



**Bankrupt Stalinism opens floodgates to capitalist restoration**

## Soviet workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush counterrevolution

SEPTEMBER 23—In the wake of the pathetically botched 19 August coup by Kremlin Stalinists, Boris Yeltsin—with an enfeebled Gorbachev in tow—seized the reins of power in Moscow in the name of “free market” capitalism and Russian nationalism. The Communist Party was suppressed, and a purge of 80 per cent of the senior commanders of the Soviet military announced. The imperialists declared victory in their 74-year war—sometimes hot, sometimes “cold”—against the Bolshevik Revolution.

As we wrote in the article reprinted on p6 of this issue from *Workers Vanguard* (no 533, 30 August): “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.... 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.”

One republic after another has declared “independence” from the impotent Moscow centre, raising the prospect  
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August 21—Pro-Yeltsin crowd in front of Russian “White House”.

Spartacist

**Nationalist blood-bath threatens in Soviet break-up**

### Soviet pull-out: set-up for US attack!



On 13 September the Spartacist League/US held an urgent “Solidarity with Cuba” demonstration in New York City outside the Cuban Mission to the United Nations. The demonstration was called after the Soviet Union’s treacherous announcement of withdrawal of troops and aid from Cuba. Demonstrators demanded “US out of Guantanamo!” and raised the call “Cuba in peril—high time for socialist democracy”. Among the slogans carried were: “U.S. Killer Cops of the World, Keep Your Bloody Hands Off Cuba! Independence for Puerto Rico! Stalin’s ‘Socialism in One Country’ Undermines Defense of All Workers States” and “For Socialist Revolution Throughout the Americas!”

As the press release announcing the demonstration read:

“The advancing counterrevolution in the Soviet Union not only threatens every gain of the Soviet working people.

It has sharpened the voracious appetites of U.S. imperialism around the globe.... Now Gorbachev and Yeltsin have given U.S. imperialism a green light to drown the Cuban people in blood.

“For the last 31 years, Washington has tried to roll back the Cuban Revolution—through invasion, assassination, and a decades-long economic blockade intended to starve the Cuban people into submission. On the heels of its invasion of Panama and the hideous slaughter of the Iraqi people, the U.S. is out to impose its ‘new world order’ on defiant Cuba, 90 miles off the Florida Keys.”

A Spartacist spokesman noted: “The revolution lifted the Cuban working people from the degradation, racism and grinding poverty they suffered under the Batista dictatorship, the U.S. sugar barons and the Mafia syndicate.

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# Ireland: on the "Ascendancy" and the Protestants

The Editor  
Workers Hammer

Dear Comrade

You refer to the Unionist rulers of the north of Ireland as 'Ascendancy politicians' (*Workers Hammer* No 122). I be-

lieve that this is historically inaccurate.

The English Ascendancy in colonial Ireland were the descendants of the English settlers huddled for the most part inside the Pale and they ran Ireland for the English Empire. They had little in common socially and historically with the mostly Protestant (as opposed to Anglican) capitalists to their north. They were

historic families much in the same way as the current English Aristocracy with whom they intermarried. In fact, the analogy with England could be taken further—they had as much in common with the Presbyterians as a lord from the Shire Counties of England might have had with a Bradford mill owner. If you want to find their descendants today, your search will be more fruitful in the environs of Eaton Square in London and not among the rabble-rousers of East Belfast.

The Ascendancy chose a different way of fighting against Home Rule prior to World War I. They were just as afraid of the Protestant slums as they were of the Nationalists and Republicans. They left Belfast to the likes of the Italian Catholic Edward Carson and chose to fight the only way they knew how—through the English Establishment, leading to the Curragh Officers Mutiny (which true to form for England was in actual fact a polite letter and not a call to erect barricades!). The thought of having to rely on Protestant workers roaming the streets with guns to stay in power would have

made them feel very uneasy in their drawing rooms—they preferred a peaceful retirement in the safer climes of Belgravia.

Incidentally, they were joined in their chosen home by a similar class of people after the end of British rule in India. The colonial administrators left India to the people who had a real stake in it, the capitalist class, just as the Ascendancy left Ireland to those who had something to lose—the capitalists north and south—who (as you correctly point out) both use the tool of religion to stay in power.

You might wish to take a look at a letter in *An Phoblacht* (4 Aibreán 1991) which shows the depth of feeling among Catholic reactionaries on the question of condoms. Cathal Quinn of Killala says:

The most precious things we have are our youth and if we stand idly by and allow their moral destruction by decadent western values and ideas we have betrayed our heritage and ignored the sacrifices of the men and women of the past and present.

That someone can get so excited about a few rubber johnnies shows how far your Dublin group have to go to put an end to the gombeenocracy that is Dublin 'government'.

Tiocfaidh Lá an Lucht Oibre  
[The day of the working class will come]  
Matt Kavanagh.

## Stalinism: gravedigger of the October Revolution



TROTSKY

More than half a century ago, Leon Trotsky warned that Stalinism was a mortal danger to the survival of the Soviet Union. Having usurped power from the Soviet workers by gutting the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, the nationalist bureaucracy headed by Stalin proceeded to undermine the gains of the 1917 October Revolution and sabotage revolutionary struggle



LENIN

worldwide. While demoralised "anti-Stalinists" simply wrote off the first workers state, Trotsky's Left Opposition fought to restore soviet democracy and Bolshevik internationalism to the USSR. As Trotsky emphasised time and again, the only alternative to capitalist restoration was a proletarian political revolution to defend the remaining gains of October by ousting the treacherous bureaucracy. Now the utter collapse of Soviet Stalinism has opened up the floodgates of bloody capitalist counterrevolution. The key to defence of the Soviet working people against Bush/Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary onslaught is the forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist party.

Under the conditions of the transitional epoch, the political superstructure plays a decisive role. A developed and stable dictatorship of the proletariat presupposes that the party functions in the leading role as a self-acting vanguard, that the proletariat is welded together by means of trade unions, that the toilers are indissolubly bound up with the state through the system of soviets and, finally, that the workers' state is aligned through the International into a fighting unit with the world proletariat. In the meantime, the bureaucracy has strangled the party and the trade unions and the soviets and the Communist International....

Which is closer: the danger of the collapse of the Soviet power that has been sapped by bureaucratism or the hour of the consolidation of the proletariat around a new party that is capable of saving the October heritage? There is no a priori answer to such a question; the struggle will decide. A major historical test—which may be a war—will determine the relation of forces. It is clear, in any case, that, with the further decline of the world proletarian movement and the further extension of the fascist domination, it is not possible to maintain the Soviet power for any length of time by means of the internal forces alone. The fundamental condition for the only rock-bottom reform of the Soviet state is the victorious spread of the world revolution....

Every political tendency that waves its hand hopelessly at the Soviet Union, under the pretext of its "nonproletarian" character, runs the risk of becoming the passive instrument of imperialism. And from our standpoint, of course, the tragic possibility is not excluded that the first workers' state, weakened by its bureaucracy, 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.

Today the rupture of the bureaucratic equilibrium in the USSR would almost surely serve in favor of the counterrevolutionary forces. However, given a genuine revolutionary International, the inevitable crisis of the Stalinist regime would open the possibility of revival in the USSR. This is our basic course....

The problem of the world revolution as well as the problem of the Soviet Union may be summed up in one and the same brief formula: *The Fourth International*.

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

## WORKERS HAMMER



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## Leninist throws in the towel as...

# Fake Trotskyists cheer on Yeltsin's counterrevolution

The spectre of the Soviet Union being dismembered and its constituent republics turned into neocolonies of Washington, Berlin and Tokyo not only threatens capitalist re-enslavement of the Soviet masses but renewed imperialist attacks against the Cuban, Chinese, Vietnamese and North Korean deformed workers states. We of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) say: "Bankrupt Stalinism opens floodgates to capitalist restoration/Soviet workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush counterrevolution!"

Grotesquely, most of the British left have performed as "socialist" cheerleaders for the Yeltsinite counter-coup. *Socialist Organiser* enthused over Yeltsin: "His brave defiance of the Stalinist establishment will help workers to see what the issues are—an opening society, with the beginnings of the rule of law and some degree of democratic self-control, on one side, and stifling ice-age Stalinist dictatorship on the other" (*SO* supplement, 20 August). *Socialist Worker* headlined: "Communism has collapsed/Now fight for real socialism" (31 August) and went on to cheer the destruction of the statues of Sverdlov, Dzerzhinsky, and other "former Communist Party icons": it even carried a photo of Lenin's statue coming down. "Communism has collapsed... It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing." Revolting, but in character; since Tony Cliff split with the Fourth International in 1950, refusing to defend the North Korean deformed workers state against British/US imperialism, shameless, scabby anti-communism has been the SWP's defining feature. *Militant* was no less craven: "All over the world workers will see this as people's power reducing the threat of dictatorship to a poorly scripted farce. Every dictator will tremble at the prospect of his own subjects taking such action."

