



Price explosion, looming hunger, bloody nationalism

Break-up of Soviet Union spells disaster

JANUARY 6—In late December Boris Yeltsin formally took over the Kremlin and booted out Mikhail Gorbachev in the name of the Russian nation, thereby eliminating the last remnants of the central Soviet government. A week later he “liberalised” prices, eliminating all but a few price subsidies, tripling the price of bread, quintupling the price of fuel and sending the price of meat soaring, so that a pound of sausage now costs two months pension. In the name of introducing “free market” capitalism, “Tsar Boris” slashed the living standards of Soviet working people by 75 per cent overnight. The imperialists in Wall Street and Washington, Berlin and Tokyo proclaimed total victory in the Cold War against “Communism”. “The Soviet Union itself is no more,” exulted Bush, calling it “a victory for the moral force of our values”.

On paper the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was replaced by a “Confederation of Independent States”. But in reality, the dismembering of the USSR does not leave a consolidated capitalist counterrevolution, but a bloody mess. After six years of Gorbachev’s perestroika the economy is in a complete shambles, the rouble is practically worthless, industrial production is plummeting and the harvest is down 15 per cent from last year. The liberal Scottish economist Alec Nove, long considered the leading Western expert on the Soviet economy, predicts:

“The immediate outlook is stormy, with a grave danger of chaos caused by—and causing—a breakdown in food supplies to Moscow, St Petersburg and other major industrial areas; an energy crisis; the collapse of transport; strikes and civil disorders.”

—Independent, 3 January

The former Soviet republics are fighting with one another over economic resources and above all military forces. Yeltsin’s Russia and the Ukrainian government are fast heading towards a showdown over which will command the Soviet navy’s Black Sea fleet. In the Caucasus, Georgia is rent by a civil war between competing nationalist cliques. The war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave is escalating wildly following the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The Central Asian republics are volatile, as Islamic fundamentalists and Turkic nationalists strive to fill the power vacuum left by the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Even US secretary of state James Baker worries that the break-up of the Soviet Union could lead to “a situation created



Sheehan/Newsday

Angry women, desperate to feed their families, in Moscow store. Yeltsin’s “free market” price-gouging threatens mass hunger for Soviet people.

Soviet workers: Smash Yeltsin-Bush counterrevolution!

there not unlike Yugoslavia with nukes”.

While his Western imperialist godfathers cheered on as Yeltsin pulled down the red flag from the Kremlin and replaced it with the tsarist emblem, there was no cheering from the Russian people. And while Western TV on New Year’s Eve kept repeating “From Times Square to Red Square”, few corks were popping in Moscow (who could afford champagne?). The popular mood was one of dread in the face of Yeltsin’s “free market” shock treatment. “We will all die of hunger,” exclaimed a nurse in a children’s hospital, when she found that a plate of dumplings in her local café now costs her a full day’s wage. An older woman who survived the siege of Leningrad in World War II, where her five brothers and sisters were killed, stood in a store and wept, “I can’t live through that again.”

A pensioner, who identified himself only as Leonid, declared: “The time will come to take a machine gun... For now it’s calm, it’s the first day. But we veterans say there will be blood spilled in Moscow, and the women will start it because they have to feed their families.”

For decades Soviet working people

have regarded a stable cost of living and low prices for basic foodstuffs along with guaranteed employment as their right. Yeltsin’s massive, frontal attack on living standards is intended to demonstrate he has the power and ruthlessness to oversee the exploitation of the Russian workers on behalf of international capital. The *Wall Street Journal* (27 December 1991) headlined an article on the elimination of price subsidies, “Yeltsin, Russia’s Designated Savior, Acts to Underscore Decisiveness”. But Yeltsin is not the would-be saviour of Russia; rather he would *sell out* Russia’s mineral wealth, collectivised property and manpower to Western and Japanese financiers and multinationals.

Soviet workers: Seize control of food distribution!

Yeltsin and his economists promise that hardships will be of short duration, while the higher prices will supposedly spur an increase in supply. But while Yeltsin’s hotshot Western economic advisers keep chanting “supply equals demand”, the stores are now just as empty as before even though prices have

risen four- or fivefold. Nonetheless, there are *sizable stocks of food* in government warehouses and hoarded by private speculators. For months farmers have been holding their products back from state procurement agencies in anticipation of the introduction of “free market” prices. And in recent weeks criminal gangs have stolen food from government warehouses, nursery schools and factory cafeterias in order to sell it in the private markets.

The elimination of price subsidies means a massive redistribution of income from working people to what Russians call “the mafia”—the interpenetrated cliques of corrupt officials, petty entrepreneurs and criminal gangs. Looking at empty store shelves and extortionate prices, Moscow workers are convinced the mafia is selling plentiful supplies of meat abroad for precious hard currency rather than near-worthless roubles. Moreover, the entire supply system is totally paralysed in the face of expected hyperinflation. Yeltsin’s former finance minister Yevgeny Saburov denounced the price “reform” as “irresponsible”, noting that most enterprises negotiate their contracts

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Spartacist

ICL organises clean-up of Marx statue in central Moscow.

Trotskyists in Moscow clean defaced monument

Honour Karl Marx

Among the monuments defaced by Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary mobs last August was the statue of Karl Marx opposite the Bolshoi Theatre in central Moscow. On 1 December a communist clean-up brigade armed with brushes, rags and paint remover came out to erase the reactionary filth. Responding to an appeal by the International Communist League (reprinted below), several dozen people gathered behind the flag of Trotsky's Fourth International, the Soviet flag and a banner reading "No to Capitalist Restoration! Yes to the Gains of October!" Among them was a delegation from the Committee to Defend the Lenin Museum. Over 300 pieces of Trotskyist literature were sold to passers-by, some of whom, including a visiting group of South Korean

Communists, joined in the clean-up effort. The action attracted newspaper, radio and television reporters from Japan and four Western European countries, as well as two pro-Yeltsin Russian newspapers. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (3 December) carried a report headlined "Trotskyists *Subbotnik* in Moscow: Supporters of the IV International Cleaned the Monument to Marx" — referring to the tradition of a Saturday of voluntary work for the community. While the Trotskyist *subbotniki* could not remove all the filth from the statue, they did not leave until cleaning the inscribed appeal by the founder of modern socialism (which the Moscow city council wants to erase): "Workers of the World, Unite!"



