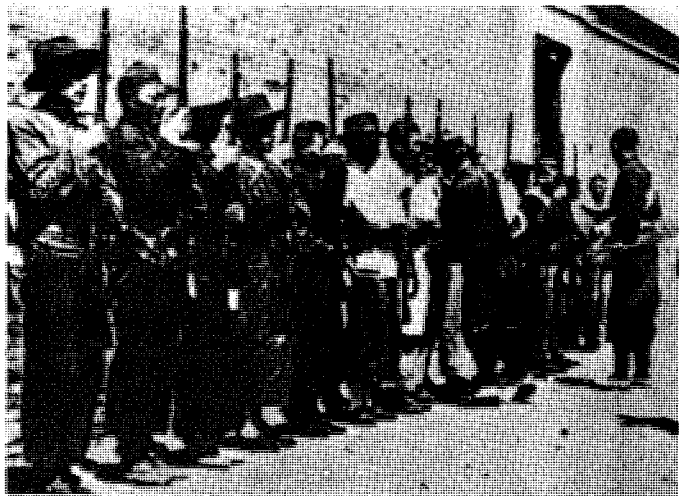
How did Stalin, a mediocrity in Lenin's party, come to stand at the head of the bureaucracy? Trotsky observed:

"Before he felt out his own course, the bureaucracy felt out Stalin himself. He brought it all the necessary guarantees: the prestige of an old Bolshevik, a strong character, narrow vision, and close bonds with the political machine as the sole source of his influence.... A secondary figure before the masses and in the events of the revolution, Stalin revealed himself as the indubitable leader of the Thermidorean bureaucracy, as first in its midst."

—*The Revolution Betrayed*

One of Stalin's most appealing features for the nascent bureaucratic layer was his nationalism. Stalin was unique among the Bolshevik leaders for his hidebound parochialism, his disdain for international and theoretical questions: in 1911 Stalin dismissed Lenin's émigré struggle against liquidationism as "a foreign tempest in a teapot." Indicatively, Stalin *never once* addressed a congress of the Communist International.

In late 1924, Stalin promulgated the doctrine of "socialism in one country," a statement that the bureaucracy's interests were divorced from those of the international proletariat, and thus counterposed to the Comintern's program of world socialist revolution. The anti-revolutionary consequences of this nationalist dogma would soon become apparent in Britain and China. By 1932, in a published discussion with an American engineer, Stalin had explicitly repudiated any notion of seeking to "communize the world," saying "that Trotsky believed in universal communism while



A. Mondadori



no credit

**Armed workers militias in Shanghai, 1927 (left). Stalin's class-collaborationist policy of subordinating Chinese CP to Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang led to mass slaughter of Communist workers.**

he [Stalin] wanted to confine his efforts to his own country."

Following its defeat in 1924, the Left Opposition looked toward revolutionary developments which would revive the demoralized Soviet proletariat and impel its most class-conscious elements—who were still to be found in the ranks of the party—to *sweep away* the Stalin faction. In late 1925, the increasingly onerous burden on the proletariat of Stalin-Bukharin's pro-kulak policy led to a split by Zinoviev and Kamenev, who controlled the Leningrad and Moscow party organizations. Trotsky described Zinoviev's Leningrad Opposition as a "bureaucratically distorted expression of the political anxiety felt by the most advanced section of the proletariat over the course of our economic development as a whole and over the fate of the dictatorship of the proletariat" ("A 'Bloc' with Zinoviev [For a Diary]," December 1925).

Zinoviev embraced Trotsky's call for planned industrialization and came out against "socialism in one country." But by the time the United Opposition came together in the spring of 1926, Stalin had already destroyed Zinoviev's power base in Leningrad. In late 1927, the United Opposition fell apart when the Zinoviev group capitulated in the face of threats of expulsion.

Consonant with its conciliation of Nepmen and kulaks at home, the Stalin-Bukharin leadership sought to nuzzle up to the social democracy in West Europe, epitomized by the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee. When the British Labour bureaucracy betrayed the 1926 General Strike, using its "anti-imperialist" bloc with the Soviet trade unions to cover its left flank, Trotsky demanded an immediate break with the strikebreakers. Stalin and Bukharin refused.

In China, Stalin ordered the CP to subordinate itself to the bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-shek, the most catastrophic expression of the two-class "worker-peasant party" policy, which the Stalinists justified by falsely appealing to Lenin's *pre-1917* formula of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." The CI insisted that the main task in China was "the further development of the Kuomintang" (*Communist International*, March 1927), even as the Kuomintang was moving to bloodily suppress the Shanghai workers insurrection which began in March 1927. Trotsky savagely indicted Stalin for his criminal policies:

"The official subordination of the Communist Party to the bourgeois leadership, and the official prohibition of forming soviets (Stalin and Bukharin taught that the Kuomintang 'took the place' of soviets), was a grosser and more glaring betrayal of Marxism than all the deeds of the Mensheviks in the years 1905-1917."

—*The Permanent Revolution* (1929)

The defeat of the Chinese Revolution again dashed the expectations of the most advanced Soviet workers, reinforcing defeatism and passivity. But Trotsky's consistent, repeated and *vindicated* warnings did not fall on deaf ears. Alongside the growing number of careerists, opportunists and outright criminal elements in the CPSU, there remained a kernel of subjective communists who feared where Stalin was leading them and saw in Trotsky's struggle a fight against the corruption of the revolution. In 1928, a group of Red Army leaders, including Muralov, Putna and Yakir, addressed a secret statement to the Politburo expressing solidarity with the Left Opposition (Isaac Deutscher,

*The Prophet Unarmed—Trotsky: 1921-1929*). Sentiment for Trotsky likewise permeated the GPU and other intelligence services (see, for example, Elizabeth Poretsky, *Our Own People*). A decade later Stalin took his revenge by decapitating the Red Army's general staff, beginning with Marshal Tukhachevsky.

By the time the Sixth Comintern Congress convened in 1928, the leadership which had led the CI and its sections in Lenin's time had long since been removed and replaced. Yet even confirmed Stalinists like Togliatti and Thorez were affected by Trotsky's "Critique of the Draft Program" and its devastating polemic against "socialism in one country." More significantly, delegate James P. Cannon, a leading cadre of the American Communist Party who had worked for a period of time in Moscow in Lenin and Trotsky's Comintern, was won over to the Opposition on the basis of Trotsky's critique. Cannon, in turn, won to Trotskyism much of the pre-existing "Cannon faction" of the American CP, providing the nucleus for what was to become the strongest section of the International Left Opposition and, later, the Fourth International.

In 1928, in the face of a virtual kulak insurrection, a panicked Stalin broke with Bukharin and made a left turn on economic policy, implementing in his own brutal way significant aspects of Trotsky's economic program, dramatically vindicating Trotsky's five-year-long struggle against the rightist course. But this also caused turmoil in the Opposition's ranks. Prominent Oppositionists like Pyatakov, Preobrazhensky and Radek capitulated, arguing that the Stalin faction had now adopted their program. Pyatakov and Preobrazhensky had



always been concerned primarily with the question of socialist industrialization, the latter even accepting the possibility of building socialism in a single country. But, as Trotsky later noted, the cornerstone of the Left Opposition's struggle was the perspective of world socialist revolution:

"The Left Opposition began with the struggle for the industrialization and agrarian collectivization of the Soviet Union. *This* fight it won in a certain sense, namely, in that, beginning with 1928, the whole policy of the Soviet government represents a bureaucratically distorted application of the principles of the Left Opposition. Without this the Soviet Union would not be in existence any longer. But the economic questions of the USSR formed only one part, and a subordinate one at that, of our program, whose center of gravity rested in the sphere of international revolution."

—"The Meaning of Rakovsky's Surrender" (March 1934)

## Germany: The Decisive Test

Stalin's left turn against the kulaks and Nepmen was accompanied internationally by the so-called "third period" policy of sectarian opposition to the united front and to the official trade unions. With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, the Weimar Republic was thrown into severe crisis. Both the Nazis and the Communists were gaining influence rapidly, though the KPD's base of industrial workers plummeted as a result of mass layoffs and its abandonment of the official trade unions in favor of "red unions." Yet the workers were straining against the passivity imposed by the Social Democratic tops in the face of the mortal fascist threat. The situation was heading in the direction of a revolutionary clash between the proletariat and the Nazi shock troops of German capitalism.

But in place of a revolutionary policy, the Stalinists substituted pseudo-leftist adventurism and sectarian posturing. Stalin dubbed the Social Democracy the "left wing of fascism," refusing to propose joint action which would have exposed the SPD's treachery and mobilized its ranks in struggle. In 1931 the KPD even joined with the Nazis in an unsuccessful attempt to unseat the Social Democratic Prussian state government through the "red referendum." Trotsky denounced the Stalinist bureaucracy for trying "to act against fascism with its own weapon, borrowing the colors of its political palette, and trying to outshout it at the auction of patriotism" ("Against National Communism! [Lessons of the 'Red Referendum']," August 1931).

Time and again, Trotsky warned that Stalin's strategy was a recipe for disaster, that fascism was not simply one

more undifferentiated reactionary force but aimed to strangle the entire labor movement:

"Fascism is not merely a system of reprisals, of brutal force, and of police terror. Fascism is a particular governmental system based on the uprooting of all elements of proletarian democracy within bourgeois society. The task of fascism lies not only in destroying the Communist vanguard.... It is also necessary to smash all independent and voluntary organizations, to demolish all the defensive bulwarks of the proletariat, and to uproot whatever has been achieved during three-quarters of a century by the Social Democracy and the trade unions."

—"What Next?" (January 1932)

"What Next?" was distributed in the tens of thousands, evidencing widespread receptivity to Trotsky's call for a united front of the Communist and Social Democratic workers organizations. In early 1932 the German Left Opposition, though extremely weak, initiated a Workers Struggle Committee in Oranienburg (near Berlin)—embracing the KPD, SPD, unions and unemployed committees—which led to the formation of a workers defense squadron against the Nazi gangs. Trotsky also called on the Kremlin leaders to mobilize the Red Army on Germany's borders in the event of a Nazi takeover. "A victory of fascism in Germany," he warned in November 1931, "would signify an inevitable war against the USSR."

But Stalin did not fight in Germany, nor did he want to fight in the Soviet Union when Hitler invaded in June 1941 (as the memoirs of numerous high-ranking Red Army officials attest). Behind the Stalinists' pseudo-revolutionary bluster about "social-fascism" was a criminal passivity rife with illusions in the strength of the KPD's parliamentary support. KPD leader Remmele blustered in the Reichstag, "Let Hitler take office—he will soon go bankrupt, and then it will be our day." Thälmann ridiculed Trotsky's urgent appeals for action, declaring in September 1932: "Germany will of course not go fascist—our electoral victories are a guarantee of this." Nine months later, Thälmann was sitting in Hitler's dungeons.

Hitler's appointment as chancellor did not in itself signal the death knell for the German proletariat. The International Left Opposition hoped and worked for proletarian resistance to Hitler's new government. The International Pre-Conference of the Opposition, held in Paris in early February 1933, voted to levy a special assessment on each member to further the struggle in Germany. The German Opposition was instructed

to make immediate preparations for the emigration of some of its leading cadre and for the publication of an organ abroad. In Germany, they illegally printed a widely distributed appeal "To All Members of the Communist Party of Germany, to All Social Democratic Workers, to the Entire Proletariat of Germany," which ended in the call, "Smash fascism! Long live the joint action of the proletarian front! Long live the victory of the proletariat!"

Many in the Opposition had anticipated that some kind of civil war would follow Hitler's appointment as chancellor on January 30. Addressing the disorientation in the ILO's ranks, Trotsky wrote:

"The complete absence of resistance on the part of the German workers has provoked certain troubles within our own ranks. We expected that the onward march of the fascist danger would surmount not only the perfidious policy of the reformists but also the ultimist sabotage of the Stalinists. These hopes were not confirmed. Were our expectations false? This question cannot be put in such a formal manner. We were *obliged* to proceed from a course based upon resistance and to do all in our power for its realization. To acknowledge a priori the impossibility of resistance would have meant not to push the proletariat forward but to introduce a supplementary demoralizing element."

—"Germany and the USSR" (March 1933)

## The Fight for the Fourth International

Initially, Trotsky called only for a new party in Germany, waiting to see whether sections of the CI would rebel against Stalin's catastrophic course. The International Pre-Conference had sent a telegram to the Comintern demanding the immediate convocation of its Seventh Congress, and full rights for participation by the Opposition, to discuss the German situation and the threat posed to the USSR. But from within the CI there were not even demands for a critical discussion. It was clear that the stranglehold of the bureaucracy over the CPSU and CI could no longer be dislodged through factional struggle. This had immediate ramifications for the fate of the Soviet Union itself. It was now clear that only a *proletarian political revolution* could reverse the degeneration which had progressively engulfed the Soviet state since 1923-24. Trotsky outlined this course in "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" (October 1933):

"In reality, the last congress of the Bolshevik Party took place at the beginning of 1923, the Twelfth Party Congress. All subsequent congresses were bureaucratic parades. Today, even such congresses have been discarded. No normal 'consti-



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tutional' ways remain to remove the ruling clique. The bureaucracy can be compelled to yield power into the hands of the proletarian vanguard only by force."

Following Hitler's assumption of power, the Comintern, seized with panic, dropped all mention of "social-fascism" and rapidly embarked on the all-embracing class collaboration of the "people's front against fascism," which was codified at its Seventh Congress in 1935. The CI had been transformed into an instrument for the Kremlin's diplomatic maneuvers, an agency for shackling the international proletariat to its imperialist rulers. In the name of the popular front, French CP leader Thorez broke a general strike in 1936. In Spain, the Comintern became a direct agent of bourgeois counterrevolution. Even as they cynically appealed to anti-fascist sentiment to mobilize international brigades, the Stalinists sabotaged the workers revolution which was the *only* way to crush the Francoists, instead declaring their commitment to defense of bourgeois property against the insurgent Spanish proletariat, while slaughtering the most revolutionary-minded workers on behalf of the "democratic" imperialists. In 1935 Trotsky wrote, "Stalin Has Signed the Death Certificate of the Third International," calling the Seventh Congress later that year the "Liquidation Congress." It was indeed. In 1943, in order to appease his wartime imperialist allies, Stalin formally liquidated the CI with the stroke of a pen.

As Lenin had done following the 4 August 1914 collapse of the SPD and

the Second International, in 1933 Trotsky began the arduous struggle of assembling the forces for a new international revolutionary vanguard. Now calling itself the International Communist League, the Left Opposition sought every opportunity to break out of isolation and find new allies, even temporary ones, so that the first steps could be taken toward the building of a new International. There was some resistance to this course even within the ICL. Arguments were raised that the call for a Fourth International was "premature," or misplaced in a period of proletarian defeats. Trotsky replied: "The proletariat has need of an International *at all times and under all conditions*. If there is no Comintern today, we must say so openly and immediately start the preparation for a new International" ("Success or Failure?", September 1933).