Turning to those who give new meaning to the words "bankruptcy of Stalinism", the Gorbachevite *Morning Star* (23 August) headlined "Great day for perestroika!" upon the return of Gorbachev, with the headline below: "Yeltsin goes for Communist jugular". The following day, *Morning Star* ran its leader entitled "Stop this witch-hunt" wondering pathetically: "Are we witnessing a counter-coup by decree?" *MS* gives their advice on the correct conduct of the purges: "No-one is arguing that individuals who violated the constitution by actively supporting the coup should not be prosecuted under law. But it does not follow that the organisation to which they belonged, or even led, should be persecuted.... The leading organs of the Communist Party certainly did nothing to mobilise opposition to the coup, and that was a serious dereliction of their duty toward the party and the working class."

It was not only these servile reformists who cheered (or in *Morning Star's* case, squirmed) in the face of the counterrevolutionary tide unleashed by the Yeltsinite forces. Populating the ostensible "far left" are the Workers Power organisation; a small centrist competitor of Workers Power, the Revolutionary Internationalist League and the disoriented Stalinoids of *Leninist*. Albeit coming from different directions, these groups all miserably

failed the test when faced with the desperate situation posed in the aftermath of the August coup and counter-coup.

### Workers Power: running dogs for capitalist counterrevolution

The rapidly rightward-moving Workers Power group came down hard and in no uncertain terms on the side of the Yeltsinite counterrevolution. Scarcely attempting to prettify the Yeltsin forces (and even offering a candid eyewitness account of the social dregs that manned Yeltsin's barricades) *Workers Power* writes:

"No matter what the socially counter-revolutionary nature of Yeltsin's programme, 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 cell."

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 deformed by Stalinism. The "real socialist fight" *Workers Power* writes "means being the most resolute fighters for the real democratic rights of the masses, even where the masses have illusions in the form of parliamentary 'democracy' used to con us in the west into endorsing the rule of the profiteers". The Little England Labourites of *Workers Power* have more than bought into this "con". 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 Soviet degenerated workers state to survive a day longer.

*Workers Power* concedes that the purges are "an essential stage, a prerequisite to turn to the next stage—the task of rapidly dismantling the instruments of central planning" (*Workers Power*, September 1991). But WP makes a clear call for "workers control" of the counterrevolutionary forces, for a "workers witch hunt"—for a Yeltsin who goes all the way:

"Revolutionaries share the workers' hatred for all the real and symbolic representatives of their oppression. We support the closing down of the palatial CPSU offices, private shops and sanatoria, the rooting out of the KGB officers. But we put no trust in Yeltsin or the leadership of the main soviets in the chief towns and cities to carry out the destruction of the Stalinist dictatorship.

"We seek at every point to involve the masses independently in the process of the destruction of the CPSU dictatorship....

"The workers must control the process of destruction of the Stalinists through to the end and not let Yeltsin preserve what is useful to him."

The "Fourth Reich centrists" of

Workers Power's German group *Arbeitermacht* issued a statement entitled "Down with the Putsch". Currently ensconced within the PDS, *Arbeitermacht* was concerned that "Should the 'Emergency Committee' succeed and assert its power, then all the democratic gains of the last years will be lost". *Arbeitermacht* called on "the reformist parties SPD and PDS to mobilise for a massive and effective protest in Germany". And sure enough, marches "Against the Coup in the USSR—For Returning Mikhail Gorbachev to Office" took place in Berlin, supported by *everyone* from Kohl's CDU, the SPD/DGB and the Greens as well as the PDS. Presumably the SPD braintrusts for capitalist *Anschluss*, the architects of Ostpolitik and the PDS doormats to the destruction of the former DDR failed to heed *Arbeitermacht's* pathetic plea: "No common rallies with the CDU and FDP; against the imperialist great-power politics of the Kohl government".

*Workers Power* in Britain didn't have any vigils against the coup to join, but it was hardlining from afar: "Thus we had to stand with, and indeed take the front ranks in, the fight to stop the coup" (our emphasis). On the spot, its eyewitness account noted that those who manned these front ranks "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' demonstrations, 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."

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

We said: "a call on Moscow workers to clean out this counterrevolutionary rabble was in order. Yet the coup plotters not only did not mobilise 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 programme of struggle against capitalist restoration, calling for independent workers committees in the factories to take control of production and fight privatisation, 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 pogroms and anti-Communist lynch mobs and to ward off communalist butchery by revanchist nationalists. *WP* partially quotes our statement that: "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." *Workers Power* writes: "the hallmark of their politics is the strategic call on the bureaucrats". This merely proves that *Workers Power*, like the social democrats, identifies genuine communism with Stalinism. The August events dramatically confirmed that it is only the Trotskyists who consistently defend the gains of October; our call for action by the Moscow workers to suppress the pro-imperialist yuppie/black marketeer/speculator rabble who were the shock troops for capitalist counterrevolution was the concrete manifestation of this defence. *And WP's supporters on the barricades of Yeltsin's White House were part of that rabble which had to be cleaned out.*

*Workers Power* complains that "a soft and sentimental form of Stalinism has widespread influence in the British labour movement". The Labourite TUC bureaucrats have the same worry and subjected miners leader Arthur Scargill to a barrage of vilification in Glasgow, crowing about the Yeltsin counterrevolution and viciously baiting him. *Workers Power's* own aiding and abetting of the witch hunt against Scargill through its sponsorship of the NTS/UDM connected Yuri Butchenko last year was a major scandal on the left. We noted at the time that this was no aberration or "mistake" but part and parcel of *Workers Power's* hard drive back into the Third Camp of the running dogs of capitalist counterrevolution.

As Trotsky wrote, warning of the "tragic possibility" of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union:

"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

Now with its forthright support to the Yeltsinite counterrevolutionary forces, *Workers Power* has dropped its centrist figleaf. In the "hour of mortal danger" *Workers Power* joined those who were on the *first barricade of counterrevolution* in the Soviet Union. *Workers Power* is aiming in a straight line for the social democratic swamp from which it originated.

One self-styled Trotskyist grouplet, the Revolutionary Internationalist League (affiliated to the Revolutionary Workers League in the US, which recently split) tried to maintain the usual centrist posture—one foot in the camp of counterrevolution and another in the camp of revolution. Its *Revolutionary Internationalist* (11 September) carried an article headlined "Defend Collectivised Property! Build Workers' Councils in the USSR!" 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

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# Fakers...

(Continued from page 3)

call on Moscow workers to clean out the counterrevolutionary rabble outside the Russian 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 don'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 coup because, as we wrote, it was a "perestroika coup". But both imperialism and the forces of internal counterrevolution were aligned on Yeltsin's side. Had the coup plotters stuck to their guns, it could have led to a civil war—which is what they feared above all. And in an armed struggle pitting outright restorationists against recalcitrant elements of the bureaucracy, defence of the collectivised economy would have been placed on the agenda whatever the Stalinists' intentions. Trotskyists would

have entered a military bloc with "the Thermidorean section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counter-revolution", as Trotsky postulated in the 1938 Transitional Programme. This was precisely our policy towards Jaruzelski in 1981. But the RIL, whose US cohorts supported Solidarność, is beholden to social-democratic "anti-Stalinism". Thus it can't stomach being in a bloc with Stalinists even in defence of a workers state.

## Leninist throws in the towel

Leninist's announcement that there is nothing left to defend in the USSR may well come as a shock to many of their readers. Its 1 September "special" reprints Jack Conrad's "farewell, USSR" speech, given on 25 August—one day after the appearance of Leninist's front page entitled "Gorbachev's return: Counterrevolutionary danger increases" (Leninist, 24 August). In the earlier statement, Leninist wrote that while they did not "politically support the State Emergency Committee coup", "an opportunity to make political revolution against both the conservative bureaucracy and the most counterrevolutionary forces fronted by the Yeltsinites" had been created. Potentially, had a section of the bureaucracy (including the military, which stayed largely out of the fray) mobilised sections of the population opposed to the reintroduction of the market and Yeltsin's forces, such an opening could have occurred. This was not the case.