TROTSKY

Soviet Union crushed Nazi invasion

As Bush/Yeltsin counterrevolution threatens the remaining gains of the October Revolution, the social democrats and fake Trotskyists have actively supported the capitalist restorationist forces. Along with this treachery goes consistent capitulation to reactionary nationalism, penetrated by fascist outfits who collaborated with Hitler 50 years ago, such as the Ukrainian Ban-

deraites. The imperialist-backed counterrevolutionaries within the USSR must be crushed today as Hitler's invading army had to be smashed in WWII. Following Nazi Germany's launching of the Operation Barbarossa invasion of the USSR in June 1941, American Trotskyist leader James P Cannon expressed the Fourth International's unconditional defence of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and the threat of internal counterrevolution. At the time, many bourgeois pundits and others expected the Soviet Union to fall in a matter of weeks, as had capitalist France a year earlier. But the Soviet proletariat rallied to the defence of their workers state and ultimately the Red Army crushed the Hitlerite scourge. Cannon is speaking in August 1941, on the first anniversary of Leon Trotsky's assassination by a Stalinist agent.

Those fainthearts, those traitors who said the Russian Revolution has been killed, that the Soviet Union is not worth defending, are being answered on the battlefields of Russia today by millions of men in arms. Millions of Soviet soldiers, pouring out their blood, say the revolution still lives and not even Hitler's army can kill it!...

Nobody believed in the fighting capacities of the Soviet army except the Soviet workers themselves — and the Fourth Internationalists. Stalin didn't believe in the fighting ability of the Red Army which he had beheaded. The only reason he didn't capitulate to Hitler and give him all the concessions he wanted, is that he didn't get a chance. Hitler thought it would be so easy to smash the Red Army, he didn't bother to parley about it. All the statesmen and military experts expected and freely predicted a Russian collapse on the French pattern in a few weeks. What they all overlooked was the one most important and most fundamental element in war, the one that was elucidated by Comrade Trotsky in our last talk with him in Mexico, fourteen months ago, the element of *morale*....

Those who made an equation between fascist Germany and the Soviet Union could not understand the psychology of the Russian workers and peasants. You can write all the books, wisecrack theses, explaining there is no difference between the degenerated workers' state in Russia and the fascist regime in Germany. But the Russian workers and peasants think there is a difference, and they think the difference is worth dying for. They know better than all the renegades, better than all those who have turned their backs on the Soviet Union in the hour of danger, the hour when people are really tested as to the value of their ideas, opinions, theories, and promises.

Trotsky said more than once that the beginning of a war of imperialism against the Soviet Union would undoubtedly arouse a veritable outburst of genuine revolutionary patriotism and fighting spirit in the Russian masses. That is precisely what we have seen there.

—James P Cannon, "Trotskyism Lives" (August 1941)



LENIN

In defence of the statue of Marx!

"His name and his cause shall live through the ages!"

Comrades!

Jackals like to tug at the tail of a fallen lion. That's the way of jackals. But their feast is not to be: the lion lives!

People who yesterday hypocritically knelt before the figures of Marx and Lenin, the founders of the great Soviet state, today deface and destroy monuments, supposing that the great victories achieved by a century of struggle by the toilers can be diminished by their filth and spatterings.

The counterrevolutionary crusade, inspired by the Yeltsinites and aimed against the gains of the October Revolution, began with the defacing of monuments of the revolutionaries F Dzerzhinsky and Y Sverdlov. The defiling of these monuments was an opening test of strength by the consolidating Yeltsin-Gorbachev-Bush counterrevolution. Now they are aiming their blows at the economic, political and social gains of the working class.

The monument has become a symbol.

And today we come out in struggle with this symbolic act — the cleaning of the statue of Karl Marx. It must become a symbol of our fight against the vile attempts to tarnish the monument to the

genius of Marx in a vain attempt to reimpose capitalist slavery on the Soviet working people. Our banner, the banner of Great October, the banner of the Left Opposition, the banner of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, remains untarnished. Marx must not be made to pay for Stalin & Co! We will not surrender our statue!

The peak of the "democratic" hysteria is behind us, and their attempt at capitalist restoration is calling forth growing protest by the Soviet working class. We remain loyal to our ideals: the struggle for Marx's cause. At the call of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) we have gathered here, because we consider it our duty to arm the Soviet workers with the programme of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky — that is, the programme of Great October.

Our standard remains as before, Marx's slogan:

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

International Communist League

(IV Internationalist)

1 December 1991

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 541, 27 December 1991.

WORKERS HAMMER



**For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!
For a Socialist United States of Europe!**

Newspaper of the Spartacist League, British section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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CIRCULATION MANAGER: Antoine Vernes

Published by Spartacist Publications, PO Box 1041, London NW5 3EU

Subscriptions: £3.00 for 1 year, overseas airmail £6.00.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

Printed by Slough Newspapers Ltd(TU). ISSN 0267-8721

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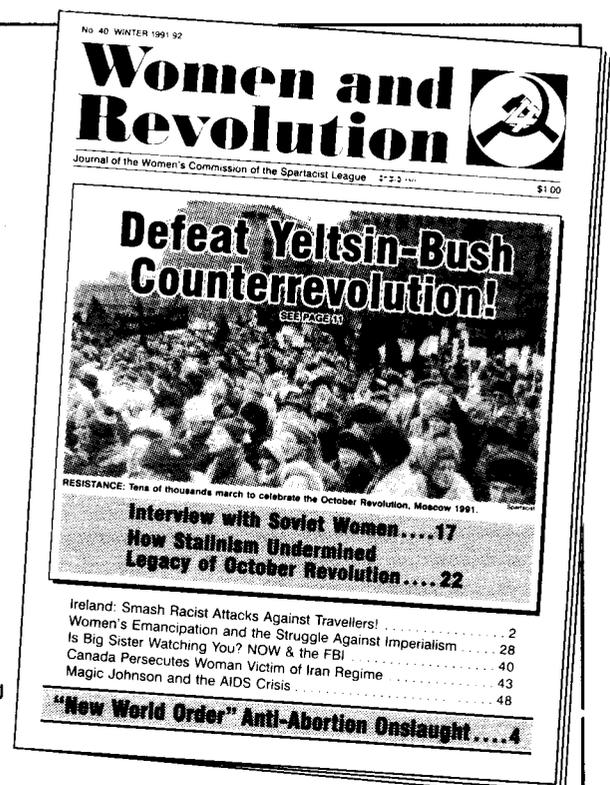
Women and Revolution