Trotsky also waged repeated struggles against those who wanted to wash their hands of the Soviet degenerated workers state and who argued that the Stalinist bureaucracy represented a new class of exploiters, variously described as "state-capitalist" and, later, "bureaucratic-collectivist." Against them, Trotsky insisted that it remained the task of the international proletariat to unconditionally defend the Soviet Union against imperialism and counterrevolution. The bureaucracy was not a new social class but a fragile, contradictory parasitic *caste* which derived its privileges from, and thus was at times forced to defend, by its own bureaucratic means, the social foundations of the workers state.



**Nazi stormtroopers march on KPD headquarters, Berlin, January 1933. In their fight for workers united front to crush fascist gangs, German Trotskyists in their newspaper *Permanente Revolution* raised the call: "Protect and Defend the KPD!"**

Seeking a regroupment of revolutionary forces, in August 1933 the ICL signed "The Declaration of Four" with the German SAP (Socialist Workers Party) and the Dutch OSP (Independent Socialist Party) and RSP (Revolutionary Socialist Party) of Sneevliet, centrist formations which stood halfway between the Second and Third Internationals but were moving left under the impact of the German debacle. The discredited parties of the Second International were also being reinvigorated, as working-class militants and youth disillusioned with the Comintern joined the social-democratic parties. In February 1934, an international youth conference in Belgium voted to work for the creation of a new International. In France, Belgium, Switzerland and Spain, sections of the Socialist Youth became sympathetic to Trotsky's ideas—the Spanish youth explicitly appealed to the Trotskyists to join their party in order to help make it Bolshevik.

In response to these developments the ICL adopted the tactic of the "French turn," temporary entries into the SPs aimed at winning to Trotskyism sections of the burgeoning left wings. The success of these entries varied from country to country, with the American Trotskyists recruiting a sizable enough layer of working-class militants and youth to found the Socialist Workers Party in 1938 with over 2,000 members. In Spain, where an entry appeared most fruitful and could have had the most immediate revolutionary repercussions, Andre Nin's Communist Left refused to carry out the tactic, instead breaking with Trotsky to



SWP memorial meeting for Leon Trotsky, New York, 28 August 1940.

pursue an unprincipled fusion out of which came the centrist POUM. The significance of this betrayal for the fate of the Spanish Civil War can be gleaned from the fact that the Spanish CP at the time consisted of several hundred members. With an infusion of thousands of revolutionary-minded workers and youth from the SP, the Spanish Trotskyists would have been well-placed to combat Stalin's sabotage of the Spanish Revolution.

Trotskyism also found an echo in colonial and semicolonial countries like Vietnam, Ceylon and Bolivia, where the Stalinist policy of the "people's front" meant support to continued imperialist subjugation. In 1945, the Vietnamese Trotskyists led a mass anti-imperialist insurrection of the Saigon proletariat as Ho Chi Minh was welcoming the troops of British and French "democratic" colonialism.

Nonetheless, with the exception of the U.S. SWP, the sections of the Fourth International consisted of dozens or hundreds at the time of its founding in Sep-

tember 1938. But with the impending threat of imperialist war and the drying up of the various centrist currents following the advent of popular-front governments in France and Spain, the objective need for the foundation of a new International permitted no further delay. Declaring that "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership," the basic programmatic document adopted at the founding conference, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (Transitional Program) noted:

"The definite passing over of the Comintern to the side of the bourgeois order, its cynically counterrevolutionary role throughout the world, particularly in Spain, France, the United States and other 'democratic' countries, created exceptional supplementary difficulties for the world proletariat. Under the banner of the October Revolution, the conciliatory politics practiced by the 'People's Front' dooms the working class to impotence and clears the road for fascism."

Weak in numbers, the Fourth International was soon thrust into the maelstrom

of World War II, as its most talented European cadre were decimated by the combined onslaught of fascist and Stalinist repression.

## Legacy of Stalinism

In his 1987 speech on the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, Gorbachev said "the Party's leading nucleus headed by Joseph Stalin had safeguarded Leninism in an ideological struggle" against Trotsky, who "negated the possibility of building socialism in conditions of capitalist encirclement." The "ideological struggle" which Gorbachev hailed was a campaign of harassment, repression and terror that ended in the blood-drenched dungeons of the Lubianka and the desolate concentration camps in Vorkuta. From the first expulsions and arrests of Oppositionists in 1927 to the first execution two years later, when GPU official Jacob Blumkin was shot for having had contact with Trotsky in Prinkipo, Turkey, the anti-Bolshevik terror mushroomed into the horrendous blood purges surrounding the Moscow show trials.

Blumkin was not the last GPU cadre to be shot for supporting the Left Opposition; in 1937, Ignace Reiss was assassinated after declaring for the Fourth International. Notwithstanding the bourgeois homily that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely" to the contrary, it took repeated purges to turn the GPU into a pliant instrument of Stalin's anti-Bolshevik terror. The GPU agents who were sent to drag Trotsky off to Alma Ata in 1928 expressed shame and embarrassment. Even in the prison camps in the early '30s, the GPU treated communist oppositionists with some measure of respect. In his autobiographical *The Russian Enigma* (1940), Ante Ciliga recalled how he and his comrades in prison were allowed to carry on organized political discussions, and noted: "The terms 'political repression,' 'political' prisoners or exiles are, in the U.S.S.R., applied only to socialists, anarchists and Opposition Communists. They alone are entitled to the special treatment of political prisoners."

By the early 1930s, there were some one thousand Oppositionists in the Vorkuta prison camp alone, and thousands more in other camps. As they were later marched off to be shot and thrown into unmarked mass graves in the Vorkuta wastes, the Trotskyists defiantly sang the *Internationale*. Finally, in August 1940, Stalinist agent Ramon Mercader tracked down and assassinated Trotsky himself in his home in Coyoacán, Mexico.

Ultimately it was not enough for Stalin to smash and isolate his political oppo-

nents to secure the rule of the conservative bureaucratic caste. He had to destroy the Stalin faction itself, including assassinating Leningrad party chief Sergei Kirov, since many of its leading members were opposed to shooting Communist opponents of their faction.

By the mid-'30s, all the leading personalities in Stalin's bureaucracy had, with few exceptions, been arrayed *against* the Bolsheviks in 1917 (Vyshinsky had signed the order for Lenin's arrest!). At least since 1933 on, the CPSU was basically a gang for skimming off the social surplus generated by the planned, collectivized economy. In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky described the "automobile-harem factor," as the heiresses of the former nobility flocked to marry into the new Stalinist aristocracy. While the working class sweated to fulfill the five-year plans, rightfully taking pride in the economic achievements of their workers state, "the whole advance in social well-being, municipal utilities, comfort, culture, art, still serves chiefly, if not exclusively, this upper privileged stratum."

But because these privileges derived from its position atop the workers state, the bureaucracy was not a new social class but a parasitic caste which embodied enormous contradictions. Trotsky

observed that "all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy," from Bolshevism to fascism—in itself evidence that the CPSU had ceased to be a political party in any sense. This was empirically shown in 1937 when three leading Soviet officials broke with the Stalin regime: GPU agent Ignace Reiss joined the cause of the Fourth International (and was soon assassinated); Butenko, a Soviet diplomat in Italy, went over to fascism; and Walter Krivitsky, also a GPU agent, defected to American bourgeois democracy.

In the face of a political revolution, this bureaucratic caste would shatter, Trotsky noted, with one wing going over to the counterrevolution and another to the insurgent proletariat. In any case, only the ouster of the bureaucracy and a return to the soviet democracy instituted by the Bolshevik Revolution could guarantee the further advance to socialism:

"The bureaucracy replaced the soviets as class organs with the fiction of universal electoral rights—in the style of Hitler-Goebbels. It is necessary to return to the soviets not only their free democratic form but also their class content. As once the bourgeoisie and kulaks were not permitted to enter the soviets, so now it is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets.... "Only the victorious revolutionary uprising of the oppressed masses can revive

the Soviet regime and guarantee its further development toward socialism. There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection—the party of the Fourth International!"

—Transitional Program

Stalinism corrupted or crushed the communist aspirations of one generation after another, extirpating the internationalism which had animated the Russian Revolution. But where the tentacles of Stalin's murder machine could not reach, there remained cadre who continued to fight for the authentic Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky. James P. Cannon's struggle for Trotskyism, and his direct experience working in the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky, provided much of the slender thread of revolutionary continuity which is today embodied in the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Our tendency arose out of a struggle against the revisionism of Michel Pablo, which abandoned the fight for an independent proletarian revolutionary vanguard and in 1951-53 destroyed the Fourth International and was to engulf Cannon's SWP a decade later. We can rightly echo Cannon's words in 1939: "We are, in fact, the party of the Russian revolution. We have been the people, and the only people, who have had the Russian revolution in their program and in their blood."

One week after Hitler took power in 1933, Trotsky had warned that the Stalinists' continued refusal to organize proletarian resistance to Hitler "will be nothing less than a surrender to fascism, an historic crime tantamount to the liquidation of the party and of the Communist International. Should such a disaster happen, the working class will have to make its way towards a Fourth International; and it will have to make it through mountains of corpses and years of unbearable sufferings and calamities" (quoted in Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast—Trotsky: 1929-1940*). Unfortunately, that has proved to be the case. More than ever, the fate of the multinational peoples of the ex-USSR and all humanity hinges on the re forging of an authentically Leninist-Trotskyist Fourth International.

We wish to cite two invaluable sources for background to this article and for a broader description of the degeneration of the CPSU. One is Isaac Deutscher's three-volume biography of Trotsky: *The Prophet Armed—Trotsky: 1879-1921 (1954)*, *The Prophet Unarmed—Trotsky: 1921-1929 (1959)* and *The Prophet Outcast—Trotsky: 1929-1940 (1963)*. The second is E.H. Carr's multi-volume series, *A History of Soviet Russia (1950-78)*. ■

## Reforge the Fourth International!

# Stalin Drowned the Communist Party of Lenin and Trotsky in Blood



The party of October was revolutionary and internationalist: Lenin and Trotsky (center) with delegates to the First Congress of the Communist International, Moscow, 1919.

January 1993 marked 60 years since Hitler's rise to power, which was the prelude to the 1941 Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and the slaughter of well over 20 million Soviet citizens, and millions more Jews, Gypsies and others. The

German Social Democrats, beholden to the capitalist state, refused to mobilize the working class to stop Hitler from coming to power because proletarian struggle would endanger the Weimar Republic. The German Communist Party (KPD) abetted this suicidal policy by its criminal passivity. And Stalin himself bore direct responsibility for this unparalleled catastrophe, by rejecting outright the possibility of joint struggle against the Nazis by the Communist and Social Democratic workers organizations.

Repeatedly, Leon Trotsky and the Left

Opposition gave the alarm: "the leadership of the Comintern is driving the German proletariat toward an enormous catastrophe, the essence of which is a panicky capitulation before fascism!" In the aftermath, Trotsky drove home that this world-historic defeat of the proletariat signaled that the Communist International (CI) and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), its controlling center, were dead for the cause of revolution. "Yet the proletarian party is indispensable if the Soviet state is not

*continued on page 55*





Stay Tuned – New ICL Line Change Coming

# Stalinists Led the Counterrevolution? ICL Between Shachtman and Trotsky

Key Issue in East Europe and USSR Yesterday,  
China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam Today

Andor D. Heller/Hungarian News Agency



**Hungarian workers toppled Stalin statue in 1956 political revolution. Workers uprising, vowing to defend socialized property, led to split in the Stalinist bureaucracy. Most of Communist Party membership went over to the insurgents.**

*The following article is reprinted from The Internationalist No. 9, January-February 2001.*

AUGUST 21—For the past four years, the Spartacist League and International Communist League (SL/ICL) have vituperated against the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International (IG/LFI) for our exposure of their anti-Marxist claim that *the Stalinist bureaucracy led the counterrevolution in East Germany* (the DDR). We pointed out that the ICL had adopted, after the fact, the position of

various pseudo-Trotskyist Stalinophobes who used this as “theoretical” justification for sidling up to the bourgeoisie and its direct agents who actually did lead the counterrevolution in the DDR (Kohl’s Christian Democrats and Brandt’s Social Democrats), the Soviet Union (Bush’s man Yeltsin) and East Europe (such as Solidarnosc, the Polish company union for the Vatican and CIA).

The SL/ICL’s new line was generated in its factional frenzy leading to the 1996 expulsion of several leading com-

rades, who then founded the Internationalist Group. In the July 1996 document published by these comrades, we noted that this line “portray[s] the Stalinist bureaucracy as spearheading the destruction of the proletarian property forms on which it was an excrescence. In reality, this is the line that ‘Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through.’ The Spartacist tendency has always fought this kind of equation between the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and that of direct representatives of the capitalist class.”

For four years, issue after issue of the SL newspaper *Workers Vanguard* have repeated this line of a supposed Stalinist-led counterrevolution. In fact, the ICL viewed it as so important that they even wrote it into their revised “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program,” saying: “The Kremlin abetted by the East German Stalinists led the counterrevolution in the DDR” (*Spartacist* No. 54, Spring 1998). A major article on China in *WV* (No. 715, 11 June 1999) generalized it to the USSR and all of East Europe, saying flatly: “In the end, it was the Stalinists who led the counterrevolution.” In the same issue, a lengthy polemic against the Internationalist Group over China declared “we warn the main force leading the drive for capitalist restoration today is the Stalinist regime itself. Not so the IG.”

*WV* was responding to our article, “Where Is China Going? Workers Political Revolution vs. Capitalist Counterrevolution” in *The Internationalist* No. 6 (November-December 1998), where we wrote:

“The leading force for bourgeois counterrevolution in China today is the *bourgeoisie* and powerful capitalist-restorationist forces inside and around the bureaucracy who are allied with it. Likewise, it was the German bourgeoisie of the Fourth Reich and its social-democratic running dogs who led the drive for capitalist reunification that obliterated the DDR in 1990....”

We noted that “the Beijing Stalinist bureaucracy has gone further than the government of any other deformed workers state in fostering market reforms that fuel capitalist forces,” which are now consolidating their power and influence. “But while the bureaucrats have provided the openings and opportunity for this process, the capitalists do not trust them. The bourgeoisie understands all too well that the governing layer in China is still dependent upon the economic structure of a workers state.” We quoted there from Trotsky’s November 1937 article, “Not a Workers’ and Not a Bourgeois State?” where he wrote:

“The struggle for domination, considered on a historical scale, is not between the proletariat and the bureaucracy, but between the proletariat and the world bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy is only the transmitting mechanism in this struggle.”

### Rendering Revisionism More Precise

In verbal exchanges with the Internationalist Group, SLers loudly insisted over and over that from Berlin to Beijing the Stalinists led and were leading the counterrevolution. Then in late July of this year, something strange occurred in Mexico. As a militant of the Grupo Internacional-

ista was explaining to a contact the parallels between the ICL’s line on China and that of another pseudo-Trotskyist current, a supporter of the Grupo Espartaquista (GEM), the ICL’s Mexican group, piped up to deny that this is their line. “The bureaucracy as such is not leading the counterrevolution,” he said. When we pointed out that this contradicted their published position, he repeated: “The bureaucracy paved the way for counterrevolution, it is not itself leading it.” A little later our comrades encountered other GEM supporters, who admitted they had made “*una pequeña precisión*,” they were rendering their position “slightly more precise.”