Confronted with the manifest bankruptcy of the so-called "hardliners", literally overnight, Conrad announced it

was all over. As the 1 September Leninist puts it: "genuine communists should briefly mourn before getting on with the job of organising on the basis of the lessons our defeat in the USSR teaches"; that there is nothing "for partisans of the working class to defend". As soon as the truly pathetic Stalinist coup makers threw in the towel, so did the Leninist. On what basis did the Leninist arrive at this dramatic conclusion?

"The government of what is still called the USSR will be chosen by Boris Yeltsin. The president of the Soviet Union is no longer a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. And after initial dilly-dallying, in order to save himself, Gorbachev has ordered the confiscation of all the property of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and demanded that the Central Committee liquidates itself, and therefore, effectively, liquidates the Party itself.

"That is counterrevolution. Peaceful and democratic, but counterrevolution nevertheless."

In comparing the situation to that of a strike, Leninist writes that in the USSR the "bureaucratic strike" against capitalism and imperialism has been broken, betrayed from above and exhausted from below". But this is precisely what has not happened. In fact, Western bourgeois commentators expressed bitter disappointment at the lack of Soviet working-class support for capitalist counterrevolution. The question of what the proletariat—which has largely remained passive given the options of the Yeltsinite counterrevolutionaries and the "perestroika coup"—will do is an unanswered one.

Leninist has long looked to a wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy to "reform" (eg, its support to the Katowice section of the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy), refusing to recognise that the bureaucracy will split and shatter under the impact of proletarian political revolution. The flip-side of its illusions in the reformability of Stalinism is the endemic defeatism Leninist shares with that bureaucratic excrescence within the working-class movement. When Gorbachev criminally pulled the Red Army out of Afghanistan—leaving the PDPA regime and its supporters to stand alone against the CIA-supported Mujahedin cut-throats—Leninist simply wrote off the civil war as a foregone defeat. Our proposal to organise a brigade to fight alongside the Afghanistan government forces against the counterrevolutionary mujahedin was ridiculed by Leninist and it stood aloof as we collected over £27,000 in material aid for the civilian victims of the besieged city of Jalalabad. When the possibility of political revolution in East Germany broke out in late 1989/early 1990, Leninist was paralysed. While the comrades of the International Communist League mobilised our forces to intervene with the call for a red Germany of soviets and against unification under capitalism Leninist could only, after the victory of the West German Anschluss, declare the entire process a "counterrevolution" from start to finish.

At the same time, Leninist refers over and over to "democracy" and "democratic counterrevolution". But, the Russian nationalist demagogue Yeltsin has nothing to do with "democracy" of any description—he was the most prominent figure associated with legitimising the fascist Pamyat scum (which today he openly courts). Leninist itself was initially soft on the so-called "rights" of Pamyat in the name of "the fullest democracy under socialism" and "the plurality of parties" and announced that "in the main we would seek out Pamyat members in order to argue with them". Now, Leninist writes: "the August 19 coup itself pointed to the growing importance of democracy in advanced societies in general"! Their conclusion: "The immediate or minimum programme of our reformed Communist Party will seek to push democracy within capitalism to its limits".

Simply put, Leninist has never broken from Stalinism. Sometimes they are on the right side of the barricades (eg Poland, Afghanistan), but they are always on the Stalinist side—including in Hungary 1956 where an incipient proletarian political revolution split the bureaucracy, winning 80 per cent of the Communist Party to the workers' side, and was smashed by Kremlin tanks. Utterly lacking a genuine internationalist perspective, Leninist is now retreating into its own version of Little Englandism: forward with the Workers Theatre Movement, Unemployed Workers Charter and the re-launch of the Daily Worker.

Decade after decade of Stalinist degeneration have brought the Soviet Union to unparalleled disaster. As we concluded in our Spartacist Pamphlet: *Trotskyism: What It Isn't and What It Is!*: "So long as the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat from the tyranny of the imperialist bourgeoisie continues to develop and be fought for, there will necessarily be fights to preserve and extend the program of revolutionary internationalism that inspired Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks against alien class pressures.... Meanwhile all the imposters and fakers, who drag the banner of Leninism through all the old crap, must be fought." The need has never been more urgent for reforging a Fourth International that Trotsky would have recognised as his own. Defeat Yeltsin/Gorbachev counter-revolution! For a Trotskyist party in the Soviet Union, built in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International! ■

## Wretches in the service of a wretched programme

Putting our heads together we cannot remember a single example of any workers movement organisation (with the arguable exception of the Healyites) sinking so low as to exclude members of another left group from a memorial meeting. That's exactly what Workers Power did at the 15 September London meeting in commemoration of their leading member Dave Hughes, who died on 13 August.

We took no pleasure in the death, at the early age of 43, of a talented if wrong-headed socialist activist. Yet, as an organisation the Spartacist League had no particular interest in this meeting: our political differences with Dave Hughes were our differences with Workers Power. They were very deep-going (particularly since WP veered off sharply to the right with not-so-tacit support for counterrevolution in East Germany, and now the USSR), oft-argued (at least on our part) and well documented. His memorial meeting was not the place where we would have wanted to pursue them.

But for one of our comrades in particular, Jo Woodward, the news of Dave Hughes' death was personally painful. Jo was part of the Left Faction of the International Socialists, formed in 1972 in opposition to IS opportunism on Ireland, of which Dave Hughes was a founder. She followed that initial leftward trajectory, pointing from social-democracy to communism, to ultimately join our tendency in the fusion of the Trotskyist Faction of the old Workers Socialist League with the London Spartacist Group in 1978. Her participation in the same South Birmingham branch of IS as Dave Hughes and in the faction in the early 1970s meant that she worked closely with him. She reports that "he played a role in my realising that being a communist meant studying and acquiring knowl-

edge of the history of the Leninist and Trotskyist movement".

Not surprisingly therefore she wanted to attend his memorial meeting, simply to listen and by being present to say goodbye to someone who had been for a formative period a comrade-in-arms. She asked another of our comrades, Alastair Green, who had joined IS in 1973 and in 1974 supported the IS Left Opposition (a split from the original Left Faction), to go to the meeting with her.

So our comrades attended, and were excluded at the door after identifying themselves as SL members. Sue Thomas, a leading member of Workers Power who also had been in Birmingham IS and the Left Faction, did the dirty work; unctuously expressing her "personal sorrow" that Jo Woodward would have to stay outside, remarking how "painful" it must be for her, but asking that our comrades "respect the wishes of Dave's organisation". As one of the comrades responded at the time: "if Stalinism was the syphilis of the workers movement then WP is a pussy, suppurating boil on its backside".

Excluding Trotskyists is nothing new for WP. Ever since the SL refused to comply with WP's insistence that we could not have a literature display at a debate on Cuba between our two organisations in Birmingham in 1982, the SL has been refused admittance to WP public meetings (save when the likes of Sean Matgamna or Al Richardson refused to speak if we were not allowed in—not even in their violations of workers democracy can WP resist their own opportunism).

This pathetic excuse for their political cowardice was of a piece with the miserable evasions and contradictions of WP's politics over the years. Now that WP have thrown away their figleaf of centrism by flatly siding with Yeltsin

counterrevolution on the White House barricades in Moscow, it is perhaps fitting that they should mark the occasion by a new low in political morality.

WP has "held fast the opposites" (and they have been many and various) in its ranks by increasingly strange, rigid and cliquish organisational practices, which belie its nominal internal democracy. This is an organisation which is truly "bonkers about bulletins". They oppose their ex-members retaining a record of their political history by keeping old internal bulletins—even Stalin let Trotsky take a trainload of personal political archives into exile in 1929! Its members are capable of simultaneously protesting about SWP exclusion of Spartacists while excluding us themselves. They specialise in absurd and obscure literary brawls about property and "loyalty" with former members who join other groups (spiced with yet more exclusions).

As we pointed out in discussing the political come-uppance of the late, unlamented Gerry Healy:

"'Morality' for Marxists is inextricably tied to program. The Spartacists' unwavering adherence to revolutionary Trotskyism—our genuine, concrete defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism and against the treacherous Stalinist bureaucracy, our commitment to building an international party of proletarian revolution—this has been our political compass. From that comes a certain superstructure, a certain morality. We are fortunate to have been the heirs to an unbroken tradition which started with the American party of the Russian Revolution—the Communist Party—and continued through James Cannon's SWP to the Spartacist League..." (*Spartacist* no 36-37, Winter 1985-86).