No 40
Winter 1991-92

75p

Subscription —
3 issues £1.50

Make cheques payable/post to:
Spartacist Publications,
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Exchange with centrists on the Russian Question

RIL: neither the coup committee nor Yeltsin

[Received 5 December 1991]

To the Editor
Workers Hammer

Dear Comrade,

Immediately after your attack on the position taken by the RIL on the August Coup in the USSR (p. 4 Workers Hammer no. 125, Sept/Oct 1991) you claim that "both imperialism and the forces of internal counter-revolution were aligned on Yeltsin's side". Some economy with the truth here comrades? Mitterrand was less than an enthusiastic Yeltsin supporter and other leaders of world imperialism showed by their hesitancy that they were prepared to support the victors in the struggle and for most the coup regime would have been quite acceptable. After all Gennady Yanayev had promised all the international treaties would be honoured and that perestroika would proceed apace, if at a slower one. Some imperialists agreed with Yanayev that the USSR needed to have a strong centre in order that the restoration of capitalism could proceed in an orderly fashion. Is this not 'internal counter-revolution'? So the coupists did not call on the workers to defend the nationalised property relations indeed? Who but you would dream that they might or think that Stalinism would do so foolish a thing which might result in the risen working class cutting their throats?

In Poland you expected the Stalinist Jaruzelski to defend the nationalised property against a mass working movement 'Solidarity' and you supported the butchery of that working class by him. In fact the Polish coup was not just to pay back the imperialist bankers, it proceeded with the restoration of capitalism itself, at its own pace so that the leading layers of the bureaucracy might benefit from it. This was the purpose of the crushing of Solidarity and your Stalinophilia blinded you to the fact that IMPERIALISM SUPPORTED THAT BUTCHERY,



Spartacist

Red flag flies as massive workers protest opposes Yeltsinite counterrevolution/"free market" starvation (left). RIL says workers should have "answered" strike call by Russian chauvinist/imperialist stooge Boris Yeltsin during August countercoup.

never encouraged the mobilisation of the working class (it is mad to think that they would) and only gave unequivocal support to a DEFEATED SOLIDARITY. Only when the working class was defeated and demobilised (with your support) did reactionary political positions conclusively triumph in Solidarity. Of course you can have a mass reactionary movement, based on the middle class and declassed workers (fascists and others), but this is entirely different to a movement based on workers' organisations with a reactionary leadership. To confuse the two is to abandon the struggle for the hearts and minds of the working class entirely and concede that struggle to the existing right wing leadership. To oppose an insurgent working class as you did was to join the counter-revolution and TO THEORETICALLY EXCLUDE the possibility of political revolution forever.

This is the source of your abhorrence of the idea that workers, answering Yel-

tsin's strike call to 'defend democracy' might then make their own demands and set their own agenda once they had felt their strength and the weakness of both sections of the bureaucracy. History is full of historical precedences of this, from the German Revolution of 1848 to Spain in 1936. Your position is 'on no account must workers take action on their own behalf against the bureaucracy until they have accepted and put into practice the full programme of the Spartacists', it seems.

This fundamentally idealist conception of historical development is absolutely false. It basically proposes: 'first the masses must get their heads in order, then they may be allowed to begin revolution, if not they should be shot down like dogs'. A Trotskyist leadership must be both part of the working class struggles and as an opposite to its existing reformist consciousness in order to win leadership. Your position leads you to



A C Humichew/TASS

support one wing of the bureaucracy, one wing of world imperialism and one wing of restorationism against the working class. It is the politics of an introverted sect with no relationship with the working class and oppressed masses and no desire or struggle for such a relationship. It makes a mockery of your claim to be seeking to build a Bolshevik-type leadership in the working class. For Workers Hammer it is truly a case of "in the beginning was the word".

Comradely
Gerry Downing
FOR THE RIL.

WH replies: As we noted in "Fake Trotskyists cheer on Yeltsin's counterrevolution" (*Workers Hammer* no 125, September/October 1991), while the SWP, Socialist Organiser, the WRP, Workers Power et al jumped shamelessly into the Yeltsinite camp, the centrist Revolutionary Internationalist League (RIL) tried to keep one foot in the camp of counterrevolution and another in the camp of revolution: "neither the coup committee nor Yeltsin". *Revolutionary Internationalist* (11 September 1991) wrote:

"For Trotskyists there should have been no more talk of critical support for, or 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."

RIL acknowledged that in the wake of the botched coup and Yeltsin's countercoup "All the forces pushing for capitalist restoration have been enormously strengthened" but attacked our call on Moscow workers to clean out the counterrevolutionary rabble outside the Russian parliament. It claimed to want to "fight" capitalist restoration but didn't want the workers to crush the shock troops of the counterrevolution. It opposed a "united front" with Yeltsin

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Workers Vanguard



SIPA

New York, 1981: Spartacists protest Solidarność (left). Clerical-nationalist, capitalist-restorationist Solidarność' Lech Walesa embraces Pope John Paul II. RIL stood with Walesa.

Soviet workers say nyet to Militant/WRP Yeltsin-lovers

We print below a report by an ICL member of an intervention into a 14 December meeting called in Moscow by Rabochaya Demokratia (Workers Democracy), which is supported by the British Militant group. Elsewhere on this page we print a letter from a Trotskyist militant from the city of Voronezh, who rejected the Stalinophobic line of the Slaughterite WRP, and adheres politically to the ICL.