A week later in Philadelphia, the Internationalist Group ran into a Spartacist League sales team. At the end of the day a half-hour discussion took place between IG and SL supporters, in which the SLers refused to say that the Stalinists were “leading” the counterrevolution in China. Instead, they said that the bureaucracy “opened the door” and “paved the way” to capitalist restoration. The bureaucracy doesn’t have the cohesion of a class, such as the bourgeoisie or proletariat, that could lead a revolution or counterrevolution, they added. When we pointed out that they were repeating, word for word, what the IG/LFI had written and what they had previously vociferously denounced, they replied, “it’s not a matter of a formulation.”

What was gold for the ICL yesterday, suddenly becomes fool’s gold today. Just a “formulation” which was being made “more precise”?! The ICL can’t figure out who led the counterrevolution in East Europe and the USSR and who is leading the counterrevolution in China today, affecting the fate of 1.2 billion people, one-fifth of the world’s population? This is no trivial matter. For any genuine communist, it’s vital to understand the difference between the traitorous misleaders of the working class (the Stalinists, social democrats and various reformist and centrist pseudo-socialists) and the *class enemy* (the bourgeoisie). What does the ICL’s talk of political revolution in China mean if they can’t tell Chinese workers where and how to direct their blows? And who will take them seriously, let alone follow them, when they keep changing the line of fire and calling one about-face after another?

We pointed out that this “formulation” was the theoretical linchpin of ICL spokesman Al Nelson’s attack on long-time *WV* editor and ICL executive committee member Jan Norden over Germany, leading up to the June 1996 expulsions. Nelson wrote that “Norden can’t seem to grasp” that “the SED [the East German Stalinists’ Socialist Unity Party] was *leading* the counterrevolution” in the DDR. “In a way Nelson was right,” responded a current member of the editorial board of *Workers Vanguard* during the exchange in Philadelphia. In a way?! How could the SED lead the counterrevolution, we challenged, when the entire SED Politburo from Erich Honecker on down ended up in the jails of the German Fourth Reich?

A recent SL recruit said the Kremlin led the counterrevolution because the Soviet Army controlled the military forces in the DDR. An IG spokesman replied by asking, if the Soviet

Army was leading the counterrevolution, why didn't the ICL call for withdrawal of the Soviet troops? In fact, our comrade noted, several groups falsely claiming to be Trotskyist took exactly the line of the present-day ICL, that the Stalinists were leading the counterrevolution, and used this as justification for calling for removal of the Soviet troops. The ICL at the time opposed this because it correctly understood that this would open the door to the imperialists.

What about in the Soviet Union, we asked, did the Stalinists lead the counterrevolution there? No, said ICLers, it was a different situation. We pointed out that their new line change contradicted their own revised Declaration of Principles. Perhaps they would now issue a version 2.1? This was met by silence from the assembled SLers. We pointed out that they had not responded when we said the ICL's line of the bureaucracy leading the counterrevolution was Shachtmanite, and their silence showed they knew this was true. More silence. We pointed out that this was not about word games; that their repeated line changes reflected a different policy. Again, not a peep.

This silence was curious indeed coming from the SL whose practice has been to stage "scream-ins," trying to talk over and shout down our comrades. The exchanges in Mexico City and Philadelphia referred to here involved quite a few ICL members and were witnessed by others. It is possible that the ICL will try to slip in its latest line "rectification" unnoticed, without calling attention to it. But if it does, every ICL supporter will know that the leadership is covering up the fact that they vociferously argued one line against the IG/LFI and now they have adopted another line. Many ICLers may cynically pass this off, but others may have some "stomach aches" digesting this latest turnaround.

## The Dual Nature of the Stalinist Bureaucracy

The theoretical and programmatic ramifications of the ICL's line are far-reaching. This revision of Trotsky's analysis of the dual nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy negated what the SL/ICL had written on the "Russian question" for three decades, and was sharply counterposed to its own intervention fighting counterrevolution in the DDR and the USSR during 1989-92. It would also deeply disorient forces fighting for workers political revolution against encroaching capitalism in the bureaucratically deformed workers states today, first and foremost China, along with Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam.

In our July 1996 document on the expulsions from the ICL, titled *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*, we emphasized:

"The Stalinist bureaucracies, a parasitic intermediate layer, *undercut the defense* of the workers states by their treacherous policy of conciliating imperialism and politically suppressing the workers, and thus *prepared the way* for counterrevolution. In this way the Stalinists *play a counterrevolutionary role*, even more so in their international policies. But the actual overthrow of the bureaucratically deformed workers states and installa-

tion of capitalist rule was *led* not by the bureaucracies but by the direct agents of capitalism."

There should be no mistaking the seriousness of this question. Indeed, WV No. 651 (13 September 1996) wrote that the IG "fume[s] over a statement that the East German Stalinist 'SED in 1989-90 was leading the counterrevolution,' claiming that this denies Trotsky's position on the dual nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy." On the contrary, said WV, the IG's position was "an outright revision of the Trotskyist understanding of the Stalinist bureaucracy." This was its "proof" for the claim that the IG represents "Pabloism of the Second Mobilization." Yet today the SL/ICL is junking the position which it had previously declared the *sine qua non* of Trotskyism.

Trotsky's actual position on the nature of Stalinism was summed up in his crucial work, "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" (October 1933). For many years the SL/ICL cited this article against myriad Stalinophobic opponents. Trotsky wrote that what is crucial is the specific class basis on which a bureaucracy arises:

"The bureaucracy is indissolubly bound up with a ruling economic class, feeding itself upon the social roots of the latter, maintaining itself and falling together with it...."

"The further unhindered development of bureaucratism must lead inevitably to the cessation of economic and cultural growth, to a terrible social crisis and to the downward plunge of the entire society. But this would imply not only the collapse of the proletarian dictatorship but also the end of bureaucratic domination...."

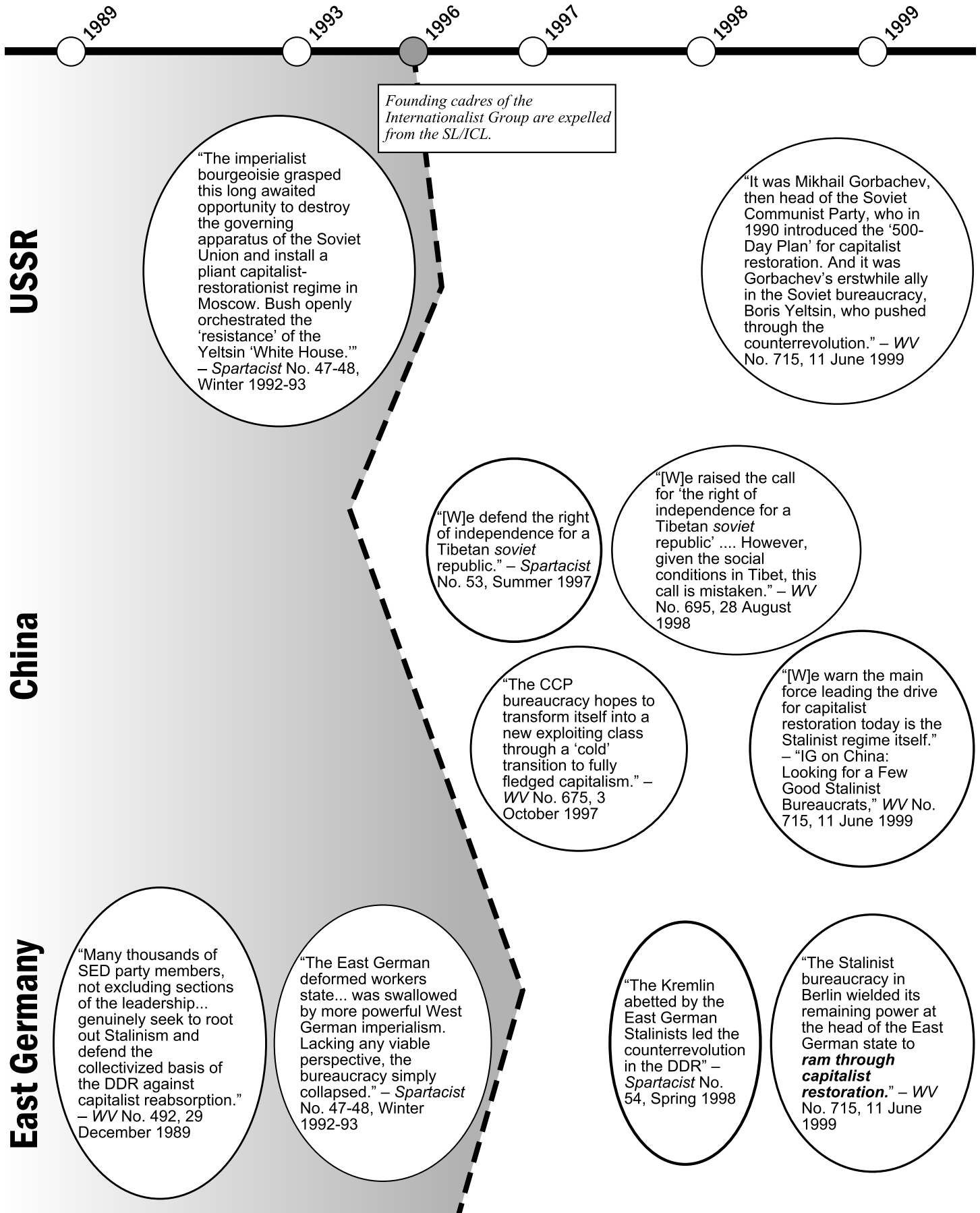
"[W]hether we take the variant of further successes of the Soviet regime or, contrariwise, the variant of its collapse, the bureaucracy in either case turns out to be not an independent class but an excrescence upon the proletariat. A tumor can grow to tremendous size and even strangle the living organism, but a tumor can never become an independent organism."

"[The bureaucracy] defends the proletarian dictatorship with its own methods, but these methods are such as facilitate the victory of the enemy tomorrow. Whoever fails to understand this dual role of Stalinism in the USSR has understood nothing."

Trotsky wrote these lines only a few months after Hitler had taken power in Germany, a world-historic defeat for the proletariat which had been made possible by Stalin's disastrous line declaring the reformist Social Democrats to be "social-fascist" and refusing to form a united front with them against the actual fascists. On the eve of World War II, as the fate of the Soviet Union hung in the balance, a petty-bourgeois opposition in the Trotskyist movement led by Max Shachtman and James Burnham abandoned the Fourth International's position of unconditional military defense of the USSR. Murry Weiss, a spokesman for the Trotskyist majority led by James P. Cannon, wrote in answer to the "Third Camp" minority:

"[I]t was this slight misconception as to who was the main enemy that helped to bury the German revolution. 'For the Marxists, the main enemy of the Russian working class, as well as the international working

# Zig-Zag: ICL Caught Between



# Shachtman and Trotsky



"The IG's incantation that the Stalinists cannot 'lead the counterrevolution' because they constitute a caste and not a class is a political amnesty for these treacherous sellouts.... It is a lying cover for the Stalinists to say, as does the IG in its 1998 article, that 'it was Washington's man Yeltsin, in constant contact with president Bush, at the head of elements that had split from the Stalinist bureaucracy, who seized power in August 1991 and proceeded to destroy the Soviet Union.'" – WV No. 746, 17 November 2000

"In China today, insofar as it is pushing market-oriented 'reforms,' conciliation of imperialism and repression of workers' struggles, the bureaucracy is leading the drive for capitalist restoration.... At the same time, there is a crucial difference between the act of counterrevolution itself and the lead-up to it. In that sense, the Beijing regime is not committed to capitalist restoration..." – "IG: Still Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats," WV No. 746, 17 November 2000

"However, WV [No. 746] never made clear, as it should have, that we were correcting the earlier [No. 715] polemic. And it would have been better to have stated that the Beijing bureaucracy is 'promoting and greatly strengthening the forces of capitalist restoration,' rather than 'leading the drive for capitalist restoration.'" – *Spartacist* No. 58, Spring 2004

"The fact that it took repeated party fights in the late 1990s and early 2000s against agnosticism on the question of defending the Chinese workers state and/or third-campist formulations in our propaganda on China ... reveals that the critical importance of this question was not assimilated by the previous party leadership." – *Spartacist* No. 60, Autumn 2007

"As a brittle, parasitic caste resting atop the socialized property, the Stalinist bureaucracy is incapable of implementing a cold, gradual restoration of capitalism from above." – *Spartacist* No. 62, Spring 2011

"These assertions of our revolutionary purpose ['the PDS led the counterrevolution in the DDR' and 'we were the revolutionary leadership'] contained an important kernel of truth .... At the same time, they were polemical excesses in the heat of battle." – *Spartacist* No. 58, Spring 2004

"It is not correct to say 'the PDS led the counterrevolution in the DDR' and 'we were the revolutionary leadership' in the incipient political revolution in the DDR in 1989-90." – *Spartacist* No. 58

"The conference rejected the claim... that a purported failure to evaluate our intervention into the incipient political revolution in the East German deformed workers state (DDR) in 1989-90 was at the root of the ICL's problems." – *Spartacist* No. 62, Spring 2011



class, is the *class* enemy.... The Bolshevik-Leninists in the U.S.S.R. will be the best fighters and because of that they will tell the Russian workers the truth: In order to win this war against imperialism we must overthrow the traitor Stalin and appeal to the revolutionary working class of the world to come to our aid."

—"Marxist Criteria and the Character of the War," [SWP] *Internal Bulletin*, February 1940

From the Soviet Union under Stalin to China under Mao's heirs today, the indispensable instrument to lead workers political revolution to oust the traitorous Stalinist bureaucracies is a Trotskyist (Bolshevik-Leninist) party. This is indissolubly bound up with forging such parties in the imperialist centers and the semi-colonial countries, re-forging a genuinely Trotskyist Fourth International to sweep away imperialism through international socialist revolution.

### From "Feudalism" to Shachtmanism

WV No. 715 wrote on China, "The IG is fond of screaming how we have changed our line on every question under the sun." Now they are doing it again, precisely over China. The ICL has changed its line on a whole number of key questions recently, usually in direct response to the LFI. In our July 1996 document we noted: "whether for simple factional animus or reflecting a deeper shift in the party, the ICL has now not only revised its own Leninist organizational norms and parts of its recent history, it has begun to adopt revisionist positions at the formal programmatic level. Most significantly, in the Germany dispute, the ICL has rejected important aspects of Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism." Since then the ICL has changed its line on the colonial question, the popular front, permanent revolution, the general strike and labor mobilization against imperialist war, the nature of corporatist "unions" as well as the key thesis of the Transitional Program, writing off long-held Trotskyist and characteristically Spartacist positions.