# TUC bureaucrats pimp for North Sea Oil Murder, Inc.

"Water in the WC would have been sitting there charged with explosive gas. It is a rather bizarre sequence of events, but this is the story on the platform"—Ronnie McDonald, chairman of the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC). What followed on the morning of Wednesday, 7 August, was a series of explosions on Shell Expro's Fulmar Alpha platform which ripped through bedrooms and badly injured three catering workers, including a woman, Collette McGechan, hospitalised with blast burns. It is only by chance that many more workers were not injured or killed; the carnage of another Piper Alpha may have been only a whisper away.

A platform worker has disclosed to OILC that at the time of the blasts around 130 workers were still dispersing from a red alert muster after a high-level gas leak was detected in the production area two decks below. Otherwise many more would have been in their quarters. The blasts devastated fifteen double cabins. Ominously, Shell claimed that only two were damaged. Moreover, a suspected gas leak exploded inside the accommodation module—the so-called "impregnable" "safe haven" touted by Lord Cullen and the oil companies as the answer to another Piper Alpha. No gas alarm was triggered but in other incidents workers could smell gas in their accommodation.

What is suggested by the OILC is that a rupture in the mass of fine tubing circulating sea water as a coolant in the heat exchanger, to process natural gas (methane), resulted in gas-aerated water being piped into the accommodation. According to Ronnie McDonald, "it has been known in the North Sea for ruptures to have been deliberately overlooked on the assumption that gas would be dispersed in the sea within seconds". But in a calm sea it might not so disperse and instead be piped back onto the platform—straight into the toilets and fire-fighting system. On 7 August there was no fire: if there had been, the deluge of water released could have been charged with explosive gas, like lemonade in a bottle.

In a statement released on 15 August, Shell conceded that an "equipment failure" in the cooling system led to gas exploding in the Fulmar's accommodation module. But Shell and the Health and Safety Executive were warned in Febru-

ary of a similar deadly danger to platform workers by Colin Jewell, a design engineer with over twenty years international oil experience whose contract with Shell was recently terminated. According to *Scotland on Sunday* (11 August) the danger persists on the Dunlin A, Cormorant A and three Brent rigs, of gas pumping through hot water systems via damaged exchangers. Colin Jewell proposed the simple installation of electric water heaters: problem is, that's an expense. The gas is hot. And it's free.

*Scotland on Sunday* also reported that the control rooms on these platforms are sandwiched between diesel storage tanks and aviation fuel tanks, and across the main escape routes from living quarters to the life boats. Colin Jewell, at an OILC press conference, expressed his fears that just such an explosion as the Fulmar's could destroy a control room, preventing blowdown and "almost certainly destroying the platform with a large loss of life". *Blowout* explains that "blowdowns"—designed to automatically shut down production in emergencies—can typically only be initiated from the control room. Criminally, at least on Shell's Brent Bravo, the auto facility has been shut down: a hazard to profit (*Blowout* no 19, August 1991).

Nothing has changed three years after the Piper Alpha blew up in the world's worst offshore explosion which murdered 167 workers. Certainly not the ruthless pursuit of capitalist profit—on the order of two million pounds per hour—by Big Oil as it races to re-open the Piper field next summer three months ahead of schedule. After all, following the deaths of workers in these profit-leeching death traps, the Piper Alpha bosses never even had to stand in the dock.

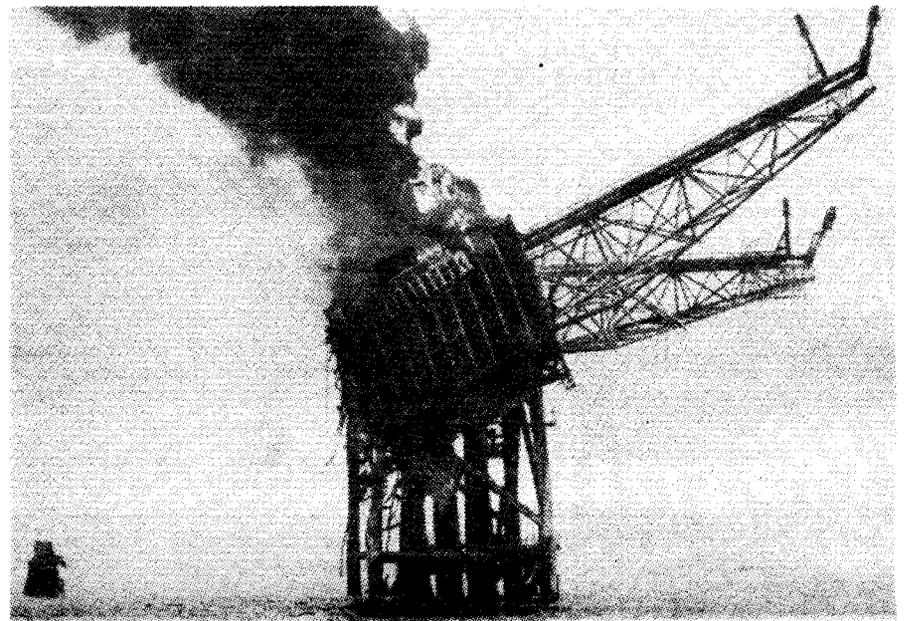
Scandalously, trade union misleaders have rushed to renew the infamous "hook-up" agreement—guaranteeing the vital work to "hook-up" BP's Miller field and Occidental's Piper B—literally letting the bosses get away with murder! From Piper Alpha to the 1986 crash of a Chinook helicopter, over 500 people have been killed in rig disasters, while 27 helicopters have hit the waters of the North Sea since 1968, resulting in 116 deaths. This latest sell-out is another kick in the teeth for the hundreds of militants sacked and blacklisted fighting for union recogni-

tion and a decent safety regime offshore.

Now, in addition to rounding on miners leader Arthur Scargill for defending the elementary right of unions to be free of interference from the bourgeois state, the TUC is simply telling the strategic and militant oil workers to drop dead. At the TUC Conference in Glasgow, the bureaucrats refused to allow OILC even to set up a literature stall and when sacked "Pergamon 23" strikers from Aberdeen put up OILC leaflets in solidarity, the TUC hacks proceeded to

spark that kindles some badly needed class struggle on this island, a hell-hole for millions.

Every platform worker knows that all the talk of "safe havens" by the oil companies and the Government is so much bullshit! What is necessary is for workers accommodation to be taken off the production platforms and on to "flotels". For union safety committees with the power to stop production on the spot. As we wrote, on the eve of the imperialist slaughter in the Gulf: "It's time the



Daily Mirror

The wreck of Piper Alpha. 167 workers slaughtered.

rip them up as well! And on 20 September, the AEU banned OILC from its Glasgow headquarters, saying they could not be obliged to "assist your organisation in its efforts to form a union in opposition to the AEU".

This could well blow up in the face of these Kinnockite inquisitors. The *Morning Star* (14 September) reports widespread rank-and-file outrage, quoting an OILC claim that "delegations had been swelling OILC weekly meetings to 1990 levels... with workers coming with this message [that OILC reconstitute itself as a new single union for the industry] straight off the helicopters from installations to OILC's Aberdeen offices". Clearly what is needed is an industry-wide union now! And North Sea oil workers could be the

workers took some effective sanctions against the bosses.... A hard strike would lay the basis for forging one solid union of all onshore and offshore oil workers." Key to winning was to "shut down production now!" (*Workers Hammer* no 116, September 1990).

But imperialist war demands a revolutionary workers leadership determined to defeat and overthrow "our" bloody bourgeoisie. It was the Spartacist League who said: "Defeat US/British imperialism! Defend Iraq!" As the plight of the oil workers underlines, it is necessary to replace the Labourite traitors with a new class struggle leadership in the unions, linked to a revolutionary workers party forged by splitting the ranks of the Labour Party from the pro-capitalist tops. ■

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# Soviet Union...

(Continued from page 1)

of border wars, mass forced population transfers and communalist blood feuds. Gorbachev, backed by Yeltsin, rammed through the self-liquidation of the Congress of People's Deputies. For the moment, the repository of "authority" will be a Council of Republics consisting of Gorbachev and representatives of ten republics which have not completely severed their ties to Moscow. But Yeltsin's Russian republic holds the whip-hand.

The last several weeks have seen little more than parliamentary play-acting. The real question is what will happen when the new regimes in Russia, the Ukraine and other republics begin to introduce the various "shock therapies" aimed at moving towards capitalism. Should workers take to the streets to defend themselves against the ravages of capitalist restoration, against the shutdown of "unprofitable" enterprises, mass unemployment and impending starvation, all the plans of the imperialists and their Soviet running dogs could go up in smoke.