The Militant/Rabochaya Demokratia meeting was held in a House of Culture in the Red Presnya district. There were at most 35 people there, mainly old male academics, five women including me, only a few workers and a few youth most of whom we knew—they'd attended our classes, previously called or written.

On the wall was a photo montage of their participation on Yeltsin's barricades, labelled in Russian "On the Barricades 19-21 August 1991", as well as pictures of them with a bunch of anarchist types in Red Square on 7 November. Talking up our line on the Yeltsin barricades we knew that a good section of the audience, like the bulk of Moscow, now hates Yeltsin. (According to a recent poll only 15 per cent fully support him.)

These Grantites are pretty dim—but that's what Labourite politics will do to you. So for their first point they had a Swedish trade unionist talk for at least 45 minutes about the situation in Sweden—going back to the organisation of the

first trade union. It was very social democratic/workerist: life is bad in Sweden too and you need a labour party. Then Sergei B. talked about workers committees and a bit on the economy. Most people were bored and a number around us were asking us questions, signing our mailing list and buying our literature.

I intervened towards the end of the discussion period. I had a hard time getting called on and finally just stood up and they had to call on me, as I was in the centre front. I said that every group in the Soviet Union and around the world is judged by their position on the coup/countercoup. We of the International Communist League were for taking down Yeltsin's barricades. But everyone should know that Rabochaya Demokratia are the most vile kind of social democrats, proud of the fact that they participated on Yeltsin's barricades in defence of Bush and counterrevolution. The task right now was to defend the Soviet Union in its hour of greatest danger. Here the audience started to applaud.

Sergei B. said that the counter-revolution had already won. Then he tried to shut me up but failed. I asked if this treatment was an example of "workers democracy". Much to my surprise there was silence so I continued. I said the question is simple: revolution or counterrevolution. These people have supported Solidarność in Poland, told the workers in Poland to trust Solidarność. Now there's poverty and unemployment there. Our International said at the time

that Solidarność is a "union" of the CIA! In conclusion I invited anyone who was a genuine communist to come and talk with myself and my comrade, a former officer of the DDR who had refused to serve the Bundeswehr and became a Spartacist because he wanted to defend socialism.

This broke up the session. Sergei B. tried to answer me, but rather weakly—that it wasn't a reality to say that workers could be mobilised to take down the Yeltsin barricades, and that we're soft on Stalinism. Then I heckled him, asking point-blank whether he participated on Yeltsin's barricades. He said yes, that they participated, and that there were a lot of Moscovites there. I pointed out that they think the main enemy was Stalinism, while we understand the main enemy is imperialism. No wonder they can't see the class line!

Then a worker—one of the only ones in the room, an old guy with white hair in the front row—got up and started to shout them down emotionally about how they supported Yeltsin. Could this shameful thing really be true, that they were on the Yeltsin barricades? They tried to shut him up but someone else raised the same question. Then they lost control of the meeting. So after trying to get things back together and failing they called a break.

Then we were surrounded by a number of people who shook our hands and agreed with us that it was shameful to be on the Yeltsin barricades. So we left after the break ended, as did a number of people in their audience.

* * *
To Comrades of the International Communist League (IV Internationalist):

On 7 November 1991 in Voronezh there was a demonstration and rally, celebrating the 74th anniversary of the October revolution. The demonstration was not organized by the city structure. It was organized by the Socialist party of working people and by the Council of Voronezh veterans.

About 10 o'clock in the morning in the central square of the city gathered 400-500 people. Many in the group wore red bands but there was not one red flag nor one red slogan there.

We Voronezh Trotskyists earlier knew about the plans for the demonstration and decided to come to it to participate. We distributed in many parts of the city leaflets calling out the Voronezh workers to come out on 7 November to the central square under red banners.

We came to the square under our own red flag which we made ourselves and with our literature of the International COMMUNIST League (IV Internationalist). We distributed this literature at the time of the rally. The demonstrators were very interested in our materials and very many took them. We sold 50 copies of "Bulletin Spartakovtsev" No. 1, and about 650 supplements as well as several copies of Trotsky's book, "The Revolution Betrayed".

Our spokesman spoke in the name of the ICL. He called on the workers to be
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Workers Power:

Yuri Butchenko brigade's fascist smear against mass anti-Yeltsin protest

Tens of thousands of Soviet workers marched to Moscow's Red Square on 7 November to celebrate the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution and protest Yeltsinite "free market" starvation. As we reported in our last issue, up to 90,000—heavily proletarian in composition—voiced deep hatred towards the agents of Wall Street and Frankfurt spearheading the drive to capitalist restoration. They chanted "Lenin! Lenin!" and "Down with the bourgeois dictatorship!" and carried signs reading "Yeltsin: Russians Will Never Be Slaves—Your Rapacious Reforms Will Not Work" and "Down with the CIA's Perestroika!"

Here's how Workers Power, among the first on the White House barricades with the spivs and racketeers of Yeltsin/Bush counterrevolution, painted the mass anti-Yeltsin Revolution Day protests in its December 1991 issue:

"... a motley crew of ageing Stalinists led by Nina Andrejeva, Pamyat supporters (a Russian fascist organisation) and a few monarchists, demonstrated outside Lenin's tomb. Slogans included demands to keep open the Lenin museum, to free the leaders of the August coup attempt, against Yeltsin's privatisation measures and calls to take measures against Jews and Freemasons who were the source of all Russia's ills!

"In the midst of this unsavoury bunch marched none other than the 'Trotskyists' of the International Communist League (the Spartacists), who proceeded to share a platform with the Stalinists and Pamyat!"

This is called The Big Lie. Workers Power uses it in small things as well as large. For example, even the bourgeois press placed the number of the anti-Yeltsin protests at more than 10,000. Workers Power's buddies in the Slaughterite WRP—while retailing a similar slander—wrote "Riding a wave of anti-Yeltsin feeling, the hard-liners attracted about 6,000" (*Workers Press*, 16 November 1991).