For decades, the SL held that Leninists fight for independence for all colonies, as Lenin, Trotsky, the Third and Fourth Internationals insisted. Beginning in 1998, the SL declared "we do not presently advocate independence for Puerto Rico," calling only for its "right" to separation from U.S. imperialist domination. From 1988 to 1997, the ICL called on workers and the oppressed in Mexico to "break with the Cárdenas popular front." This key position of the GEM appeared in every issue of its newspaper. Then, as Cárdenas was about to be elected head of the Mexico City government and it was more crucial than ever to combat the popular front, the ICL dropped this line, concluding that Mexican workers are so besotted with nationalism that there is no point in calling for them to break from the class-collaborationist "alliance" with the bourgeois nationalist opposition party. Subsequently it declared a popular front impossible in any country without a mass workers party, thus contradicting Trotsky's writings on India and China in the 1930s as well as the Spartacist tendency's own writings on popular fronts from the anti-war movement in the U.S. to

Bolivia, El Salvador and many other countries.

In some instances, as now appears to be the case over the nature of Stalinism, the ICL bombastically proclaimed a line only to withdraw it later when it couldn't defend it under polemical fire. Thus in Mexico, the ICL declared "IG 'Disappears' Permanent Revolution" (WV No. 663, 7 March 1997) and "IG Discards Permanent Revolution" (WV No. 672, 8 August 1997) because we denounced their fantasy that workers revolution in Latin America must be for "the destruction of feudal peonage in the countryside" and of the "heritage of Spanish feudal colonialism." We pointed out that the hoary myth of Latin American "feudalism" was invented by the Stalinists to justify their program of "two-stage revolution." After a year of lambasting the IG on this score, suddenly in December 1997 the ICL leadership discovered that, *mirabili dictu*, there was no feudalism in present-day Mexico after all and the Spanish colonial heritage was one of "mercantile capitalism."

With egg on their faces, ICLers declared that this was merely an "analytical" difference. In fact, there are direct programmatic consequences for any tendency which fights for agrarian revolution in Latin America (which the ICL has no intention of doing). As for the ICL's revisionism on the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy, this has already had programmatic consequences *on China*. The article in *Spartacist* (No. 53, Summer 1997) calling for an independent "Soviet Tibet" was no fluke, although the ICL later withdrew this call. It came amid a crescendo of "free Tibet" propaganda and reflected the view that the Stalinists were "leading" counterrevolution in China. This was precisely the argument made by pseudo-Trotskyists like Workers Power who called for independent "soviet republics" in the Baltics in 1990 just as the fascistic Lithuanian Sajudis was demanding independence from the USSR.

In our article "Where Is China Going?" we noted: "in defending the right to independence of an entirely mythical 'soviet Tibet' and in claiming that the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] formally voted to carry out the restoration of capitalism, the ICL press was directly reflecting the pressure and views of 'its own' imperialist bourgeoisie" (*The Internationalist* No. 6). After quoting the last half of this sentence, WV responds: "Actually, it is the view of a significant wing of the U.S. bourgeoisie that the Beijing bureaucracy is a battering ram for capitalist restoration." Thus they *confirm* our charge, essentially saying, so what? So what is that to claim the Stalinists are *leading* the counterrevolution is factually wrong, contradicts Trotsky's analysis of the nature of Stalinism and leads to the dangerously wrong perspective of a "cold" counterrevolution "led" by the Stalinist bureaucracy in its entirety.

This anti-Marxist perspective is explicitly stated in some, but not all ICL articles on China. WV No. 675 (3 October 1997) linked this to a supposed vote by the Stalinist CP to "liquidate state industry." WV No. 725 (10 December 1999) starts off with the view that joining the World Trade Organization would be the death knell of China's socialized

economy: “China’s entry into the WTO would mean eliminating what remains of the state monopoly of foreign trade, a key component of the collectivized economy created by the 1949 Chinese Revolution.” As we have written, China’s joining the WTO would greatly escalate pressures for restoration of capitalism. But it would sharply *pose the fight*, not end it. The ICL’s fantasy of Stalinist-led counterrevolution is the classic posture of those preparing to abandon defense of the deformed workers state before the final battle. This is not Trotskyism but proto-Shachtmanism.

### Third Campism of the Second Mobilization

In our earlier article on China, we noted: “Taken together with their recent flip-flop over Tibet, one might be tempted to ask: is there a ‘two-line struggle’ (to use a Maoist phrase) going on inside the ICL over China? Rather, this is another zig-zag of a degenerating centrist tendency.” No doubt the ICL leadership will explain another line “adjustment” as a sign of an internal corrective process, while seeking to minimize its import publicly and perhaps launching some new (or recycling an old) slander against the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International to divert attention from the enormity of their “mistake.” Certainly any revolutionary party can and will make mistakes. But the sheer number of the ICL’s recent “corrections” and uncorrected line changes should lead would-be revolutionary militants to inquire what is behind this. Marxists must begin by asking whose class interests the different policies represent.

Centrism, as Trotsky noted, is not a static or stable condition but an intermediate state, characterized by constant shifting and “organic amorphousness” (“Centrism and the Fourth International,” February 1934). There is also the key question of the *direction* of movement, typically of erstwhile revolutionary groups sliding into opportunism, occasionally of split-offs from reformism veering to the left under the impact of great upheavals (such as the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution or Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933). While various reformist/centrist pseudo-Trotskyist currents characterize the SL/ICL as hardened “sectarians” and “ultra-lefts”—as do the misnamed Bolshevik Tendency, the Mandelites and others—we have insisted that the ICL is moving unevenly *to the right*. The SL’s reaction to the anti-WTO/IMF/World Bank protests in Seattle and Washington, D.C. is a barometer: first insisting that the SL wouldn’t even sell its press in Seattle, then prettifying the D.C. protests to say that the youth present were untainted by anti-Communism.

This qualitative degeneration of the political tendency which for three decades upheld revolutionary Trotskyism was set off by the destruction of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states. This led the ICL to write (in its new Declaration of Principles, version 2.0) that although Trotsky stated in the 1938 Transitional Program that the world political situation is “chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat,” this

statement “predates the present deep regression of proletarian consciousness.” So according to the ICL, the key thesis of the founding program of the Fourth International is *out of date*, and the backward consciousness of the proletariat, not the leadership, is now key. Over China, WV No. 715 writes that “Stalinism has done everything in its power to wipe out anything that smacks of socialist consciousness in the working class,” suggesting that it has been successful in doing so. WV takes *The Internationalist* to task for referring to the need for a proletarian political revolution in China to link up with the (presumably non-existent) “socialist workers of Vietnam and North Korea.”

While falsely claiming that the IG is “Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats” in China, the reality is that *the ICL is writing off the Chinese working class as a revolutionary force*. Compare the article on “Where Is China Going?” in *The Internationalist* No. 6 with the ICL’s propaganda. While the ICL still ritually calls for workers political revolution (as did the “Bolshevik Tendency” on the USSR until August 1991), nowhere in the lengthy two-part China article in WV Nos. 714-715 (or in a dozen articles before or since) does it give any but the most minimal programmatic content to this slogan. In contrast, our article puts forward a series of transitional demands for mobilizing Chinese workers against encroaching counterrevolution and building a Trotskyist party in sharp class struggle.

The ICL’s snowballing line changes, corrections, corrections of corrections and revisions of revisions oscillate around a descending line heading from revolutionary Trotskyism toward reformism. We have characterized its present position as left centrism, but this is no final resting place. We have shown how the SL/ICL has taken on different aspects of left social-democratic currents, from De Leon’s abstract propagandism to Serrati’s refusal to build revolutionary leaderships in the colonial countries to Kautsky’s posture of “passive radicalism” on the eve of World War I. The various strands of left social democracy and its accompaniment, anarchosindicalism, proved incapable of carrying out workers revolution, and their protagonists degenerated into reformism or simply disappeared from the stage of history.

The ICL’s recent line of a counterrevolution led by the Stalinists is a retrospective backing off from the Trotskyist program it correctly fought for in the DDR and USSR in 1989-92, and a bridge to abandoning defense of the remaining deformed workers states by claiming that a “cold” counterrevolution already took place. It is the same line as that taken in August 1991 over the Soviet Union by various pseudo-Trotskyists including Workers Power in Britain and Altamira’s Partido Obrero in Argentina who subsequently formally abandoned defensism (WP decided that the bourgeois state had never been overthrown in East Europe, PO has since declared China capitalist).

As we have demonstrated the falsity of its arguments, and what they would mean in practice, the ICL has constantly tried to shift the debate. We pointed out that if the

SED Stalinists were leading the counterrevolution, what were the Spartakist Workers Party and Spartakist-Gruppen doing up there as speakers at the 3 January 1990 anti-fascist mobilization at the Soviet war memorial together with the SED leadership? The ICL responded by declaring that the SED became the leaders of the counterrevolution *after* Treptow. When we asked, if the SED tops led the counterrevolution, how come they all ended up in the Fourth Reich's jails, the ICL changed tack again, declaring that it was the *Kremlin* Stalinists who led the counterrevolution.

Now it is apparently preparing to drop the argument altogether, in good part for its own internal reasons. The ICL's Mexican section, the GEM, is clearly in crisis, as could be expected from a group that essentially sat out the ten-month UNAM student strike, with occasional forays onto campus to make sales and pronouncements and never fighting for revolutionary leadership to integrate the students' strike into a powerful working-class struggle. Today GEM supporters argue different lines on whether the Stalinists led the counterrevolution in the DDR and USSR, and finally announced that they are having internal discussion to figure this out. Meanwhile, they say that even though the claim that the Stalinist bureaucracy is leading the counterrevolution in China is "incorrect," they have to argue the old line until the new one is published.

The Spartacist League/U.S. certainly ought to be in a deep crisis after arguing a proto-Shachtmanite line for four years, then suddenly being struck dumb in Philadelphia and becoming tongue-tied in subsequent encounters. But by now SLers have become well-versed in the art of vehemently arguing both sides of a line. While this is the professional specialty of lawyers and bourgeois politicians, as well as reformist pseudo-socialists of all stripes and the centrists who chase after them, it is deadly for revolutionists. As James P. Cannon, the founding leader of American Trotskyism, wrote about the Shachtmanite minority that abandoned unconditional defense of the Soviet Union on the eve of World War II:

"The leaders of the opposition, and a very large percentage of their followers, have shown that they are capable of changing their opinions on all fundamental questions of theory and politics over night. This only demonstrates quite forcibly that their opinions in general are not to be taken too seriously."

—*The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*



Spartakist

**If Stalinists were leading the counterrevolution in East Germany, why did ICL join Stalinist SED leaders in speaking at 3 January 1990 anti-fascist mobilization at Treptow Soviet War Memorial, East Berlin?**

### Postscript

In response to the Internationalist Group polemic printed above, which was published as a leaflet and on our Internet site, the ICL brought out an answer titled "IG: Still Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 746, 17 November 2000). This has now been published in several languages, including a special supplement in Mexico. True to the new WV's apparent motto, "the more straw men the merrier," the article continues to invent positions for the IG that are the direct *opposite* of what is stated in our press. Yet amid the mountains of obfuscating verbiage, as predicted, they did slip in their latest line change on the nature of Stalinism.

After abundant hemming and hawing, WV notes "there is a crucial difference between the act of counterrevolution itself and the lead-up to it. In that sense, the Beijing regime is not committed to capitalist restoration and sectors of it might balk at the consequences...." This is a sharp about-face from the position that for four years was the *leitmotiv* of polemics by the SL/ICL against the IG and League for the Fourth International, namely that the Stalinists supposedly "led the counterrevolution" in East Germany. That Stalinophobic position was a whitewash of the bourgeoisie and directly contradicted the ICL's own intervention in the DDR and USSR during 1989-92.

Yet this "corrective" ties them up in new contradictions. Is it only the Beijing bureaucracy that gets cold feet at the moment of truth? Caught between Trotsky and Shachtman, the ICL has executed a dizzying series of zigzags on their path from revolutionary Marxism toward a left version of social democracy. Our reply to WV's revision-of-a-revision will be printed in the next issue. ■

# ICL Still Caught Between Shachtman and Trotsky



Workers and students fraternize with People's Liberation Army troops sent to Beijing to impose martial law, 21 May 1989.

## China: For Workers Political Revolution to Defeat Capitalist Counterrevolution!

*The following articles are reprinted from The Internationalist No. 11, Summer 2001.*

As the Spartacist League (SL) and International Communist League (ICL) slide deeper into pseudo-Trotskyist centrism, their polemics have taken on a distinctly schizophrenic cast, particularly those directed against the Internationalist Group (IG) and the League for the Fourth International (LFI). The latest example is an article titled, "IG: Still Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats," in *Workers Vanguard* No. 746 (17 November 2000), which vituperates against the IG/LFI in a ham-handed attempt to cover up the ICL's latest line change. This time it concerns a fundamental question for those who claim to uphold the political program of Leon Trotsky, co-leader together with Lenin of the Russian October Revolution of 1917. For the last five years, the SL/ICL has argued that the heirs of Stalin *led* the counterrevolution that put the bourgeoisie in power and destroyed the bureaucratically deformed/degenerated workers

states, from East Germany to the Soviet Union, and are leading the counterrevolution in China today. Now the ICL says it ain't necessarily so.

In our article, "Where Is China Going? Workers Political Revolution vs. Capitalist Counterrevolution" (*The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998), we went after the ICL for their line *negating* Trotsky's analysis of the "dual character" of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Usurping political power in the Soviet Union upon Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin and his cohorts replaced the Bolshevik watchword of world socialist revolution with their nationalist doctrine of "socialism in one country." Trotsky pointed out that this conservative petty-bourgeois layer sits atop and derives its privileged position from the workers state as it simultaneously transmits the pressures of imperialism. Crushing workers democracy and undermining the economic foundations of proletarian rule while seeking an impossible "peaceful coexistence" with world capitalism, the Stalinists pre-

pare the way for and open the door to capitalist restoration. But actual counterrevolution requires the leadership of stronger and more cohesive forces than the brittle bureaucratic caste. Thus we wrote:

“The leading force for bourgeois counterrevolution in China today is the *bourgeoisie* and powerful capitalist-restorationist forces inside and around the bureaucracy who are allied with it. Likewise, it was the German bourgeoisie of the Fourth Reich and its social-democratic running dogs who led the drive for capitalist reunification that obliterated the DDR in 1990; it was Lech Walesa and his Polish nationalist Solidarność, embraced by the Pope of counterrevolution and financed by the CIA (and the Vatican bank), which carried out the restoration of capitalism in Poland; it was Washington’s man Yeltsin, in constant contact with U.S. president Bush, at the head of elements that had split from the Stalinist bureaucracy, who seized power in August 1991 and proceeded to destroy the Soviet Union....

“While the bureaucracy with its counterrevolutionary policies is a contradictory, parasitic layer living off the workers state, the force that has the cohesion of clear class interests necessary to actually lead a counterrevolution is the bourgeoisie.”



In its previous installment (“IG on China: Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats,” WV No. 715, 11 June 1999) the ICL responded by reiterating its line: “we warn the main force leading the drive for capitalist restoration today is the Stalinist regime itself.” A major article on China in the same issue stated: “In the end, it was the Stalinists who led the counterrevolution” in the USSR and throughout East Europe. So according to the ICL, the Stalinists overthrew the regimes they presided over; this means, in effect,

that the bureaucracy was acting as an exploiting class. This throws overboard the Trotskyist understanding of the nature of the bureaucracy. Trotsky made the analogy between a bureaucratically led trade union and the bureaucratized Soviet Union; both are organizational embodiments of working-class power that Marxists defend against the bourgeoisie in spite of (and often against) the sellout tops. A class-conscious worker will understand the difference between the union misleaders, the *labor traitors* who sabotage the workers’ struggle in the interests of the bosses, and the bosses themselves, who are the *class enemy*.