The new Council of Republics is aimed at presiding over the "orderly collapse" of the Soviet state. But the collapse of the Soviet Union will be neither orderly nor democratic. The multinational population of the USSR is deeply interpenetrated — indeed, often intermarried — far more so than under the tsars. In Estonia only three people out of five are ethnic Estonians, in Latvia one out of two are Latvians, and in Kazakhstan, scarcely more than one in three are Kazakhs. Russia is home to more than 100 national and ethnic groupings, including 16 autonomous republics. At the Congress of People's Deputies representatives of these nationalities asked for guarantees against Yeltsin's Russian nationalist regime. In Moldavia, nationalist leader Micca Snegur calls for unification with Romania in order to "fulfill the dream of our King Stephen the Great" — from the 15th century. In response, non-Romanian minorities have declared an independent Socialist Republic of Dniester, where statues of Lenin still stand and have demanded in militant protests the release of their president arrested by the Moldavian authorities.

The Latvian government is debating whether to even grant citizenship rights, much less language equality, to the 48 per cent of its population who are Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians or other non-Balts. What is involved here is not only national but also class oppression, for Russian-speaking workers make up the overwhelming majority of the industrial proletariat in Latvia and also Estonia. *The formation of real workers soviets in Riga and Tallinn could teach the petty-*



Anatoly Sapronyevkov

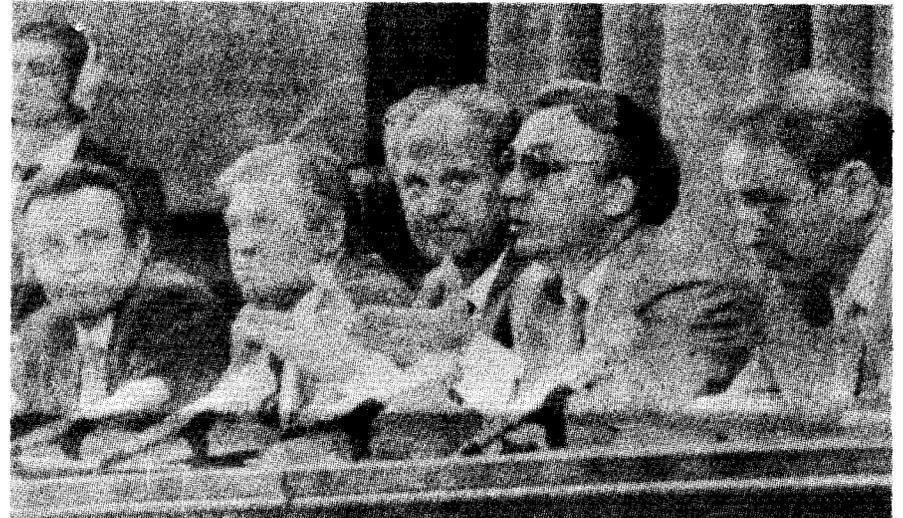
**Hardliners of the OFT labour federation brandish portrait of Stalin during May Day parade this year. Illusions that any sector of Stalinist bureaucracy would resist counterrevolution are now brutally exposed.**

*bourgeois Baltic nationalists a well-needed lesson in democracy.*

The heritage of bourgeois "independence" and "democracy" that the various nationalists in the Soviet Union harken back to today is one of imperialist subjugation, fascism and bonapartist dictatorship. An international uproar was triggered over news that "democratic" Lithuania has been "rehabilitating" thousands of Nazi collaborators sentenced for war crimes by Soviet courts. And in Russia, Yeltsin is flagrantly courting the present-day Black Hundreds, the Pamyat fascists whom he legitimised in one of his first acts as Moscow party chief in the mid-1980s. From the time Pamyat appeared on the streets of Moscow and Leningrad, we Trotskyists called for independent mobilisations of workers, Red Army men and women, Jews and other minorities to sweep these fascist black-shirts away. The bureaucracy, for its part, protected Pamyat, and now these pogromists are flourishing under the flag of the new counterrevolutionary regime. Yeltsinists and Stalinist "patriots" alike have acted to drive Soviet Jews, whose forebears fought in disproportionate numbers to defend the Soviet state in the Civil War and World War II into the arms of the Zionist deathtrap of Israel.

If the Central Asian republics continue to remain under the control of the old-line Stalinists — who, to be sure, now espouse Turkic nationalism — and statues of Lenin continue to stand in Tashkent, it is because these peoples more than any other Soviet nationality benefited from the strides forward Soviet power brought them. Even now, up to half of the budgets of the Central Asian republics rely on subsidies from the centre and it is they who will suffer most from a capitalist free-for-all. Yeltsin & Co have incited resentment among Russians that the

great wealth of Siberia's natural resources goes in part to develop the more backward Turkic-speaking regions. The Yeltsinite "free marketeers" — largely the children of Stalin's apparatchiks — want to sell Siberia's oil and natural gas fields, and gold and diamond mines, to Wall



Reuters

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

Street and Frankfurt so they can live like Western yuppies.

Perestroika fuelled the aspirations of the more advanced republics like the Baltics and Armenia for an even greater slice of the pie. Baltic nationalists dream that by ridding themselves of Russia and the more backward republics and prostituting themselves to the deutschmark, they will live like Scandinavians. They might ponder what the D-mark has brought to the former East Germany — four million unemployed, economic devastation, social collapse. Genuine Leninists stand for full equality of all nations and nationalities in a genuinely socialist federation.

It will take more than parliamentary decrees to dismantle the Soviet state and consolidate a capitalist regime. While the pinnacles of the military, police and administrative apparatus are now occupied by counterrevolutionaries, the multimillioned base of the state apparatus will not be so easily purged. Moreover, the centrifugal tendencies being promoted by the various separatist forces collide head-on with the fact that the economies of the republics are strongly intertwined and based from top to bottom on a centralised economy.

The working class has yet to make its voice heard. But there are unmistakable rumblings of discontent with the "new order". Tens of thousands, predominantly working people, have come to Lenin's mausoleum, standing in lines that have reached a mile long. Soviet workers do not relish the prospect of seeing their cities, and even their immediate families,

torn apart by nationalist fratricide. They are already fed up with the rampant black marketeering and grotesque avarice fostered by five years of partial capitalist measures. As a worried Eduard Shevardnadze noted: "If people take to the streets, it is impossible to predict what slogans they will be guided by, and who will lead that movement." In his own counterrevolutionary way, Shevardnadze understands that the fate of the Soviet Union will be decided by who will lead the working masses and under what programme.

On p1, we print the statement of our comrades in the Spartacist League/US who protested on 13 September the announced Soviet pull-out from Cuba. And close on the heels of their treachery against the Cuban revolution, the Soviet regime announced at a joint press conference with US Secretary of State James Baker, that they would halt all weapon supplies to Afghanistan and support "a democratic process in Afghanistan", leading to the eventual staging of free elections for a broad-based government made up of moderates from guerrilla factions and from the governing Watan party" (*Guardian*, 14 September). It is the duty of the international working class to fight in the defence of the Cuban deformed workers state and against the victory of

the counterrevolutionary CIA-backed mujahedin in Afghanistan!

We take up, on p3, the positions our opponents on the British left have taken in the face of the dire and catastrophic events in the USSR. Key to reversing the counterrevolutionary tide sweeping the homeland of October is for the vanguard elements of the Soviet working class to rediscover the undistorted programme of Leninism, regrouping in a Trotskyist party all the forces who would return to the internationalist road of the Bolshevik Revolution. This is the task of the hour.

**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 counterrevolutionary 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



Spartacist

**Pamyat fascists, Great Russian anti-Semitic terrorists, legitimised by Yeltsin, march in Moscow earlier this year with portrait of Tsar Nicholas II.**



Planeta



Planeta



Novosti



Novosti

Leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution. From left: Yakov Sverdlov, first president of Soviet Republic; Feliks Dzerzhinsky, founder of Cheka; Stepan Shaumyan, head of 1918 Baku soviet; Christian Rakovsky, first president of Soviet Ukraine.

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 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 privatisation and Gorbachev's market reforms, looked to the so-called hardline "patriotic" wing of the bureaucracy. *There is no room anymore for such illusions.*

The 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 US. 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 defence 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 programme 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 towards 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 fuelled the forces of capitalist restoration which have now reached their fruition with Yeltsin's counter-coup.

Boris Yeltsin is not a "Westerniser"

—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 US 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 US government. One of Yeltsin's first acts as Moscow party chief in the mid-'80s was to legitimise 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 collectivised economy.