It doesn't matter to Workers Power that Pamyat did not have an organised presence, much less a "platform" or that the Stalinist "patriot" organisers preferred to close the rally down rather than admit our spokesman to the platform. No, mere facts have nothing to do with the aim here: a vile "fascist smear" against the mass workers protest in opposition to Boris Yeltsin—the counter-revolutionary Russian chauvinist who legitimised Pamyat as Moscow party chief, the man to whom the NTS Russian fascists flocked during his August counter-coup, the man who in his own words has had dealings with Pamyat for



Moscow, 7 November — Trotskyists of ICL raise banner of Fourth International at Revolution Day demonstration. Workers Power, on the barricades with Yeltsin in August, now resorts to Big Lie slander against demo.

"quite a long time"!

The Slaughterites were somewhat more open about their complaint with the anti-Yeltsin protest: to wit, it included Stalinists, "survivors of the Communist Party's collapse". For its part, Workers Power's Big Lie echoes the Yeltsinite

rabble who have carried slogans equating the CP with the Nazi SS. The counter-revolutionary Baltic nationalists so dear to Workers Power also smeared the Soviets as "SS" and are now busy amnestying Nazi war criminals. There is an
continued on page 11.

Revolutionary History:

Pseudo-Trotskyists who can't distinguish between communists and fascists

Early last year the International Communist League withdrew from the editorial board of the journal *Revolutionary History*. Now the first issue published since our withdrawal (*Revolutionary History* Vol 3, No 4, Autumn 1991) invokes our name negatively in three different spots: one an editorial note, one a letter entitled "ICL Inaccuracies" and another letter called "ICL Factionalism". Inaccuracies, factionalism? Their indignant protests about our withdrawing from their editorial board are mainly organisational and that we are bad people. For the three years we participated in this archival journal we had only one voting representative on an editorial board that generally numbered ten or more members. Considering this their complaints that we deranged the rest of the editorial board and kept them from projects that all others wanted are patently absurd.

When we joined the editorial board there was common agreement that the journal would not publish anything about historical events within the last 25 years. The rest of the editorial board members no doubt saw this as protection against our devious manipulation, but it was fine with us. It was the rest of the editorial board who could not, especially in the current climate of triumphal bourgeois cant about the death of communism, resist the temptation to intrude their Stalinophobic, Labourite politics into what was supposed to be an historical, archival journal. The opening sentence in the main editorial in the current issue uses as its point of departure the Persian Gulf War, which among many other idiocies and deviations fails to even mention the word "imperialist". The strains of the recent and current political scene served to reveal the political gulf which has always been present between us and other participants in the journal. Obviously our criticisms struck a very tender political nerve.

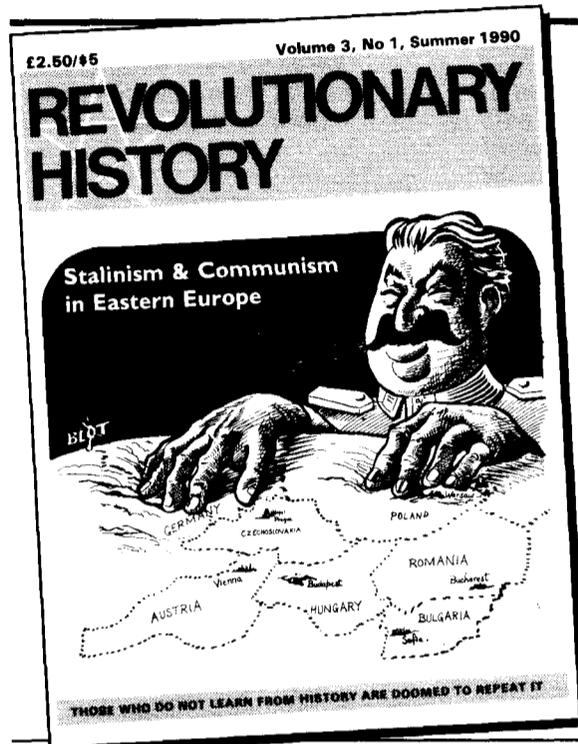
As our 22 March 1991 letter announcing our withdrawal from the editorial board noted (see *Workers Hammer* no 122, April 1991):

"It is the continued disintegration and collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe which conditions the increasingly all-sided political divergence between ourselves and the rest of the Editorial Board. The grossly anti-communist sketch of Stalin leering over Eastern Europe which appeared on the cover of *Revolutionary History* Volume 3 No. 1 (which we refused to distribute publicly), the desire on the part of a good part of the Editorial Board to publish patently fascist Ukrainian nationalist material in that same issue, the attempt of the editor to whitewash the record of the highly dubious Hungarian 'anti-Stalinist' Michel Varga, also in that issue (cf our 'ICL Statement' on Varga, *RH* Volume 3 No. 1, pp27-8): these are the acts of those who currently howl along with the imperialist wolves, cheering the anti-democratic nationalist movements which openly threaten counterrevolution in the Baltic states. Such 'anti-Stalinism' has nothing in common with Trotskyism, which seeks to mobilize the East European and Soviet working classes in defense of collectivized property forms and for their international extension."

Behind their smokescreen of ICL "factionalism" and "sectarianism" lies one simple fact: they are on the opposite side of the class barricades from us in the Soviet Union. The August events were an acid test for those who claim to be revo-

Trotskyists de France bulletin, September 1977), Varga solicited funds from the US State Department, and neither denied nor repudiated the obscene racist and anti-Semitic statements (shown in box on p6). In the current issue of *RH* the "Editor-

"Will Europe find in herself the strength and wisdom to defend her right of primogeniture and her priority against semi-Asiatic Moscow?" This has nothing to do with "revolutionary history", and everything to do with the fact that these fascist



Anti-communist or not? Compare the message on the cover of *RH* Vol 3 No 1 with that on the cover of *Workers Monthly*, theoretical journal of the American Workers [Communist] Party (1925).



lutionaries. Our headline was "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" A few excerpts from the newspapers of groups on the *RH* editorial board highlight the counterposition. Taking its cue from the imperialists and their Labour Party lackeys, *Socialist Organiser* (20 August 1991) hailed Yeltsin's "brave defiance of the Stalinist establishment". Supporters of the Slaughterite WRP helped man Yeltsin's barricades, and *Workers Press* cheered on the shutting down of the CPSU. Workers Power, similarly signing up for a united front with Yeltsinite counterrevolution, boasted that "we had to stand with, and indeed take the front ranks in, the fight to stop the coup" (*WP*, September 1991). The WIL chimed in: "What was lacking was a leadership which could mobilise workers to take mass strike action against the coup on the basis of their own independent class interests" (*Workers News*, September 1991).