This is not idle logic-chopping but a matter of crucial importance to the world proletariat. Restoration of capitalism in the Soviet bloc has meant devastation for the working people – mass unemployment, pervasive poverty, drastically shortened lifespans. Workers in the remaining deformed workers states fear for their livelihoods and their lives, but don’t know how to defend them. Yet the ICL’s dizzying zig-zags demonstrate that their talk about defending the deformed workers states and organizing for political revolution there is nothing but literary posturing.

### Suddenly Last Summer...

In “Looking...,” WV complained that “The IG is fond of screaming how we have changed our line on every question under the sun.” Indeed, we pointed out that never during the ICL’s intervention in East Germany and the Soviet Union during 1989-92 did it claim the *Stalinists* were leading the counterrevolution. The ICL has been unable to refute this easily verifiable fact. Yet suddenly last summer ICLers refused to defend their own anti-Trotskyist line. In an article we posted on the Internet last August (“Stalinists Led the Counterrevolution? ICL Between Shachtman and Trotsky,” reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001), we alerted our readers, “Stay Tuned – New ICL Line Change Coming.” And now we have it. In “Still Looking...,” buried under heaps of lies, inventions and distortions, of dead dogs and red herrings, we read that in the end the Stalinists do and don’t, will and won’t lead the counterrevolution.

WV starts off, “In China today, insofar as it is pushing market-oriented ‘reforms,’ conciliation of imperialism and repression of workers’ struggles, the bureaucracy is leading the drive for capitalist restoration....” Yet a sentence later it is singing a different tune:

“At the same time, there is a crucial difference between the act of counterrevolution itself and the lead-up to it. In that sense, the Beijing regime is not committed to capitalist restoration and sectors of it might balk at the consequences, particularly in fear of the kind of devastation wreaked on the industrial and military power of the former Soviet Union and, in some cases, because of genuine concern for the current and future plight of the workers and peasants.”

From “Looking...” to “Still Looking...,” the ICL has executed a sharp about-face on this central theme of its frenzied attacks on



the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International.

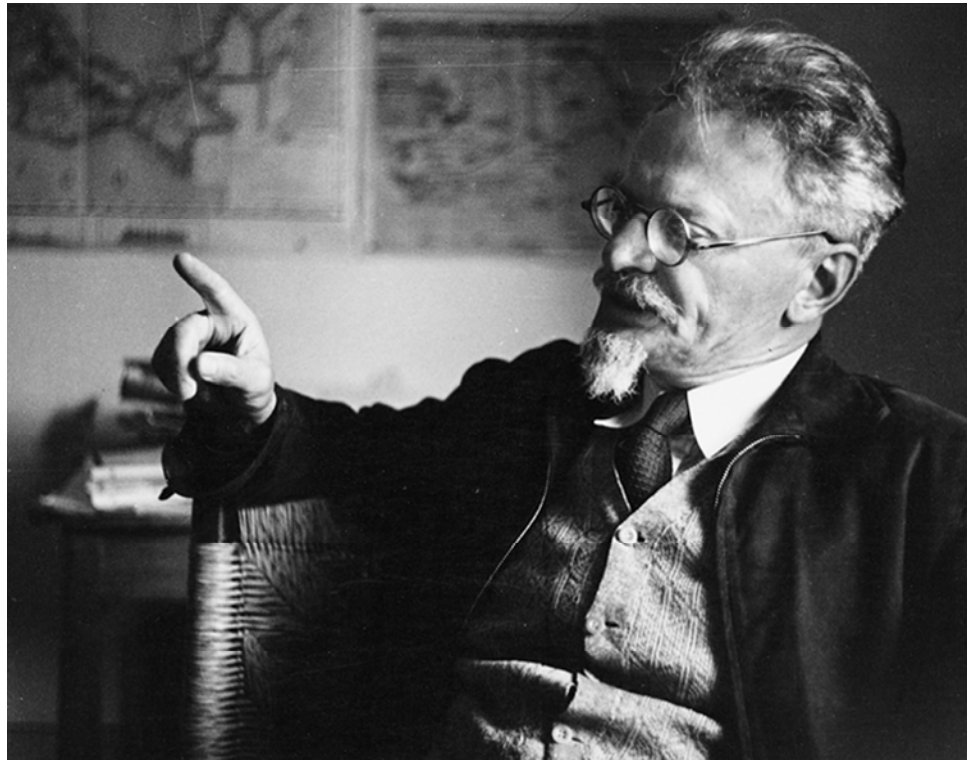
Strange, is it not, that for the last four years this “*crucial difference*” escaped the ICL, which now discovers that at the moment of truth “the Beijing regime is not committed to capitalist restoration and sectors of it might balk at the consequences”! Stranger yet that the ICL should pretend that the IG is “looking for a few good Stalinist bureaucrats” when WV itself declares that elements of the Chinese Stalinists might draw back from counterrevolution “because of genuine concern for the current and future plight of the workers and peasants”! Some paladins of counterrevolution, who at the last minute get cold feet and butterflies in the stomach!! One is tempted to remark that *insofar as* the ICL is talking out of both sides of its mouth, *in that sense* its weasel words add up to a crock of centrist confusionism.

### Get Out Your Hip Boots and a Shovel

From the outset, as WV declared that the founding cadres of the Internationalist Group had “fled” the ICL when in fact they were bureaucratically *expelled*, its attacks on the IG and LFI have been smear jobs rather than polemics. By now, like everything else in the “new WV,” they have been reduced to a shop-worn formula: start off by repeating a string of lies, no matter how obvious; throw in some sophomoric insults (“IGlets,” “Potemkin village idiots”); invent positions supposedly held by the IG/LFI in order to knock down some straw men; and end with sinister insinuations (the IG allegedly seeks to “spike” the ICL’s work and “would also be ready to serve as braintrusts for some pretty unsavory types”).

To borrow an expression from James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, in dealing with the ICL’s dirty smears it’s necessary to get out hip boots and a shovel to remove the filth they pile up. As we have pointed out before, the signature quality of a “new WV” polemic is the use of lies that anyone who has read the press of the LFI can easily see for themselves are 100 percent false. WV clearly figures it can circulate its fabrications far more widely than we can get out the truth. So in the interests of Marxist hygiene, we list below a few of the more blatant inventions in the latest ICL diatribe against the IG/LFI:

Clearly, WV is banking on their readership being a captive audience who have not read *The Internationalist*. But even the few truncated quotes they give of what we actually



Leon Trotsky in Mexico, 1939.

A. Buchman

write should give an attentive reader pause. Thus after first claiming of the IG, “Positing that the Stalinist bureaucracy – or a section of it – is inherently wedded to socialized property” (which, as the above quotes demonstrate, the IG does *not* posit), they quote from “Where Is China Going?”: “*Our strategy for political revolution is based on mobilizing the working class for communism. At the same time, we seek where possible to split sections of the bureaucracy.*” So? Stalinophobes like the Shachtmanites or adherents of Tony Cliff’s “theory” of a “state-capitalist” USSR who oppose this on principle would cringe at that statement. But the SL? To attack the IG over this statement, the ICL is forced to falsify its own history.

At every hot point of the anti-Soviet Cold War, from Vietnam to Afghanistan and Poland, the international Spartacist tendency (iSt, forerunner of the ICL) defended the degenerated/deformed workers states against imperialism. Against the Maoists who called the Soviet Union “capitalist” and renegades like the “Bolshevik Tendency” who echoed the Shachtmanite concept of a “Stalinist state,” the iSt underlined the contradictory character of the Stalinist caste as a parasitic growth on the workers state. Fighting in 1989-90 for political revolution in the DDR and against capitalist reunification with imperialist West Germany, the ICL initiated a united-front demonstration with the Stalinist SED (Socialist Unity Party) against fascist desecration of the Soviet war memorial at Treptow. So we have repeatedly asked, what was the ICL doing on the speakers tribune at Treptow next to the SED tops on 3 January 1990 if the latter were *leading* the counterrevolution, as the ICL now claims?

WV's lame response in "Still Looking..." underscores its predicament: "We were engaged in a united-front action with the SED in defense of the DDR workers state, in the course of that waging *political combat* against the SED misleaders, aiming to split the SED's proletarian base and win it to the Trotskyist party." Precisely. And the ICL could not have carried out such an action if the SED was in fact *leading* the counterrevolution, because there would be no basis for a united-front action in defense of the workers state. Would the German Communists (KPD) have made a united front with the Social Democrats (SPD) in January 1919, when SPD butchers Friedrich Ebert and Gustav Noske were indeed leading the counterrevolution and ordered the murder of KPD leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht? Obviously not, they were fighting on the barricades the military forces unleashed by the SPD. Would the Spartacist tendency have carried out a united-front action with Polish Solidarnosc in 1981 when Walesa & Co. were leading a counter-revolutionary anti-Soviet mobilization? No, the iSt called to "*Stop Solidarność! Counterrevolution!*" and declared that it would support a military crackdown by the Kremlin Stalinists against the front men for Reagan and Wojtyła. WV's responses demonstrate the absurdity of their new line.

In "Stay Tuned..." we wrote that if the Soviet Army was leading the counterrevolution in the DDR, why didn't the ICL call for withdrawal of Soviet troops? Again, WV's response gives the lie to the ICL's own claim: "It was Gorbachev who called the shots in East Germany. Soviet troops were not mobilized to suppress a workers rising, but were essentially restricted to barracks." So Gorbachev supposedly *led* a counterrevolution by restricting Soviet troops to barracks?! To our challenge that if the SED *led* the counterrevolution, how come the entire East German Politburo ended up in the jails of the Fourth Reich, WV presents an even lamer response: "How could Chilean Socialist president Salvador Allende end up dead in 1973 during General Augusto Pinochet's military coup after having appointed Pinochet and preaching reliance on the 'constitutional' military?" Yet by their own account, Allende *prepared the way* for the bloody counterrevolutionary coup which was *led* by Pinochet and his CIA handlers.

For the latter-day ICL, befogged by centrism, the Russian question has become, in Churchill's famous phrase on the outbreak of World War II, "a riddle wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma."

### Shades of Shachtman: The ICL's Telltale Line

From 1996 on, the ICL has argued against the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International that the Stalinists led and are leading the counterrevolution here, there and everywhere in the bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states. The USSR, DDR, China, Cuba, you name it. Now it seems, according to their latest revision, that during foreplay the Stalinists can "lead" the counterrevolution, but it's another matter when it comes to

consummating capitalist restoration. Yet still they insist, "The Kremlin abetted by the East German Stalinists led the counterrevolution in the DDR," a phrase inserted into the ICL's revised "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program" (1997) specifically to attack the IG. In the DDR but not in China? WV's contortions are a cynical subterfuge to cover up their umpteenth line change as the ICL zigzags away from Trotskyism.

The claim that the Stalinists "lead" or "led" the counterrevolution is a telltale line typical of those who abandon Trotskyism in favor of bourgeois Stalinophobia. After fleeing the Fourth International on the eve of World War II, Max Shachtman proclaimed in December 1940 a "Stalinist counterrevolution" in the form of "the seizure of power by a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy" (*The Bureaucratic Revolution: The Rise of the Stalinist State*). Shachtman's purpose was to justify his refusal to defend the USSR against German imperialist attack. More recently, various pseudo-Trotskyists claimed that the Stalinist "gang of eight" that staged a half-hearted coup in Moscow August 1991 were leading the counterrevolution, in order to justify their own support to the man who in fact led the counterrevolutionary seizure of power, Boris Yeltsin.

Such revisionist arguments directly contradict Trotskyism. Trotsky repeatedly stressed the "dual position," "dual function," "dual role" and "dual character" of the Stalinist bureaucracy:

"Stalin serves the bureaucracy and thus the world bourgeoisie; but he cannot serve the bureaucracy without defending that social foundation which the bureaucracy exploits in its own interests. To that extent does Stalin defend nationalized property from imperialist attacks and from the too impatient and avaricious layers of the bureaucracy itself. However, he carries through this defense with methods that prepare the general destruction of Soviet society. It is exactly because of this that the Stalinist clique must be overthrown. But it is the revolutionary proletariat who must overthrow it....

"The struggle for domination, considered on a historical scale, is not between the proletariat and the bureaucracy, but between the proletariat and the world bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy is only the transmitting mechanism in this struggle."

—L.D. Trotsky, "Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State" (November 1937)

In claiming that the Stalinists *led* the counterrevolution, the ICL in effect declared that the bureaucracy had lost its dual nature, that it ceased to be a contradictory layer. If today the SL/ICL leadership takes a quarter-step backwards when their revision becomes too blatant, opining that some bureaucratic sectors may "balk at the consequences" of counterrevolution (in China but not in the DDR or USSR?!), *they nonetheless oppose seeking to split the bureaucracy in the course of a workers political revolution.*

When we get past their endless, shameless slanders about the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International, the core of the ICL's latest "polemic" against

the IG consists of two points. The first is to quote from a 1953 document by the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) arguing that revolutionaries should not look for a break in the bureaucracy. Second, while Trotsky argued in 1938 that a minority fraction of the Stalinist bureaucracy could come over to the insurrectionary workers in a political revolution, the ICL now claims that Trotsky's view is no longer valid, and indeed has not been since at least World War II. Again this is a negation of what the ICL wrote during its intervention in East Germany and the Soviet Union in 1989-92, and it directly contradicts Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism.

The 1953 SWP document quoted by WV, "Against Pabloist Revisionism," states:

"The proposition that no significant segment of the bureaucracy will align itself with the masses against its own material interests does not mean that the bureaucracy would not manifest deep cleavages under the impact of an uprising.... But the function of a revolutionary policy is to organize, mobilize and help lead the masses in their struggles, not to look for and even less to bank upon any real break in the bureaucracy."

We've pointed out before the new ICL leadership's curious practice of falsely accusing the IG of doing exactly what the ICL itself does. Since WV falsely claims that the IG is "pounding the 'delete' key" in reproducing quotations, let's take a look at that ellipsis in the middle of this quote. They omitted from the SWP statement the sentence, "Such disorganization, disintegration and demoralization was observable in East Germany." Later on in the same document, the SWP wrote of the East German Stalinist apparatus in the 1953 workers revolt:

"It is clear that the SED bureaucracy became panic-stricken and differences set in on how best to handle the situation and that the movement found sympathy and support among certain elements in its lower ranks. This happens in every revolutionary uprising and it would be wrong to deny or ignore such developments."

Yet the policy the ICL has been pushing is precisely that *potential splits in the bureaucracy should be ignored*. In fact, ICL spokesman Al Nelson first came up with this anti-Trotskyist line in order to argue that any attempt to win potentially revolutionary cadres from the Kommunistische Plattform of the German PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism, the social-democratic successor to the SED) was deviant as they supposedly "led" the counterrevolution.