The alternatives posed before the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state have always been: counterrevolution

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

central apparat whose bureaucratic fiefdoms were threatened. Their avowed programme 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 privatisation 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."

—Independent (18 April)

Not exactly a programme 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 organisers 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 unravelling. 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 of dozen Russian republic police, Yeltsin's bodyguards were rent-a-cops from a private security company (like the strikebreaking Pinkertons in the US). 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

*continued on page 8*



Amid Yeltsin's counterrevolution, thousands wait in mile-long queue at Lenin mausoleum to honour leader of the Bolshevik Revolution.

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 programme 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 mobilise 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

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 economy 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 crackdown 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

# Soviet Union...

(Continued from page 7)

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 defence 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 VI 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 "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 lambasts centrifugal forces pulling apart the USSR: "This is insanity. We are a nuclear country." Yeltsin aides talk of destabilisation 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 identifying 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.

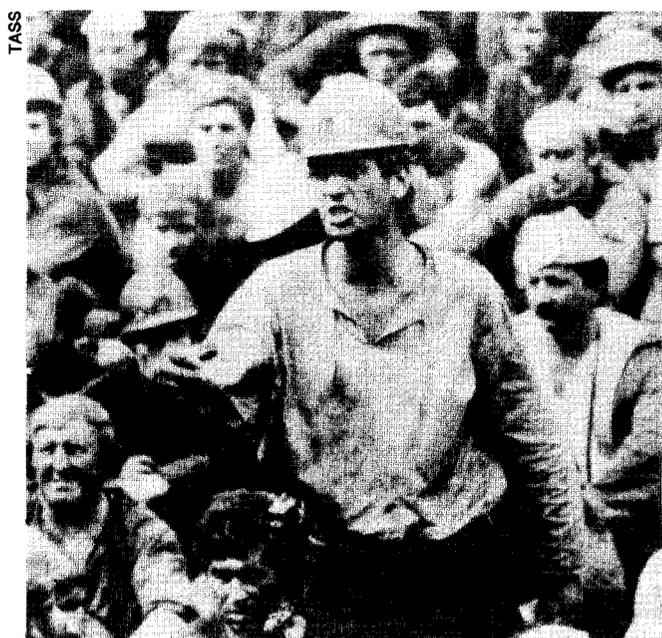
In his decisive analysis of Stalinism, *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), Trotsky asked prophetically, "Will the bureaucrat devour the workers' state, or will the working class clean up the bureaucrat?" In developing this, he elaborated the programme of proletarian political revolution led by a Bolshevik 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 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.



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*.

Soviet workers have not entered the scene in this hour of deadly peril. 1989 miners strike threw up incipient workers councils (soviets), showed potential power of multinational USSR proletariat.



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 recognise 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 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 programme, 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 centres 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 polarisations and defeatism in the face of their class enemies.

Both the Yeltsinites and the "hardliners" compete on the terrain of counter-revolutionary Russian nationalism. Starting with Stalin himself, vicious Great Russian chauvinism has characterised 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



AP

life, Lenin insisted, against Stalin, that the revolutionary Soviet state be a voluntary union based on equality of nations.

It is urgently, indeed desperately necessary for the working class to now establish organisational forms to mobilise 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, railway yards and other enterprises to prevent lay-offs and privatisation 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 victimised 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 mobilisations. 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.

● Illegalisation 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 victimise militant workers who lead strikes against lay-offs and privatisation. *Down with the witch-hunting ban on the CP! Don't let them drag away Jewish or Communist co-workers!*

● The escalating nationalist secessionist movements in the various republics are fuelling fratricidal slaughter among the deeply interpenetrated Soviet peoples. It is urgently necessary to organise *multi-national defence guards* to ward off communalist butchery. As Leninists, ie 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 child-care centres, 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 programme 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 defence 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

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 mobilisation 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 Eastern 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 demobilising of the working class.



Spartakists initiated 250,000-strong anti-fascist mobilisation in defence of Red Army monument at Treptow Park, East Berlin, January 1990.

market first and democracy later." This is known as the "Chilean option", modelled 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!"

— *Workers Vanguard* no 532, 2 August

During the coup, the Moscow workers council which came out of this July conference issued a call to: "Form up 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

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 labour 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, ie anti-capitalist, transformations in Eastern Europe as a defensive measure. But now Eastern 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 Washington, 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 defence of the Soviet Union against the capitulation of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

Where the Soviet Stalinists waged a half-hearted 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 Solidarność, 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 Solidarność Counterrevolution!" General Jaruzelski's countercoup temporarily spiked these clerical-nationalist front men for Wall Street and Washington. But the Stalinists had neither the moral authority nor the programme 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.

*continued on page 10*

# Cuba...

(Continued from page 1)

Today the Cuban population has medical care and education superior to that in U.S. cities. If the capitalist bloodsuckers return, all that the Cuban people have built in the last three decades will be wiped out."

The Spartacist League/US from its inception has been an ardent defender of the Cuban Revolution, while opposing its bureaucratic deformation. While US rulers, from Democrat Kennedy to Republican Bush, have railed against Havana exporting revolution, in reality the Stalinist Castro regime counselled the Chilean and Nicaraguan masses not to embark on the road of a "second Cuba". But all attempts to appease vindictive US imperialism are doomed to failure.

"It is our duty, the duty of all opponents of Yankee imperialism, to make clear their stand in solidarity with Cuba in this crucial hour," the demonstration organisers also said, "We look to class struggle, in the U.S. and around the world, to defend Cuba against Yankee imperialism and counterrevolution." Defend Cuba and all the deformed workers states against imperialist attack! ■

# Capitalist misery...

(Continued from page 12)

between two local shopkeepers, one Welsh and the other Asian over who would sell bread and milk, and an incident in which the Asian shopkeeper, Abdul Waheed, attempted to detain a youth allegedly shop-lifting. Abdul Waheed and his family were forced to flee, and some of the youth vowed that they will not let him return. Waheed has been depicted as a litigious petty bourgeois with a tough line on shop-lifting, but what has clearly bubbled up in the hostility to him are racist and pogromist tendencies. While local residents, including Asians, have denied a racial component, in the absence of class struggle it is not surprising that the consciousness of unemployed white youth should reflect some of the most ugly and racist aspects of British imperialism. Earlier Waheed had been racially abused as a "greedy Paki" and the police initially logged the incident as racial. The *Morning Star* (14 September) reports evidence of neo-fascists being active in Ely after the conflict broke out. A class-struggle leader-

Ahmed is still in hospital, paralysed down one side, unable to walk and feed himself.

In a "trial" reminiscent of the aftermath of Ahmed Shek's murder one of Mr Ahmed's attackers, Christopher Tees, was convicted of assault after having his plea of not guilty to attempted murder accepted by the Crown. Tees, who had been convicted one week earlier for assault on the owner of a kebab shop, got merely a seven-year sentence.

This is capitalist "justice"—whether it is administered in virtually Tory-free Scotland or south of the border. While some at the Edinburgh rally took the Labour Party's "anti-racist" credentials as good coin, the Spartacist spokesman recalled that Labour was in government when the Special Patrol Group murdered anti-fascist fighter Blair Peach. It was a Labour government which introduced the vile "virginity" tests on Asian women.

Certainly in Scotland working people and minorities have less cause to harbour illusions in Labourism; they have been at the sharp end of Labour's role as enforcers of the hated poll tax. As comrade Myall put it in her speech to the 3 August rally: "In the next general election we say no vote to the racist scab Judas Kinnock. What we need is a revolutionary workers party. Because ultimately you can only sweep away the fascists if you fight to overthrow capitalism and fight for the perspective of a workers government." ■

ship in the Cardiff workers movement would have organised trade union delegations to put a stop to the attacks on the shop and made it clear to the cops that they were not welcome on the estate. In a very direct sense, what has happened in Cardiff is the pay-off for the defeat of the 1984-85 miners strike and the vindictive massive closure of pits in its aftermath.

● An attempt by police to crack down on "hotters", youth who steal cars and then race them, provoked nights of street fighting in early September between youth and the police on the Blackbird Leys estate, on the outskirts of Oxford. Oxford itself is a relatively prosperous academic and tourist centre—and nearby Cowley car plant was, especially during the sixties and early seventies, a site of major industrial militancy. When Blackbird Leys was built at the end of the fifties, Cowley employed 25,000 workers. Now it employs under 6000. Here is a stark example of the deindustrialisation of Britain: those who might have been car workers are now joyriders. One youth explained: "This is no longer about hotting. It's about the way the police treat us. They came in heavy-handed, stirring it up.... We're going to give the coppers a good hiding" (*Independent*, 3 September).