The present denizens of the *RH* editorial board draw inspiration from the Stalinophobic slogan of Healy's WRP and Pierre Lambert's OCI: "Down with Stalinism! Down with imperialism!" Indeed, for them Stalinism is the main enemy, and it is fair game to bloc with anyone — even outright fascist elements — against "Stalinist totalitarianism". Driven by political impulses alien to Marxism, it is hardly surprising that they pervert and whitewash the truth — historical and otherwise — about their "anti-Stalinist" bedmates. Indeed Varga, who is now Secretary of the WRP's international lash-up, has plenty in common with the pro-imperialist, racist and anti-Semitic sinister forces that have emerged into the open with counterrevolution in Eastern Europe. As we have documented in *Documents sur "l'affaire Varga"* (Ligue

ial Statement" by Al Richardson as well as the letters from Bob Pitt of WIL and Charles Pottins of the WRP and the Jewish Socialist Group, all argue for publishing the material by protagonists of the fascistic "Ukrainian Revolutionary Army". In fact, there is no statement to the contrary in this issue of the magazine. This only confirms the point we made at the time: "That the articles were not printed seems to us solely due to the very sharp interventions of our representatives at the editorial board" (ICL letter, 10 July 1990). Why is the *RH* ed board so ready to tout the rantings of those who apologised for Ukrainian fascism in Poland, were proud to have assassinated a key Red Army commander in the war between Hitler's forces and the Soviet workers state and who hopefully enquired

and nationalist scum are part of the imperialist-brokered "united front against Stalinism" that our social-democratic friends adhere to politically.

It has become nauseatingly commonplace for Stalinophobic outfits that falsely label themselves Trotskyist to apologise for reactionary anti-Soviet nationalists. The Estonian Nazi "Forest Brothers" were saluted by Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat in *International Viewpoint* (18 September 1989). A couple of years ago Workers Power even appealed to Maggie Thatcher to come to the aid of "poor little Lithuania" against the Kremlin. One might note that "democratic" Lithuania celebrated Yeltsin's counter-coup against the CPSU by "rehabilitating" thousands of Nazi collaborators sentenced for war

continued on page 6



Revolutionary History...

(Continued from page 5)

crimes by Soviet courts, while in the western Ukrainian city of Lvov there was a march of World War II "anti-Soviet partisans" in full battle regalia. It is precisely this ilk — Nazis or Nazi collaborators — that *RH*'s Ukrainian heroes were intimately involved with.

Yes, they were all for Yeltsin: the Ukrainian and Baltic fascists, the Moscow yuppies, the Pamyat black hundreds, Bush, Major, Kinnock... and the constituent elements of the *Revolutionary History* editorial board.

"ICL Factionalism" = political spine

A report written by the ICL representative who attended the first meeting of the journal in November 1987 noted:

"[editor] Al Richardson said that the aim of the journal would be to bring out archival materials and articles on historical subjects, not only on Trotskyism, but more generally from a Marxist viewpoint. He pointed out that these materials should be material which doesn't exist already in English, or is not easily available."

We saw worth in *RH* to the extent it fulfilled its original aims especially in the light of the involvement of veterans of the early British Trotskyist movement from the 1930s and 1940s. An outstanding example was the material on Dutch Trotskyism in WWII by Wim Bot, which played an important part in formulating the introduction to the Prometheus Research Series bulletin on the Proletarian Military Policy. And we now continue to circulate internally in quantity interesting issues of *Revolutionary History*. Naturally, our members are none too keen to purchase magazines whose covers bear anti-Soviet caricatures worthy of the *Daily Mail*, MI6 or the CIA.

Charles Pottins in his letter headlined "ICL Factionalism" complains, "Hardly an issue of *Revolutionary History* has passed without the Spartacists exercising their right to insert a statement giving

organisation that labelled itself as such. Most assuredly, we do not believe that people who can't tell the difference between a fascist and a communist are revolutionaries.

But there is a broader point here on the question of the Leninist vanguard party. We don't buy the idea that there is a "family of Trotskyism", which in Britain translates to the fact that there are a dozen or more ostensibly Trotskyist groups who for the most part agree to disagree on secondary questions while maintaining a cosy familiarity and chumminess, based on a shared capitulation to social democracy and anti-Sovietism. At bottom they all regard themselves as members of a common party — the Labour Party. This is the methodology of an Al Richardson or Charles Pottins. Pottins, for example, endlessly complains of how we "label" people. Supposedly we "smear" Alan Thornett by calling him a scab. Yet Pottins admits that "Alan Thornett had crossed an unofficial picket at Cowley..." Ditto with Varga. In truth our "crime" is... we tell the truth about ostensible "Trotskyists" who betray the working class.

In the second issue, in response to an article on the Spanish Civil War by a member of the *Revolutionary History* editorial board, we protested that it was "devoted almost exclusively to a denunciation of the treacherous activities of the Stalinists in Spain, and therefore downplays the crucial question of the Popular Front". We said that the "strong Stalinophobic tilt amnesties the other reformist and centrist working-class tendencies", such as the social democracy and in particular the POUM, on whom Trotsky concentrated the bulk of his polemics. In the following issue we again attacked the idea that Stalinism was somehow more counterrevolutionary than social democracy, noting in our statement that "The Popular Front, embraced by the Comintern in the shadow of the Stalin-Laval pact, is in substance identical to the explicit class coalitionism of social-democratic reformism."