Against Pablo and his supporters, authentic Trotskyists do not bank on splits in the bureaucracy: as we stated in the passage WV quoted, our strategy is to mobilize the working class for political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy before the bourgeoisie destroys the workers state that the Stalinists have sabotaged. In this framework, we seek where possible to win sections of the bureaucracy to the side of the workers insurrection, and to recruit revolutionary-minded elements from this contradictory petty-bourgeois layer to the Trotskyist party. The League for the Fourth International stands with the SWP against Pablo in 1951-53 and continues

today the struggle against Pabloism that the Spartacist tendency itself waged over three decades. In the past, the ICL noted certain weaknesses of the SWP's fight against Pabloism, including some wrong formulations that were later seized upon by Stalinophobic outfits. But no longer.

The article "Genesis of Pabloism" in *Spartacist* No. 21 (Fall 1972) referred to the SWP's "one-sided orthodoxy" during the late 1940s and early '50s, which led it to initially deny that deformed workers states had been formed by the Stalinists in East Europe. *Spartacist* criticized SWPer Joseph Hansen's 1953 defense of the formula that Stalinism is "counterrevolutionary through and through," writing that this was "a characterization which fits only the CIA!" Yet as we have noted about the ICL's recent portrayal of Stalinism as "leading" the destruction of the proletarian property forms on which it was an excrescence, "In reality, this is the line that Stalinism is 'counterrevolutionary through and through'" (*From a Drift Toward Abstentionism...*). In fact, the ICL's propaganda in recent years has reflected this Stalinophobic conception not only in its attacks against the IG/LFI. You don't have to take our word for it – look at what they have written about themselves.

Last summer, the SL ran a lengthy two-part article on "Permanent Revolution vs. Bourgeois Nationalism" in the Near East in the 1950s, whose purpose, as the reader discovers deep into the second installment (WV No. 741, 8 September 2000), was to take the editors to task for agreeing with a letter from a supporter who wrote objecting to an earlier article about the Iraqi Communist Party. The reader wrote, "There's no way this party could have mobilized 'its working-class base to take power in its own name'." A motion by the SL Central Committee says this "denies any contradiction between the proletarian base and Stalinist leadership. Thus any possibility for the intervention of a Trotskyist party to exploit this contradiction is eliminated and by extension any possibility of proletarian socialist revolution." This "political departure," continues WV, logically "leads to the view that Stalinism is 'counterrevolutionary through and through,' i.e., that the Stalinist bureaucracy and Stalinist parties are purely and simply reactionary."

Just where did this "departure" come from? It's not hard to figure out: this line is parallel to what the ICL has been propagating concerning the role of the Stalinists in East Europe and the Soviet Union. WV No. 741 tried to portray its self-criticism over Iraq as a healthy correction, but as its schizophrenic line on China in WV No. 746 shows, it's actually a cover-up. The discovery that the Beijing Stalinist regime is "not committed to capitalist restoration" is a *second* "correction" of the same "departure" as over Iraq, yet the ICL dares not admit it. And still they insist the Stalinists *led* the counterrevolution in the DDR and USSR. What you have here is the coexistence of two lines: a basic Stalinophobic thrust, with some later modifications covered up with vituperation against the LFI that leave the door open to any manner of opportunist high-jinks. All in all, WV's "corrections" make a mockery of its previous polemics against the LFI.

<u>What the ICL Claims</u>	<u>What the IG Wrote</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lie No. 1:</b> In “Still Looking...,” WV claims, “Pounding the ‘delete’ key, the IG obliterates the understanding expressed in the Transitional Program that ‘the chief political task in the USSR still remains the <i>overthrow of this same Thermidorian bureaucracy</i>’” (emphasis in original).</li> <li>• A page later, the same WV article repeats: “<i>the IG denies the very purpose of political revolution</i>: to overthrow the Stalinist ‘treacherous misleaders’ who undermine defense of the collectivized economy against the class enemy and would devour the workers state” (emphasis in original).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In our August 2000 article (“Stay Tuned – New ICL Line Coming”), we wrote: “From the Soviet Union under Stalin to China under Mao’s heirs today, the indispensable instrument to lead workers political revolution to oust the traitorous Stalinist bureaucracies is a Trotskyist party.”</li> <li>• In “Where Is China Going?” (<i>The Internationalist</i> No. 6, November-December 1998) we wrote: “What’s needed above all is to <i>forge a Trotskyist party</i> that can lead the working class, supported by the poor peasants together with all those who seek a socialist future, to oust the bureaucracy and take the reins of power into its own hands, through <i>proletarian political revolution</i> to stop the looming <i>capitalist counterrevolution</i>” (emphasis in original).</li> <li>• From the same article: “In fighting against the threat of counterrevolution, the Chinese working class must carry out a political revolution to oust the Stalinist caste which is sabotaging the gains of the Revolution.”</li> <li>• Again in the conclusion of “Where Is China Going”? we reiterated: “The League for the Fourth International calls to build an authentic Trotskyist party in China which alone can provide the program and organization to lead the working class in a proletarian political revolution, defeating the counterrevolution by sweeping out the corrupt, parasitic bureaucracy and opening the road to socialist revolution in the capitalist countries.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lie No. 2:</b> In “Still Looking...” the SL/ICL claims that “the IG implies that the danger of counterrevolution comes solely from outside the bureaucracy and that the Chinese workers should not direct their blows at the ‘treacherous misleaders’.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In “Stay Tuned...” we quoted from our article “Where Is China Going?” which noted: “the Beijing Stalinist bureaucracy has gone further than the government of any other deformed workers state in fostering market reforms that fuel capitalist forces. As a result of this, those growing capitalist forces in China are now consolidating their power and influence to an extent never before seen inside a deformed workers state.”</li> <li>• That article has an entire section titled, “Stalinist Class-Collaborators Pave the Way for Counterrevolution,” which analyzes how “In China the bureaucracy’s policies are producing an incessant and massive growth of bourgeois forces.”</li> <li>• The concluding section of that article states: “As the fate of the Chinese deformed workers state hangs in the balance, the fundamental enemy is the bourgeoisie – but the principal obstacle to defeating it is the bureaucracy.”</li> <li>• Another article in <i>Internationalist</i> No. 6, “China: Women Workers Key Revolutionary Force,” states: “Yet precisely because they bear the brunt of the counterrevolutionary assault, women can become steeled revolutionary fighters in the struggle to oust the sellout Stalinists who are wrecking the collectivized economy.”</li> </ul>

- **Lie No. 3:** In “Still Looking...” the SL/ICL alleges, “the IG maintains that the Stalinist regimes are committed to the defense of proletarian property forms – a notion clearly refuted by events themselves in 1989-92.”
- Our very first bulletin analyzing the course of the ICL after the June 1996 SL expulsions, *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle* (July 1996), stated emphatically: “The fact that the bureaucracy was not irrevocably committed to defense of the workers state and its economy, from which it obtained its privileges, that large sectors of it would go over to the capitalists, was foreseen by Trotsky and corresponds to his analysis of this parasitic caste.”
- Our article “Where Is China Going” notes: “Today even the remaining Stalinists don’t believe in their program of ‘socialism in one country,’ except for handfuls of political zombies – walking dead men – in the West. Those with state power are desperately trying to ensure their own survival through maneuvering and ever-greater concessions to capitalism.”
- The same article says of the USSR: “The bureaucracy, as Trotsky had written, prepared the way for counterrevolution with its policies of international class collaboration; it opened the door to the restoration of capitalism by its domestic economic policies fostering the growth of bourgeois forces; and it sold out the degenerated/deformed workers states, handing over power to the new bourgeois masters.”

## Part II: ICL Decrees: No More “Reiss Factions”

We noted above that the ICL’s claim that the Stalinists *led* the counter-revolution amounts to a declaration that the bureaucracy is no longer a contradictory layer. As a corollary of this revision, the ICL asserts that a “Reiss faction” of the bureaucracy can no longer arise, that is, a grouping that could be won to workers political revolution and the banner of the Fourth International. This was put forward in a document by Joseph Seymour, “On Trotsky’s Concept of a ‘Reiss Faction’ in the Soviet Bureaucracy” which was reprinted in *Spartacist* (No. 55, Autumn 1999) and is quoted at length in “Looking...” and “Still Looking....” Seymour wrote this document in December 1995 at the end of a fight inside the ICL over the work of its German section, the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD), directed at winning elements from the Kommunistische Plattform (KPF) of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the social-democratic party left over from the Stalinist SED.

*Spartacist* huffs and puffs about the “false view of Jan Norden, then editor of *Workers Vanguard*, that in our fight for proletarian political revolution in East Germany (DDR)



Ignaz Reiss

in 1989-90, the ICL was searching for a Trotskyist wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy.” Seymour’s document and several previous issues of *WV* falsely claim that this was raised “in Norden’s speech at Humboldt University last January,” which didn’t even mention a “Reiss faction.” Now that it’s trying to clean up its act, *WV* partially quotes from a November 1995 internal document by Norden where he points out that in an earlier document about the KPF he “raised the ‘Reiss faction’ – a reference to Trotsky’s point that the bureaucracy, due to its dual nature, will split under the impact of a political revolution – in order to make the point, in particular regarding the Communist Platform, that *there was no such section of the bureaucracy in the DDR.*”

But for the ICL today, even raising the issue is deemed Stalinophilic. According to Seymour, there *could not be* any “Reiss faction” of the bureaucracy in the post-WWII period because Stalin had succeeded in exterminating any potential left opposition in the bureaucracy in the Moscow Purges. The ICL’s claim that Trotsky’s analysis of the bureaucracy splitting is no longer valid *and hasn’t been valid*



for half a century contradicts innumerable polemics against Stalinophobic pseudo-Trotskyists published in the Spartacist press in the 1970s, '80s and early '90s which repeatedly invoked the possibility of a Reiss faction. And Seymour can't claim originality: the *identical* argument was raised by such revisionists as David North and the BT.

Ignaz Reiss (Poretsky) was a long-time member of Soviet military intelligence who broke with Stalin in 1937 and heroically declared himself a supporter of the Fourth International. Shortly afterward he was murdered by Stalinist assassins. Trotsky saw Reiss as a representative of a potential revolutionary section within the bureaucracy, as opposed to openly pro-capitalist elements symbolized by one Fyodor Butenko, a Soviet diplomat who defected to fascist Italy. In the words of the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International, "all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko)."

Trotsky was emphasizing here the heterogeneous nature of the bureaucracy as a petty-bourgeois caste perched upon the collectivized property forms of a workers state, an unstable layer that would polarize or disintegrate under the impact of capitalist counterrevolution: "If tomorrow the bourgeois-fascist grouping, the 'faction of Butenko,' so to speak, should attempt the conquest of power, the 'faction of Reiss' inevitably would align itself on the opposite side of the barricades." Thus Trotsky's conception of a "Reiss faction" had nothing in common with the idea put forward by Isaac Deutscher that the Stalinist bureaucracy would reform itself, an illusion propagated by the followers and political heirs of Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel.

So why no more "Reiss factions" today, according to the ICL? Seymour begins by setting up his straw man, defining a "Reiss faction" in the narrowest possible terms: "As the term 'faction' clearly denotes, Trotsky was here projecting the emergence of a left opposition within the bureaucracy *in advance of a political revolution* or the collapse of Stalinist bonapartism in society at large" (emphasis in original). Yet as Trotsky's reference to "the 'faction of Butenko,' so to speak" makes clear, he was *not* referring to pre-existing organized groupings. And concerning Reiss, the Transitional Program explicitly states: "The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat." One would hardly describe a formal Trotskyist left opposition as *passively reflecting* the revolutionary interests of the working class.

Trotsky considered Reiss' adhesion to the Fourth International as *symptomatic of suppressed tendencies* within the bureaucracy inside the USSR, not as evidence of a cohered Bolshevik-Leninist opposition. Trotsky's article on the murder of Reiss ("A Tragic Lesson," September 1937) was particularly concerned with why Reiss waited so long before declaring for the Fourth International: "the monstrous Moscow trials were required, and not only the first, but also the second, to bring Reiss to the actual breaking point. We may assume with certainty that in the ranks of the bureaucracy there are quite a few who feel as Reiss did. They have contempt for their milieu. They hate Stalin. And, at the same time, they endlessly toil on

and on." Trotsky here portrays someone reacting under the hammer blows of events and choosing a side.

Moreover, rather than posing a Trotskyist opposition group within the bureaucracy existing "*in advance of a political revolution*," as Seymour claims, *Trotsky repeatedly linked the crystallization of a "Reiss faction" with the polarization brought about by a crisis posing the stark alternatives of political revolution or social counterrevolution*. In addition to his reference cited above about different "factions" of the bureaucracy lining up on opposite sides of the barricades, Trotsky writes elsewhere:

"Of course, in the ranks of the bureaucracy there are sincere and revolutionary elements of the Reiss type. But they are not numerous.... We may be sure that the more decisive the discontent of the toilers becomes the deeper will the differentiation within the bureaucracy penetrate. But in order to achieve this we must theoretically comprehend, politically mobilize and organize the hatred of the masses against the ruling caste."

– "It Is Necessary to Drive the Bureaucracy and Aristocracy Out of the Soviets" (July 1938)

This was a constant theme for Trotsky. Five years earlier, he wrote:

"A real civil war could develop not between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the resurgent proletariat but between the proletariat and the active forces of the counterrevolution. In the event of an open clash between the two mass camps, there cannot even be talk of the bureaucracy playing an independent role. Its polar flanks would be flung to the different sides of the barricade."

– "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" (October 1933)

This is clearly a very different perspective than the ICL's view of the bureaucracy *leading* the counterrevolution.

Having decreed that a Reiss faction means essentially a Trotskyist cell in the bureaucracy, Seymour then declares *ex cathedra*: "In this sense the potential for a Reiss faction was specific to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. It is *not* a trans-historic concept applicable to all Stalinist bureaucracies in all times and places. There are no Chinese Ignace Reisses in Beijing today or Cuban Ignace Reisses in Havana." And again: "A Reiss faction in the specific sense that Trotsky conceived it was no longer possible in the bureaucracies of the post-World War II Sino-Soviet states." Leaving aside that Trotsky *nowhere* decreed that a Reiss faction was a cohered Fourth Internationalist opposition organized prior to a political revolution, if a Reiss faction is "no longer possible" post-WWII, why not?

The possibility of a Reiss faction, *dixit* Seymour, "derived neither from the sociological nature of the Soviet bureaucracy nor the particularities of Stalinist ideology but rather from certain historically conditioned features of the Soviet bureaucracy in the 1930s." To wit: some senior cadres of the CPSU had been Bolsheviks before 1917, others joined during the Civil War, many had been part of the Trotskyist, Zinovievite and smaller left oppositions in the 1920s, etc. Moreover, "A major aim of Stalin's Great Purges was to eliminate that potential by physically exterminating former left oppositionists and other critically minded Soviet officials and intellectuals. And he succeeded in doing so." Yet this leaves out a key fact: *Trotsky's analy-*

sis of a “faction of Reiss” did not predate the purges. Indeed, in the Transitional Program he forecast the existence of such a layer *after* the purges, in the context of a crisis of the Stalinist regime.