● Two youth in a stolen car died in a crash after a high speed chase on the weekend of 7-8 September. Some local youth claim that a police car forced them

off the road. Hundreds of youth from the local housing estate, Meadow Well, Tyneside, one of the most deprived areas in all Britain, erupted in anti-cop anger, burning and looting, and battling with riot police for several nights. The clashes spread to other Tyneside estates.

Other incidents included several nights of fighting between cops and youth in the mining community of Maltby and a spate of looting when the power failed in Handsworth, Birmingham.

## "Welcome to Dole City"

There are variegated and disparate elements involved in these outbursts, and certainly, with the exception of Telford, they are not analogous to the events of 1981 and 1985 when there were explosions of anger in the black and Asian inner-city communities against racist oppression and attacks—notably in 1985 against the orchestrated Thatcherite police terror directed at these communities. But there is a common underpinning to all these "riots", and it is not the question of "hoodlums" or a lack of parental supervision, as various Tory and bourgeois politicians and commentators would have it. The despair, the anger, the criminality are the products of the unemployment, poverty, and deprivation that venal British capitalism insists is the lot of great swathes of the working

# BNP...

(Continued from page 12)

confessed NF sympathiser who was caught with a knife and blood on his shirt was subsequently acquitted of murder and attempted murder and given a short jail sentence. This was a green light to the forces of racist and fascist violence and recent months have witnessed a sharp increase in the level of organised fascist activity in Scotland.

In the autumn of 1990, four BNPs were sent down for attacking members of the SWP. To this day the SWP continues to keep silent about attacks on its members. In December, anti-fascists won a small victory when they prevented the BNP from meeting in a Glasgow pub. Earlier this year fascist stickers directed against the Chinese community were plastered over Edinburgh. In June, 150 fascists attacked Edinburgh's annual James Connolly march, and according to the *Scotsman* (6 August) the BNP were able to successfully hold a meeting in Glasgow over the summer.

In a horrific incident in July 1990 which has only now received coverage in the bourgeois press, 51-year-old Niaz Ahmed of Glasgow was left severely brain damaged after being beaten and kicked by a racist mob while out strolling through the park with his friend. One year later, Mr

# Soviet Union...

(Continued from page 9)

We initiated the call for the giant Trep-tow anti-fascist demonstration of 3 January 1990, which drew 250,000 people to honour 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 Spartakist 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 witch hunt 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 programme 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 Programme. In recent months, we analysed the mounting crisis in our article "Where Is the Soviet Union Going?" (*Workers Vanguard* nos 520, 521 and 522, 15 February, 1 March and 15 March), including a programme 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 US 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 the US. 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 organised 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.

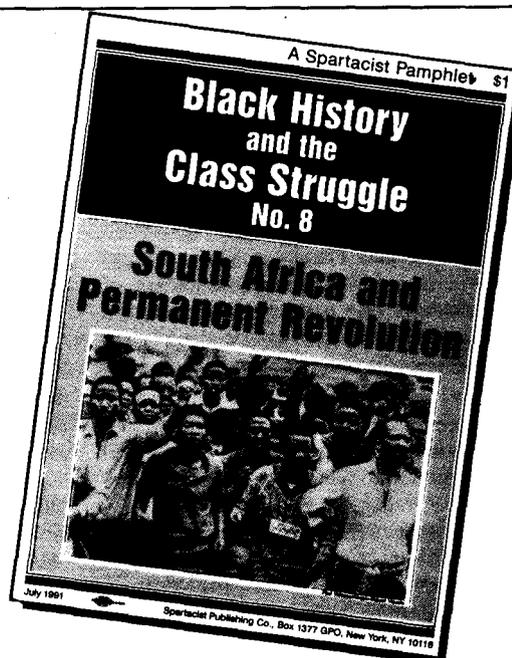
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people of these islands.

All these hot spots have above average unemployment for their localities, with youth unemployment figures invariably even higher. At one extreme is Meadow Well where more than *eighty per cent* of the employable population is unemployed. Most YTS scheme participants in the area are the sole "employed" (if you can call it that) in their families. "Many young people, from homes where nobody has worked for years, hold out no hope of ever being in work" (*Financial Times*, 11 September). And in Ely, Cardiff one youth greeted a reporter with "Welcome to Dole City", "Everyone here's unemployed" (*Independent*, 4 September).

In working-class communities across the country there is wide hatred of the police. Black and Asian youth face daily racial harassment. But although it certainly helps, you don't have to be a minority to get the cops on your back. Local government facilities that provide little or no services or simply collect the poll tax have been targets as well as any lootable shops. Shoddy housing, schools underfunded and poorly manned, lack of transport pile on the misery. It is so bad that the *Independent on Sunday* (15 September) feels compelled to editorialise:

"Politicians have not even begun to address their problems: dismal housing, bad schools, unstable families, poor public transport, unemployment. The wonder is not that the underclass riots, but that it riots so rarely."

The energies of youth in such circumstances become criminalised, as working-class communities are permanently removed from the process of production, are lumpenised. In *The ABC of Communism*, Bukharin and Preobrazhensky defined the lumpenproletariat thus:

"The industrial reserve army gives examples of complete brutalisation, destitution, starvation, death, and even crime. Those who are out of work for years, gradually take to drink, become loafers, tramps, beggars etc.... Here, we no longer find the proletariat, but a new stratum, consisting of those who have forgotten how to work. This product of capitalist society is known as the *lumpenproletariat* (loafer-proletariat)."

Except for hardened criminals (whose victims are overwhelmingly among the working class, poor and minority population), proletarian communists are not hostile to the lumpenised population, and we fight to eliminate the conditions which condemn people to desperate poverty, social degradation and even crime. Key to this is the struggle for a shorter working week at no loss of pay, a couple of five-year plans that puts Britain back to work at decent wages, and free quality health care and universal higher education. Only the working class' triumphant struggle to overthrow capitalism can bring this about.

Karl Marx noted that the lumpenised

## Ascendancy...

(Continued from page 2)

Ascendancy, whatever elements of continuity there might be, eg, in the assimilation of Northern landowners into the bourgeoisie of north-east Ireland, and into the political structures of its sectarian statelet after 1921.

Moreover to insist that the present Protestant community is simply a modern version of the old aristocratic colonial Ascendancy would, and in some cases does, serve the purpose of denying the existence of a distinct Protestant community whose legitimate rights must be recognised. This would not be the case if the Protestants were simply or primarily a colonial "ascendancy" like the British raj in India or for that matter essentially a feudal landowning class, rather than a fully class-differentiated people. ■

layers at the bottom of society are capable of "the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices, as of the basest banditry and dirtiest corruption". Given the racism of the white ruling class, black and Asian youth are and will remain the target of racist oppression and repression, but as Hitler's rise in Germany showed, lumpenised white youth can become the shock troops of fascist reaction. The vile skinhead thugs are an index of this in Britain. Fascists such as the British National Party (BNP) have already targeted areas like Tyneside as recruitment opportunities.

The *Guardian* (11 September) reported the comments of some youth from Tyneside:

"We fired the shops because we wanted to get the law on to the estate," he said. "They've always taken care of the Pakis and the Chinkies more than they have of us."

"That's not being racist, mind," said another youth, who was black. "It's just that they've got the shops, and that's what the law likes to protect."

Whatever the contradiction present, there



Eddie Mulholland

Nazi-saluting skinheads at head of racist mob, Southwark 24 August.

are racist attitudes and epithets here. And the *Observer* (15 September) reports:

"But there is a sense of too much protesting in the repeated denials, from all sides, of racial motives. The worst-hit victims, the owners of the burnt-out shops, are all Asian. Carol Warks, of Meadow Well, said: 'It's not just that they are Asians but because of the cigs and booze.' However, one of the few shops open on Friday in the districts hit by the troubles was a white greengrocer's. One youth in Scotswood insisted: 'Whites should own the shops. It wasn't our post office, it was owned by darkies, Pakis, and we don't like them.' Another youth contradicted him. Whatever the truth, the few Asians on Meadow Well have fled the area."

The fascist "Rights for whites" filth is intended to exploit such situations. And black nationalists and demagogues like Louis Farrakhan and Al Sharpton feed into this reaction with their anti-Jewish and anti-Asian race-hate propaganda. It is the duty of the working-class movement to combat each and every manifestation of racism, and to crush the fascist scum in the egg.