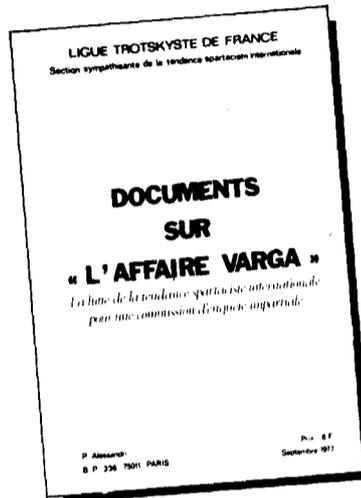
But it was real events in the real world that served to massively sharpen those existing differences. It is sufficient to have on hand a calendar of events and to chart against it the political fever of the editors

Soviet Union. Not surprisingly the other participants in the ed board tailed right on after them. We fought and fight today for the Trotskyist perspective of proletarian political revolution, necessarily centred on defence of the gains of October. It was the following issue of *Revolutionary History* (Summer 1990) that appeared with the despicable Stalinophobic cover and the "Editor's Note" whitewashing Varga. It was in the course of deliberations about the contents of that same issue — which we refused to

recent pamphlet by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB), which was founded as a bloc between Workers Power and Socialist Organiser. Naturally, the reviewer makes no mention of CSWEB's major activity — its sponsorship together with the Russian fascist NTS (which collaborated with the Nazis in WWII) of one Yuri Butchenko, the Russian "trade unionist" key to the anti-Scargill witch hunt. Obscenely, the CSWEB pamphlet is entitled *Stalinism and Anti-Semitism*.



RH whitewashes Varga, whose vile statements and history have never been repudiated. Varga exposed in Spartacist and Ligue Trotskyiste de France bulletin (September 1977).



"The initial mistake was that neither Sanyi nor you oriented to the State Department. In my opinion, we have to do everything to begin to orient so that normal links can be created with the State Department."
—Balazs Nagy [M. Varga] to Sztaray Zoltan, 19 December 1958

"About my characterization of Zinner, I'm not an anti-semitic either, but let's look things in the face: the Jewish question exists. I don't hate them, but I'm fed up with their trying to act in our name; they are trying to lead Hungarians without understanding what it's about... Fortunately the young Oxford Jews, for the time being, listen to us more than the old Jews, but for how long?"
—Nagy/Varga to Sztaray Zoltan, 4 June 1958

"In our reply we should give the impression that he is a provocateur... In short, it is time to exclude this dirty yid from the cultural milieu."
—Nagy/Varga to Joska Molnar, 4 March 1959

"In my opinion the Belgians were wrong to grant independence [to the Congo] with no preparation, after a paternalistic colonialism. They had a policy of treating the Blacks like children and suddenly they want to apply the most liberal of policies. That won't work. But that's no reason for the Blacks to be irresponsible."
—letter by Nagy/Varga, 9 August 1960



no credit

Lithuania, 1941: Round-up of Jewish women during Hitlerite occupation. For elements in and around *RH* the nationalist collaborators with Nazis are the "anti-Stalinist" Baltic "freedom-fighters" today.

their official 'line' on the events and people dealt with, the language used, or the supposedly suspect motives of the other editors for including this or that article." If Pottins took the trouble to examine the political substance of our interventions, he would note that they overwhelmingly had a common thrust. In the first issue we objected to their applying the term "revolutionary" to any

of *RH* and their co-thinkers. An important milestone was March 1990, when the DDR populace voted for Kohl and capitalist reunification. At this point the imperialists and their labour lackeys really hit their stride with their "death of communism" campaign, bleating that the restoration of capitalism was inevitable and supposedly deeply beneficial to the workers of Eastern Europe and the

circulate publicly — that Richardson & Co were thwarted in their desire to print the fascist rubbish. When Richardson presented the editorial board with the draft of the editorial on the Gulf War which appears in the current issue, it was the final straw. Not coincidentally the failure to characterise this colonialist onslaught as imperialist dovetailed neatly with the line of the Labour Party, including its "left" wing (which supported UN intervention and economic sanctions against Iraq).

Now Richardson writes in the Editorial Statement: "As for 'the grossly anti-Communist sketch of Stalin' on the cover of *Revolutionary History*, Volume 3, no 1, the fact that similar caricatures appeared in the *Socialist Appeal* of the US Socialist Workers Party prior to the Second World War disposes" of our statement on this. Richardson thinks he can avoid dealing with the blatantly anti-capitalist overturns in Eastern Europe as simply the extension of Stalin's personal despotism — see graphic on page 5 — by pointing out that *Socialist Appeal* also ran caricatures of Stalin with a big moustache. But *Socialist Appeal*'s cartoons did not feed into bourgeois anti-communism the way *RH*'s did — see the representative example of a *Socialist Appeal* cartoon from 1938. Moreover, when petty-bourgeois public sentiment turned sharply anti-Soviet after the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939, *Socialist Appeal* stopped running such caricatures. We challenge Richardson to produce a *Socialist Appeal* cartoon with the same message as the *RH* cover.

The *RH* majority increasingly resented the restraints we placed on their craven Stalinophobic political appetites. They want a magazine that will appeal openly and loudly to the burnt-out and demoralised ex-leftists, and to anti-communist intellectuals. A cursory examination of their current issue shows that fully half of it is devoted to reviews and commentary, as opposed to archival material. Thus there is a review of a

Then there are two reviews by the editor, Richardson, of books by the Cliffite SWP's Callinicos and the American Shachtmanite Walter Daum. Since the Stalinophobic Richardson regards the Soviet Union as a "counter-revolutionary workers' state", it's hardly surprising that he does not criticise their concrete betrayals in abandoning the defence of the Soviet Union; he does not mention the refusal of the Cliffites to defend North Korea, for which they were rightly expelled in 1950 from the Fourth International. Richardson's views parallel those of Max Shachtman who, reflecting the pressure from the democratic imperialists in the context of the Hitler-Stalin pact, deserted Trotskyism. Thus, Richardson claims that "adaptation to Stalinism originates with the SWP during the war (as Natalia Trotsky and Grandizo Munis pointed out) and indeed with James P Cannon himself, in his support for the activity of the Red Army in Eastern Europe in 1944-45, and in the contention that it was still 'Trotsky's army' and not Stalin's". Yes, unlike Shachtman who saw the Red Army's occupation of Eastern Europe as Soviet "imperialism", Cannon and the SWP correctly took the side of the Red Army in liberating this territory from Hitler's Nazi pogromists.