Seymour goes on to ask, “But could a ‘Reiss faction’ in a looser sense – a left opposition of a roughly centrist character – have developed in the postwar Stalinist regimes?” Again, his answer is no: “I believe this was possible only in the *first generation* of the bureaucracy when many of its members were originally leftist militants in reactionary capitalist states.” Now this is a curious argument indeed, since in East Germany the *first generation* of the bureaucracy was still running things, including party chief Honecker, security chief Mielke and others who had been jailed by the Nazis. Seymour even mentions that “the experience of the redoubtable DDR intelligence chief Markus Wolf was somewhat comparable” to that of Reiss. Moreover, the “first generation” is still around in Cuba, Vietnam and China today. So that doesn’t exactly get him anywhere.

Seymour intones the Marxist axiom that being determines consciousness. Yet where Trotsky explained the potential for a “Reiss faction” in terms of (a) the contradictory nature of the bureaucracy and (b) a crisis of the Stalinist regime, the ICL’s theoretician portrays a clot of aging pensioners animated by vestigial remnants of consciousness acquired before the rise of the bureaucracy. *This “generational” analysis has more in common with Mormon genealogy than with Marxism.* It resorts to rank empiricism – deducing that since no “Reiss faction” has appeared in recent decades, therefore there can be none – to declare Trotsky’s analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy outdated. In a similar fashion, the ICL now renounces the key thesis of the Transitional Program – that “the world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of leadership of the proletariat” – declaring in its new Declaration of Principles that this “predates the present deep regression in proletarian consciousness.”

Since according to the ICL, a “Reiss faction” of the bureaucracy has been impossible at least since World War II, why do they suddenly discover this now? “During Cold War II it was necessary for us to emphasize the contradictory nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy against the pseudo-Trotskyist advocates of the ‘bourgeois-democratic’ revolution in the Soviet sphere. But that contradiction must be understood *dialectically*, not statically,” writes Seymour. The theme for today, he says, is that “The *historical tendency* of all Stalinist bureaucracies is to bring about capitalist restoration by one means or another.” In addition to implicitly saying the ICL earlier “bent the stick” in one direction and is now bending it in another, this is inaccurate. Rather, the role of the Stalinist bureaucracies is to prepare the way for capitalist counterrevolution in which the *bourgeoisie* takes power, displacing the parasitic bureaucracy which disintegrates as the workers states it fed off and betrayed are destroyed. The new ICL “theory” is no dialectical understanding of the contradictions of Stalinism but an attempt to negate them. It is a crude falsification to “update” Trotskyism in the spirit of the bourgeoisie’s “death of communism.”

## Revisionist Minds Think Alike

“That was then, this is now” is the ICL’s new message. They’re not the only ones pushing that line. In “Where Is China Going?” we pointed out how the ICL’s line that Stalinism is leading the counterrevolution in China echoed, almost word for word, the position of the British Workers Power group (which has since declared China capitalist). Here Seymour’s arguments on a “Reiss faction” uncannily parallel those used by David North’s “International Committee” to condemn the ICL. An article in North’s *International Workers Bulletin* of 7 October 1996 on the expulsions from the SL (reprinted in the ICL’s *Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League Bulletin* No. 10, January 1997) reviles our slogan “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan” and singles out a paragraph in *Spartacist* No. 43-44 (Summer 1989), stating:

“In the USSR the appearance of capitalist-restorationist forces can lead to an open clash between them and the proletariat, which will inevitably split the bureaucracy into its polar components. Soviet politics thrown into turmoil by glasnost demonstrate anew Trotsky’s observation that ‘all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko)’.”

This restatement of basic Trotskyism brought yelps from the Northites, who wrote, referring to the Stalinist purges of the ’30s:

“This act of political genocide effectively stamped out the last remnants of revolutionary Marxism within the state and ruling party of the USSR. To base oneself on the supposed existence of a revolutionary faction within the bureaucracy in 1989 was to ignore nearly six decades of history and the river of blood separating Stalinism from Bolshevism.”

Precisely Seymour’s argument. Ironically, even as the Northites penned their 1996 article, the ICL had internally already abandoned the long-standing position that North & Co. were polemicizing against!

In early 1990, at the height of the ICL’s intervention in East Germany, it put out a pamphlet, *Trotskyism – What It Isn’t and What It Is!* in German and English, later translated into Russian, that devoted two pages to attacking the Northites precisely over this issue. North & Co.’s claim that Stalinism today is “counterrevolutionary through and through” directly contradicted Trotsky’s references to a “faction of Reiss,” the ICL pointed out. The Northites’ revision of Trotsky’s analysis of the bureaucracy was their way of junking the Trotskyist position of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union and justifying support to every reactionary anti-Soviet force on the planet, from Afghan *mujahedin* to Polish Solidarnosc.

Another treacherous pseudo-Trotskyist outfit that attacked the ICL over the issue of a “Reiss faction” was the misnamed International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT). The IBT article, “Robertsonites in Wonderland” (*1917* No. 10, Third Quarter 1991), complained of the Spartacist intervention in the DDR in 1989-90, “The ICL attempts to justify its policy of currying favor of the Stalinists by citing Trotsky’s analysis of the bureaucracy.” Tops on the IBT’s list of examples of supposedly “currying favor with the Stalinists”

was...“The SpAD’s Debacle at Treptow”! Not coincidentally, the German Northites of the BSA (Socialist Workers League) also joined in slandering the quarter-million-strong demonstration initiated by the Spartakists against the Nazi defacing of the Soviet war memorial. While the bourgeois press was denouncing “The SED’s Nazi Trick,” the BSA’s *Neue Arbeiterpresse* (19 January) chimed in:

“Today the campaign ‘against the fascist danger in the DDR’ serves to save and restabilize the Stalinist state apparatus, army, secret services, judicial system, etc.”

In denying the possibility of a “Reiss faction,” the ICL has adopted the outlook of the very anti-Trotskyists it fought tooth and nail in 1989-90. This is the sordid company they now keep. And so, as is now the case on one issue after another, the ICL must attack its own former self, the revolutionary Marxist positions it used to defend.

### Get Real – The ICL in the DDR

In his November 1995 ICL internal document, Norden wrote, “We didn’t simply ignore the SED, the party of the East German Stalinist bureaucracy and throw all its members into one bag. We directed propaganda to the SED conferences, seeking to engage interested elements in debate and discussion.” Reporting on an issue of *Spartakist/Arbeiterpressekorespondenz* (No. 7, 15 December 1989) directed at an SED conference, *Workers Vanguard* commented at the time:

“Many thousands of SED party members, not excluding sections of the leadership, and also not excluding many of those who have recently quit the party in protest, genuinely seek to root out Stalinism and defend the collectivized basis of the DDR against capitalist reabsorption.”

—WV No. 492, 29 December 1989

The next issue of *Arprekorr* (No. 8, 18 December 1989) printed “Greetings to the Extraordinary Party Congress of the SED,” saying “No doubt there are in the ranks of the SED many serious and honest workers who hate Stalinism but want to find the way to genuine communism.” A program in brief, “What Do the Spartakists Want,” printed in each issue of *Arprekorr*, stated:

“We stand with those members and recent ex-members of the Stalinist SED, as well as numerous others seeking to build a socialist world, who vow that the heirs of Hitler must not expropriate that which, by the workers’ toil, has arisen out of the ruins.”

Recall that the SED was the political vehicle of the governing bureaucracy. Does the ICL now renounce this work, since it claims the SED bureaucracy “led the counterrevolution”?

Publishing a daily news sheet, organizing in factories, initiating demonstrations including the massive 3 January 1990 Treptow mobilization, running candidates of the Spartakist Workers Party in the DDR elections, the ICL sought to build a Trotskyist party from workers (German and immigrant), students and *also elements breaking from the Stalinist SED*. Through this work, the SpAD won several former officers of the East German army (the NVA). One could consider them a miniature “Reiss faction.” They were not numerous, and they were from the bottom rungs of the

bureaucracy. But Trotsky himself emphasized that a revolutionary faction would be very small compared to pro-capitalist elements of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Here we see the reality behind the ICL’s “no more Reiss faction” line. The issue arose in the SL when Nelson attacked Norden for authoring the SpAD campaign to win recruits out of the Kommunistische Plattform (KPF) of the PDS. In fact, the group of NVA officers and soldiers won to the SpAD were all members of the KPF. Today, Seymour with his generational analysis writes off any possibility of revolutionary recruitment among younger elements, declaring that “the second, not to speak of the third, generation of the Stalinist bureaucracies were and are made up of people who inherited or were co-opted as youth into positions of social privilege and political influence.” Yet here were young officers on the front line of Soviet bloc forces confronting NATO in the Cold War who thought they were defending socialism. When they saw the Stalinists selling out the DDR before their eyes, they became open to Trotskyism.

Significantly, the SpAD has since lost all its NVA recruits. It also won the odd East German gilded youth “co-opted ... into positions of social privilege and political influence.” That is who stuck, and who today regurgitate ICL elucubrations about the impossibility of a “Reiss faction.”

Another example of the potential for a “Reiss faction” in the Stalinist bureaucracy is an incident related by Norden in his Humboldt University speech, titled “Who Defended the DDR? Who Fought Against Capitalist Reunification? The Spartakists on the Collapse of Stalinist Rule in East Europe.” (This is significant because the ICL now pretends this speech belittled the Spartacist work in the DDR.) The first issue of *Arprekorr* was headlined “No Sellout of the DDR! Workers and Soldiers Councils Now!” An NVA soldier visiting Berlin from the north told in an interview how he had gotten hold of a copy of the paper and together with his comrades formed a soldiers council. Norden related:

“It turns out that when this soldier returned to the barracks, he was sitting in the canteen with the TLD [Trotzkistische Liga Deutschlands, the ICL section before it fused with East German Spartakist-Gruppen to form the SpAD] material that he had brought with him, when his political officer went past and saw the word Trotsky or Trotskyist. The soldier thought, ‘Oh shit, now I’m really in for it.’ But no, the officer proposed to him an exchange. He had secreted away Trotsky’s *History of the Russian Revolution* and offered to lend it to the soldier in exchange for these pamphlets and leaflets. Soldiers councils were also built in a couple other units there on the Polish border, and we also later won comrades from the same units to the SpAD.”

Here we had what was likely a member of the “second generation” of Stalinist bureaucrats, the NVA *Politoffizier*, trading Trotsky’s book for Trotskyist pamphlets from a soldier who together with his comrades of the “third generation” then formed soldiers councils, out of which several officers and soldiers were recruited to the SpAD!

This incident introduces a reality factor in contrast to the ICL’s anti-Marxist, genealogical analysis supposedly proving the impossibility of the “Reiss faction.” It’s no ac-

cident, moreover, that these officers were recruited not to the Stalinophobia of the IBT and Northites but to the authentic Trotskyism then upheld by the ICL. At the Humboldt speech, IBTers declared that there was a “blood line” between the officers of the East German army and East German workers. An SpAD member who was a former NVA tank commander got up and powerfully refuted the IBT Stalinophobes.

The SpAD’s experience in the DDR is not unique. A remarkably similar story is related in the issue of *Revolutionary History* (Vol. 7, No. 3) published last year on Trotskyism in Cuba. A report by an American SWPer from the *Internal Bulletin* of the International Secretariat of March 1963 deals with his discussions with the Cuban Trotskyists, followers of the current led by J. Posadas:

“Incidentally, Molina [one of the Cuban Posadistas] told me of an incident that happened just recently where a comrade met a *compañero* with whom he had fought in the hills who is now a captain in the G2 [Cuban military intelligence]. The G2 man did not know the other fellow was a Trotskyist, and he held up a copy of *The Revolution Betrayed* which he was reading and advised the comrade to read this guy Trotsky, as he was pretty good. At this, the comrade said he *was* a Trotskyist, and then the G2 man clasped him warmly and asked him if he could get him some more books by the same author.”

Are these incidents unique? Not at all. The ICL found a remarkable receptivity to Trotskyist views not only among East German military personnel but also among officers of the Soviet Army. It sold hundreds, perhaps several thousand copies of its Russian language publications in and around Soviet army bases in East Germany. The ICL twice addressed large gatherings of Soviet officers, including a May 1991 meeting of “300 Soviet officers and soldiers commemorating Red Army victory over Nazi Third Reich, at air base in East Germany,” as a picture caption noted in the *Spartacist* pamphlet “How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled.” A photo showed rows of Soviet military men, mostly officers, listening to an ICL speaker at a podium with the flag of the Fourth International. Another shot showed uniformed air force men looking at *Spartacist* literature (including the *Spartacist* bulletin talking of a Reiss faction and featuring the picture of Ignace Reiss).

What was the ICL doing there – particularly if these were the very forces the ICL now says were the spearhead of counterrevolution! – if it had no thought of recruiting a “Reiss faction” from among these military members of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy? Alternatively, since it is rampantly revising a host of questions, will the ICL now claim that military officers are not part of the bureaucratic apparatus? If so, let’s hear it. More likely they will prefer silence on this question, as on so many others.

### The ICL and Hungary 1956

These comments about the ICL’s actual work in Germany, in which comrades who were expelled in 1996 and are now part of the League for the Fourth International played a leading role, point to what lies behind the ICL’s

line change(s) on the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The current ICL position that there was not, is not and cannot be a “Reiss faction” of the bureaucracy from 1945 on, and that the Stalinist bureaucracy *led* the counterrevolution, is a line for budding Stalinophobes...or dead-end abstentionists who are prepared to raise such social-democratic arguments in order to stop any work directed at the Stalinist milieu. The tortuous 1995-96 discussion in the ICL about its German work showed deep social-democratic inroads in the SpAD, in particular among the older West German cadres teleguided by Al Nelson feeding them Shachtmanoid lines.

More broadly, *the ICL’s line is that of pseudo-Trotskyists who have no intention of actually fighting for proletarian political revolution in China or any of the other remaining deformed workers states.* The ICL’s analysis is the handmaiden of organizational considerations, notably its concern to polish its self-image, and social reality be damned. Anyone who seriously attempts to break the Stalinist stranglehold and fight for authentic communism would pay great attention to any possibility of individuals or groupings breaking from the bureaucracy to come over to the revolutionaries. Moreover, those who claim that the Stalinists “led” the counterrevolution and that there can be no revolutionary “Reiss faction” recruited out of the bureaucracy are actually capitulating to and alibiing the imperialist bourgeoisie. In fact, in those cases where a political revolution has taken hold the Stalinist apparatus invariably shatters, often with sections fraternizing with or going over to the insurgent workers.

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 is a key case in point. Today the ICL admits that the 1989 workers revolt in China had echoes even in the higher echelons of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) officer corps, at the same time as it denies that elements can be won out of sections of the bureaucracy to a Leninist-Trotskyist opposition. Yet in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, groups of military cadres and officials joined the workers on the barricades fighting for what they understood to be communism. In “Where Is China Going?” we noted how PLA units initially refused to attack the 1989 Tienanmen protests, indicating the possibility of a split in the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy. We added: “This occurred in Hungary in 1956, where the head of the army (Pál Maléter) and the head of the Budapest police (Sándor Kopácsi) went over to the insurgents.” In “Still Looking...,” WV allows that these “were heroic individuals who had fought as Communist partisans against Nazi occupation forces in World War II and were personally opposed to capitalist restoration,” but declares this irrelevant as they remained “within the framework of Stalinist nationalism and ‘peaceful coexistence’ with the imperialist order.”