Recent events in Southwark in South London provide an alarming harbinger of the fascist threat. On 24 August, a march of about 300 anti-fascists was confronted by a larger counter-mobilisation of BNP fascists and skinheads as well as hundreds of local white youth whom they had mobilised. Only the presence of the police, whose riot squads baton-charged the Union Jack waving mob, prevented a bloody battle in which the outnumbered anti-fascists would have been lucky to escape without serious injury and even death. The demonstration's organisers, the Southwark Black Communities Consortium (SBCC), mix black separatism with pathetic appeals to the local Labour Party councillors. Even after this near debacle the SBCC tried to claim that this

was "a victory over racism and fascism" and that "The march succeeded in flushing out the racists and fascists in the borough" (*Caribbean Times*, 3 September). Any strategy of reliance on the cops to "protect" against fascist rampage is suicidal. What is needed are trade-union/minority mobilisations not for "police accountability" or pressuring the Labour Party sell-outs, but to drive the fascist vermin from the streets.

The Labour Party and TUC tops will never organise this struggle. While the Chairman of the Police Federation calls for restoring the Riot Act and Home Secretary Baker proposes more cops, the Labour Party mimics every "law and order" outcry of the Tories. Small wonder that the prospect of a Kinnock government replacing the Tories does not cut any ice with the youth of these estates. They are left with nothing but despair, bitterness and lumpen rage, because the Labour Party and TUC leaders refuse to mobilise class struggle. This is yet another stark example of why there is no reason for working people to vote for the Labour Party—the enforcers of the poll

Willis, along with Todd and the other so-called "left" trade union bureaucrats who knifed the miners strike even as armies of Thatcher's bootboys were mobilised to smash it. Today, the fight against the social decay, mass unemployment, stripped social services and ravaged public transport in this country is going to take genuine and hard-fought class struggle. Just as with the miners strike, such struggle will come up against the hard opposition of the Labour/TUC misleaders.

The Tories and the bourgeois press have drummed up a hue and cry about parental responsibility. In London the *Evening Standard* campaigned to label the thousands of homeless on London's streets as frauds who go home to a yuppie flat after a day's professional begging. With their "Victorian values" this venal lot will soon be trying to revive transportation to Botany Bay for stealing a crust of bread. (They already have tried out prison hulks for political refugees.)

Meanwhile the liberal pundits wring their hands and bemoan the loss of a sense of community. What they do not like to mention is that such a sense was based on common work experience and participation in struggle and organisation, above all the trade unions. Whatever the constraints and reformist limitations, not only did these struggles and organisations assert a powerful pull on the unemployed but in struggle English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish trade unionists confronted their own prejudices, as did militant miners during the miners strike when they found that the black and Asian communities were bastions of support for their struggle.

We do not partake of the prettification and nostalgic haze for the days of the "welfare state" when the misery of the working people was slightly alleviated by those small scraps the capitalist masters and the social-democratic lackeys saw fit to provide. But today some families face their second and even third generation of unemployment. In a perceptive article ("Absolutely no excuse", *New Statesman & Society*, 20 September) John Pilger noted that "During the Thatcher decade economic inequality rose more sharply than at any time since modern records were kept". He also reports that in 1983 "a senior Department of Education official warned in a secret report that legislative powers might be necessary to 'rationalise' the schools curricula. 'We are in a period of considerable social change. There may be social unrest, but we can cope with the Toxteths...but if we have a highly educated and idle population we may possibly anticipate more serious conflict. *People must be educated once more to know their place.*'"

The youth who took to the streets to fight the cops, unquestionably reflect wider bitterness and anger in society at Tory devastation and Labour servility. Many could become vanguard militants of the class struggle, and as Pilger put it "like those who fought the Poll Tax, will refuse to be educated once more to know their place, and will resist". The only answer to the desperate plight of the estates is the mobilisation of the working class which requires the construction of a vanguard party, drawing youth, blacks, Asians and all the oppressed into the working-class struggle for socialist revolution. ■

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# WORKERS HAMMER

## Jobless up, race attacks escalate, estates explode

# Major/Kinnock: merchants of capitalist misery

While Tory prime minister Major was jetting about preaching the superiority of capitalism from Moscow to Peking, in late August and early September youths across England and Wales battled the cops, starkly revealing the reality of this clapped-out market economy. And on top of the economic depression and social despair the situation is shot through with the prostration of the Labour Party and TUC misleaders of the workers movement. While the new Archbishop of Canterbury was provoking a Tory outcry for observing that the riots were "inextricably linked to social deprivation, poor housing and illiteracy" (*Guardian*, 20 September), Roy Hattersley has been claiming that the Labour Party has moved ahead of the Tories as the party of "law and order", and doing his best to prove it. Major bumbled that "People think it acceptable to behave in that way but it is not acceptable" (*Times*, 11 September). Kinnock's line is that the "riots" are "a criminal attack on the community. There is absolutely no excuse for them" (*Guardian*, 11 September). This is a competition between Tory and Labour as to which is the most hard-nosed, vicious candidate to enforce capitalist misery. Behind the present feverish electoral hype, this is what's on offer for working people.

● On 12 August Ian Gordon, a 24-year-old black man was gunned down in cold blood by police sharpshooters in Hadley, Telford. The police version of what happened is a tissue of lies. The



John Giles/PA

Burnt-out community centre on Meadow Well estate. Wall slogan denounces cops for death of two youths.

police had been told that the air pistol Gordon was carrying was empty and disarmed. Witnesses to the shooting said that Gordon called out "It's only a toy gun, it won't hurt you", but the cops shot to kill. A heavy police contingent inundated the area, backed up with searchlight-equipped helicopters. Youth—black, Asian and white—battled the cops for several nights. While hundreds of others lined the march route, an integrated

1000-strong demonstration marched on the local police station. The murder of Ian Gordon brought to the fore longstanding resentment against police harassment among Telford's 4000-strong black community. In one woman's words: "The people who threw bricks were protesting about more than one person's death. They got sick of being the underdogs and now the dam has burst" (*Observer*, 18 August). An act of blatant racist terror,

Ian Gordon's death recalls the cop murder of Clinton McCurbin for allegedly trying to use a stolen credit card in February 1987 in nearby Wolverhampton. Jail the killer cops!

● On a predominantly white council estate in the Ely district of Cardiff, hundreds of youth battled riot-equipped cops for several nights at the end of August. The fighting was triggered by a dispute

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## Scotland: Labourites ban Irish march, fascists get green light

# Workers must crush BNP scum!

In Edinburgh on 3 August, 150 protesters—students, leftists and minorities—came out to protest against racism and fascism in the heart of Edinburgh's city centre. Those who came did so to oppose the growth of organised racist terror in Scotland, spearheaded in particular by the fascist BNP. The rally was called by the Lothian Campaign against Racism (LCAR), an umbrella group which was recently formed in response to the BNP's announcement that it will field three candidates for the first time in the next general election. But smashing the fascist threat requires the mobilisation of the power of the organised working class and cannot be accomplished by reliance on the capitalist state and its cops, the

line pushed by LCAR.

The rally was held the same day that the BNP said it would march in the streets of Edinburgh. Instead of attempting to organise a united-front demonstration centred on the working class and supported by the minority communities, LCAR lobbied the Labour-run Lothian Council to "ban" the fascists from staging their race-hate/anti-Irish provocation. The council duly complied. LCAR organisers and many of the rally's speakers including poll tax rebel Ron Brown presented the ban as a victory. Some victory! The rally was ringed by cops and fascists were sitting in the park near-by.

Calling on the capitalist state to act against the fascists is suicidal. A striking

example of this occurred when the Strathclyde Council endorsed a police recommendation to ban a march in Glasgow by the Labour Committee on Ireland scheduled for 7 September. According to the report in the *Glasgow Herald* (6 September) "The committee, which seeks a Labour Party commitment to complete political and military disengagement from Northern Ireland, had already been given permission to hold its march in the city centre in commemoration of republican hunger strikers." Due to threatened counteraction by the fascists, the march was banned. As regional councillor James Mackechnie stated: "Why are marchers being victimised for action by third parties against them, and what on earth

are Labour councillors doing supporting the chief constable in imposing a ban on people's democratic rights?" They are doing their job as administrators of the capitalist order and that is why leftists, minorities, Irish republicans and their supporters will be on the receiving end of state "bans".

Nearly all the speakers at the Edinburgh rally alluded to the brutal murder of Somali student Ahmed Shek, who was stabbed to death by racists in Edinburgh in January 1989. Spartacist League spokesman Cheryl Myall pointed out that it was the capitalist state which had merely given a rap on the knuckles to his murderers. One of the thugs, a self-

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