This was in a situation where the developing Hungarian political revolution was defeated by the armed force of the Moscow Stalinists. We cited the examples of Maléter and Kopácsi to indicate the *potential* for a split in the bureaucracy *when faced with a workers insurrection.* They were not just “individuals” who were “personally” opposed to counterrevolution: the bulk of the Hungarian Army officers went over to the insurgent workers. True, in the absence of a

Trotskyist party, they did not break from the ideological framework of Stalinism. That is not an argument for denying any possibility of sectors that could be won to the revolutionary cause in the heat of a working-class upheaval; instead it underlines the urgency of organizing the nucleus of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard. As part of organizing the proletariat for a political revolution to oust the disintegrating Stalinist caste which is preparing the way for counterrevolution, winning socialist-minded elements from the bureaucracy could help advance this struggle, particularly from a tactical/military standpoint.

Shane Mage, later a leader of the Revolutionary Tendency of the SWP which was the forerunner of the Spartacist League, wrote a 1957 article on “‘Truth’ and Hungary – A Reply to Herbert Aptheker” (the theoretical hack of the American CP), quoting an interview with Maléter:

“The National Guard, the revolutionary committees and the workers councils are solidly in the hands of freedom fighters who are fighting on two fronts: against the Stalinists and against the reactionaries.”

—reprinted in the Young Socialist pamphlet, *The Hungarian Revolution* (1959)

In another interview, Maléter declared, “‘if there are people who are thinking about going backward, then we will see,’ and he put his hand on his revolver holster.” So what about Maléter and Kopácsi? At the end of five tabloid pages of “Still Looking...,” in which it is explained that there can be no “Reiss faction” of the Stalinist bureaucracy, WV opines: “In the course of such political struggle, elements like Maléter might well have been won to the Trotskyist program”! With that statement, the whole elaborate construct built up by Seymour and regurgitated by WV about the impossibility of a “Reiss faction” in the post-WWII world collapses like a house of cards. If it might well have happened in Hungary ’56 (though according to Seymour it was theoretically impossible since ’45), why can’t it happen elsewhere tomorrow? The ICL’s arguments are revealed as the smokescreen of centrist *fakers*, armchair theoreticians who have no intention of organizing a proletarian political revolution.

## ICL Ricochets Rightwards

We have pointed out that following counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe the ICL lost its moorings. Beginning with a drift toward abstentionism and a Kautskyite centrist policy of “passive radicalism,” it began to flail about wildly on a number of issues.

- Desperately seeking to make a case that we denied permanent revolution in Mexico, it came up with the argument that in Mexico the struggle must be directed against “elements of the Spanish colonial feudal heritage” and even “feudal peonage in the countryside.” For a year the ICL insisted on the survival of feudal remnants in Mexico in polemics against the IG, which we demolished by pointing out that “Latin American feudalism” was a recurrent theme of the U.S. bourgeois press and a hoary remnant of Stalinism used to justify its reformist “two-stage” revolution. Then the ICL precipitously abandoned this claim when called to order by Jim Robertson (who had first defended

the “Mexican feudalism” line).

- In 1997, *Workers Vanguard* raised the call for an independent “Soviet Tibet” just as the imperialist “Free Tibet” chorus was reaching a crescendo, and then a year later renounced this piece of revisionism.

- After almost ten years of denouncing the “Cárdenas popular front” in Mexico, on the eve of Cárdenas’ June 1997 election to the Mexico City government it suddenly declared that no such popular front exists or could exist in a semi-colonial country without a mass workers party.

- After decades of calling for independence for the U.S.’ Caribbean colony, in early 1998 it declared that it does “not currently *advocate* independence for Puerto Rico.” After we raked them over the coals for this capitulation to “their own” bourgeoisie, the Spartacist League now says (in its latest “Programmatic Statement”) that it would passively and quietly “favor independence for Puerto Rico” while not retracting its refusal to *advocate* political freedom from Yankee colonialism.

- After long labeling Jörg Haider and his Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) fascist, at the point they came into office last year as part of a coalition with the conservative People’s Party the ICL suddenly decided that this admirer of the SS and Hitler’s “employment policies,” the son of Nazis and instigator of anti-“foreigner” campaigns that unleashed terror bombing of immigrant workers hostels by Haider supporters, was not a fascist after all. The ICL’s explanation that the FPÖ is just an “electoral machine” reflects the electoral cretinism of the social-democratic left, which uses the same arguments in denying Haider is a fascist.

- Now, after several years of insisting against the IG/LFI that the Stalinist bureaucracy led the counterrevolution in the DDR and USSR and is leading the counterrevolution in China today, revising Trotsky’s understanding of the dual character of the bureaucracy, they render their revisionism “more precise” by saying that sections of the Stalinists may pull back at the crucial moment. Yet simultaneously the ICL insists that there can be no more “Reiss faction” of the bureaucracy.

- Generalizing its defeatist political line, the ICL declared that the central programmatic conclusion of the founding document of Trotsky’s Fourth International was outdated. Where the Transitional Program declared that the world situation is “chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of leadership of the proletariat,” the ICL decreed that this “predates the present deep regression of proletarian consciousness.” Not the misleaders but the working masses are the key problem, in its view. This negates the very reason for being of the Fourth International.

This is the record of a centrist current that has cut its programmatic anchor to Trotskyism and is tossed about in the seas of the class struggle. While its initial motivation may be factional, its gyrations reflect the pressure of the imperialist bourgeoisie and social democracy. The fight to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International must include a thorough and rigorous refutation of this revisionism in order to prepare a vanguard capable of leading the



hard struggles ahead. Those who have abandoned this fight in all but name may continue to concoct ever-new theories for their own self-justification, but in doing so they prove themselves worthless to the proletariat, for which the crisis

of revolutionary leadership remains the central issue to be resolved as it faces the stark alternatives of socialism or capitalist barbarism.■

## Seymour contra Seymour

Remarkably, less than a year before his December 1995 treatise declaring that a “Reiss faction” of the Stalinist bureaucracy has been impossible since the end of World War II, the semi-official theoretician of the International Communist League, Joseph Seymour, wrote another piece with a very different analysis and opposite conclusions. In his document, “On Stalinism and Social Democracy in Cold War Germany and the Fourth Reich” (31 March 1995), Seymour writes:

“As Trotsky pointed out, the Soviet bureaucracy contained all currents of political opinion, from fascist to Bolshevik. These contradictory and even antagonistic elements found their expression in the different aspects of official and even more so unofficial Soviet ideology and political culture. The post World War II expansion of Stalinism produced a world movement of qualitatively diverse social and political components – the bureaucracies of degenerated/deformed workers states at different socio-economic levels (the Soviet Union, China, the DDR), mass reformist workers parties (France, Italy, Chile), peasant-based nationalist-populist parties (South Vietnam) and left-wing propaganda groups (Britain, the United States, Argentina). The ‘ideological’ schisms which ripped apart the ‘world Communist movement’ beginning in the late 1950s (Maoism, Third World guerrillaism, later Eurocommunism) expressed the conflicting interests of these diverse elements.”

The same document also observes that “the counter-revolutions in the Soviet Union and the DDR had *different immediate causes and effects*” (emphasis in original). While key sectors of the Soviet bureaucracy supported the restoration of capitalism and many became capitalists themselves, “the DDR bureaucrats were not striving to become capitalists and could not have done so in any case given the strong pre-existing West German imperialist bourgeoisie. When the Gorbachev government, reflecting the rapid disintegration of the Soviet bureaucracy, agreed to the capitalist reunification of Germany, the DDR bureaucracy simply capitulated and has since adapted to the Fourth Reich by transmuting into a regional social-democratic party,” the PDS, which “continues to be the target of *anti-Communist witchhunting and demagogy* by the German bourgeoisie, its SPD agents and its state” (emphasis in original).

No Stalinism “leading the counterrevolution” here! This document, Seymour’s swan song as a Trotskyist theorist, “predated” his discovery of which way the wind was blowing in the ICL’s internal discussion over Germany. After a judicious interval he weighed in with his disquisition belatedly writing the “Reiss faction” out of post-WWII history. Where Karl Kautsky wrote that “paper is patient” (which Stalin translated as “paper will take whatever is written on it”), Seymour just “pounds the delete key.”

## How the ICL’s Line on Stalinism Was Strangled

The scene: an Internationalist Group literature table at a Palestine conference at Columbia University on March 31. A representative of the Spartacist League (SL), responding to our polemic printed above, vociferously declaimed that Boris Yeltsin was “basically a representative of the Stalinist bureaucracy” when he headed the August 1991 Moscow “counter-coup” that led to capitalist counterrevolution in the former USSR. The SLer – a *Workers Vanguard* editorial board member – was attempting to defend the International Communist League’s claim that the Stalinist bureaucracy as such supposedly “led” counterrevolution in the former Soviet bloc.

The comrade manning our table walked over to the Spartacist League lit table and bought a copy of the August 1993 pamphlet *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled*. He showed the SL representative a passage on page 5 referring to “Yeltsin, the former bureaucratic hack turned capitalist-restorationist.” No response. In fact, the entire 64-page pamphlet of ICL articles and statements published in 1992 is a devastating polemic against the revisionist line subsequently adopted by the ICL. Indeed, it is full of polemics directed against the fake-Trotskyist tendencies which (like the ICL today) claimed that the Stalinist bureaucracy was leading the counterrevolution in order to justify their

program of support to Yeltsin.

The first item reprinted in the pamphlet is the statement “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!” (30 August 1991), distributed in thousands of copies by supporters of the ICL then active in the former USSR. This powerful call states in its first paragraph:

“The first workers state in history, sapped and undermined by decades of Stalinist misrule, lies in tatters. The state power has been fractured, the Communist Party – its bureaucratic core – shattered and banned from the KGB and armed forces....”

Far from portraying a Stalinist bureaucracy leading a social counterrevolution against the state it had presided over, the article explains how Gorbachev’s *perestroika* fueled the forces of capitalist restoration and brought an accelerating fragmentation of this parasitic caste.

An article against “Cheerleaders for Yeltsin’s Counterrevolution” (27 September 1991) denounced “Traitors, Not Trotskyists,” noting:

“Insofar as these cheerleaders for counterrevolution in the Soviet Union attempt to provide any kind of ‘theoretical’ fig leaf, it is that the Stalinist bureaucracy is the chief, indeed the only, instrument for counterrevolution.

The view, summed up in the phrase ‘Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through,’ has historically been used to justify de facto abandonment of the Trotskyist position of defense of the Soviet Union. Today it is being used to justify *support to the counterrevolution*. Thus, trying to buttress its outlandish claim that the victory of the Yeltsinites was a defeat for imperialism, *Socialist Action* (September 1991) claims that with the botched coup by the ‘gang of eight’: ‘It will be extremely difficult now for the bureaucracy and its allies to organize a new, effective, instrument to carry through the restoration of capitalism.’

“In the first place, as Trotsky pointed out time and again, the bureaucracy was not a homogeneous class but a brittle, contradictory layer resting atop proletarian property forms, from which it derived its privileged position, and potentially including both restorationist and revolutionary elements. In the absence of a proletarian challenge and under sharp pressure from imperialism, it was the restorationist wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy which blossomed under Gorbachev. The coup plotters were themselves committed to introducing a capitalist market economy, though more gradually and under centralized control. *But the bureaucracy has now utterly collapsed. And, in any case, Yeltsin had already broken from it to become the spokesman for the incipient bourgeoisie* – the ‘yuppskies,’ black marketeers and a political spectrum ranging from would-be Western ‘democrats’ to the fascists of Pamyat.” [Our emphasis]

So, ICL, who is it today that says the bureaucracy led and is leading the counterrevolution?

The core of the pamphlet is the article “How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled,” originally published in *Workers Vanguard* (27 November 1992) and subsequently translated in the press of all ICL sections as a fundamental statement on this question of world-historic importance. It summed up the results of a wide-ranging discussion the ICL published in eight volumes of its *International Internal Bulletin* during 1991-92 under the title “Documents and Discussion on the Collapse of Stalinism.”

Arguing from the standpoint of the revolutionary Marxism the International Communist League still upheld at that time, the article includes a lengthy section on “The Army and the Bureaucracy.” Stressing again that “Trotsky explained that the bureaucracy was a brittle, contradictory caste,” it states: “This contradictory position generated within the bureaucracy a range of contradictory political impulses: ‘all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko)’ (Transitional Program).” It goes on observe:

“The dual character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the conflicting political appetites it harbored, remained *even after the bloody purges of the 1930s exterminated any remnant of the Bolshevik ‘Old Guard.’* But while resting on and deriving its privileges from proletarian property forms, the Stalinist bureaucracy was not ir-

revocably committed to their defense. It could play no independent role in society. Under the impact of any sharp frontal assault, either from the revolutionary proletariat or the counterrevolution, *the bureaucracy would shatter.*” [Our emphasis.]

That is exactly the point that the ICL today desperately seeks to deny, insisting that no “Reiss faction” of the bureaucracy has been possible since World War II, because any potential for this was supposedly wiped out in the Moscow purges!

But keep reading. The article notes that in the case of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, “the bulk of the bureaucratic stratum went over to the side of the insurgent pro-socialist proletariat,” whereas “in contrast, more recently in the Soviet Union, the steady pressure of conciliation to imperialism and internal market forces pushed ever-greater sections of the bureaucracy into the camp of capitalist restoration, for whom Yeltsin early on became the chief spokesman.” It then notes: “The utter incapacity of the bureaucracy to play any independent role was forcefully demonstrated in the events of August 1991.”

Another item, “Camp Followers of Counterrevolution” (WV, 9 April 1993), denounced Ernest Mandel’s United Secretariat and other fake-Trotskyists such as the followers of Nahuel Moreno, who claimed the bureaucracy itself remained in place and “is directing the transition” to capitalism. The polemic stressed:

“The idea that the Stalinist bureaucracy remains intact in the wake of – and indeed presides over – capitalist counterrevolution is of a piece with the view that Stalinism is ‘counterrevolutionary through and through’.... Trotsky, in contrast, characterized the bureaucracy as a brittle, *contradictory* caste, parasitically resting on the proletarian property forms of the degenerated workers state.

“But the bureaucracy as a caste has now been shattered. Yeltsin himself demonstratively broke from the Communist Party – the bureaucracy’s ‘apparatus of domination,’ as Trotsky called it – well before becoming Russian president. He offered himself up for the new layer of yuppie speculators and Western-oriented entrepreneurs.”

The pamphlet ends with the historical article “Stalin Drowned the Communist Party of Lenin and Trotsky in Blood,” translated from a spring 1993 Russian-language bulletin. Emphasizing once again the contradictory nature of the bureaucracy, illustrating this – once again – with the case of *Ignace Reiss* and the passage from the Transitional Program that today’s ICL epigones junk in their ongoing effort to cast off the remnants of their Trotskyist past.

*How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled* is must reading for all those (including any in the ranks of the ICL) who seek to draw the crucial political lessons of the real Trotskyist struggle against counterrevolution in the degenerated and deformed workers states. If the ICL was honest, it would renounce this pamphlet in its entirety. The League for the Fourth International stands on this crucial document and is making it available to readers.

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