Pierre Broué: *RH*'s political godfather

There's an old saying: tell us who your friends are, and we will tell you who you are. The most recent issues of *Revolutionary History* have seen Robin Blick increasingly prominent as a correspondent. Once in Healy's WRP, for a while Blick was part of a small operation of the French OCI here. After Jaruzelski's successful coup, Blick was a central figure among those who organised "solidarity" with Lech Walesa's CIA union Solidarność. Today he is simply an unabashed anti-communist. Recently he took up the

cudgels in defence of the counter-revolutionary Kronstadt mutiny in the pages of *Workers Press*.

In the current issue of *RH* he has two reviews, one of which is a four-page article on a book by Geoffrey Roberts on the Hitler-Stalin pact. Blick's viewpoint could be described as somewhere to the right of Winston Churchill. Take but one example. Referring to the author's treatment of Stalin's occupation of the Baltic states, all of whose interwar governments were virulently anti-Semitic and banned communists, Blick writes: "No mention is made at all of the hideous deportations and exterminations carried out by Stalin in the territories granted to him by his Nazi allies, the victims of which run into millions. In fact, so greatly appalling was the NKVD terror that there were recorded instances of Jewish refugees from the Nazi zone fleeing, or being driven, back to their near certain deaths under the lash of Stalinist pogroms." Trotsky makes the opposite point, in referring to occupied Poland: the Jews headed towards the Red Army, the landlords and capitalists to Hitler. But turning truth on its head, Blick concludes that the pogromists were the Red Army, and not Hitler's Nazis. But Blick is not content to make an amalgam of Hitler and Stalin, à la Shachtman/Burnham. He must also make a political amalgam between Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks, and right-wing German nationalism and fascism. Thus,

Heroic Red Army troops in Poltava area in the Ukraine pass burning German guns. Victory of Red Army liberated Europe from Nazi scourge. Anti-communist RH contributors à la R Blick make grotesque amalgam between Hitler and Stalin.

Robert Hunt Library



this point someone will tell me about the Sino-Japanese conflict of 1938, the defence of China recommended by Trotsky, about the 'tradition', etc. But there is no tradition that holds in the face of new phenomena except in the method of approaching them" (supplement to *Le Marxisme aujourd'hui*, number 4, 19 January 1991). Broué's method is the bourgeois-democratic one and the pro-

administrations, and to send the winds of democracy blowing through the provinces" (Moscou le putsch du 19 août 1991, supplement to *Le Marxisme aujourd'hui*, 7 December 1991). In the same article, Broué obscenely compares Yeltsin with Lenin! "Yeltsin...ties his political fate to the real independence of the republics stating, as Lenin before him, that this is the condition of an eventual

have to fax documents to and from their international headquarters in New York before they can come back with an opinion. Among comrades collaborating on a historical journal, this performance is absurd." As for himself, "Never, since I have been on the Editorial Board, have the JSG, the WRP or any other organisation sought to instruct me how I should vote on the merits of material submitted for publication (nor indeed, on anything else)."

How typical of little England parochial Labourism, to tout one's "independence" from party discipline or control. As if this were a badge of merit instead of a statement of one's social-democratic essence! There could be no clearer mark of how far Pottins and most of the editorial board are from even the pretence of Leninism. Pottins now sees nothing but the sinister hand of manipulation in the international component to our organisation's collaboration with *Revolutionary History*. But in fact the international archival resources of the International Communist League, especially those of the Prometheus Research Library in New York and those of our comrades in Paris, enriched *Revolutionary History* during the period of our collaboration. That the social-democratic remnants on the editorial board can't even acknowledge that this is just another statement of their bankruptcy.

As we said in our letter of withdrawal from the *RH* editorial board: "We do not wish to act as a sort of revolutionary 'conscience' for those whose ostensible Trotskyism is but a thin veneer covering a capitulationist, social-democratic core shaped by decades of demoralisation." What do we say to centrists who ask "how could you leave?" Answer: not merely high time, but gone rather rotten. ■



Centelles

Spain: Republican assault guards sent to Barcelona to crush the May 1937 workers' uprising. Proletarian revolution was defeated by Popular Front — the policy not only of Stalin but also of the social democracy and the POUM.

his article is filled with innuendo about "Lenin's precise relations with the Kaiser's government during and after the episode of the 'sealed train'", Lenin's alleged softness on German National Bolshevism, etc.

Revolutionary History members are obviously very fond of Pierre Broué, retired professor of Grenoble University. Broué for many years was a member of Lambert's OCI, easily the most Stalinophobic of the ostensibly Trotskyist organisations in France. Its leaders have long been in tight with the bureaucrats of Force Ouvrière, a trade-union federation created with CIA funds in 1947. Broué was expelled from Lambert's PCI (formerly OCI) for giving a speech on Trotsky to a meeting sponsored by an outfit known to have been linked with Nouvelle Action Royaliste (*Le Monde*, 25-26 June 1989) which stands for the restoration of a "popular" monarchy but which advocated a vote for the social-democratic head of the French popular front, François Mitterrand, in the 1981 presidential elections. Such is the logic of the "strategic united front" with social democracy that also informs Al Richardson's unswerving loyalty to the British Labour Party. This is one of many points of political convergence between *RH* and Broué.

Professor Broué explicitly refused to defend Iraq, too, arguing: "I know that at

gramme social democracy. He called for the withdrawal of French troops from the Gulf and extolled "the exercise of the right of peoples to determine their own fate in the form of free elections which are, everywhere, the sole acceptable verdict". Woodrow Wilson or de Gaulle? Take your pick.

When Broué says "free elections" are "everywhere, the sole acceptable verdict", he is of course thinking about the Soviet Union. Broué published in 1988 a thick biography of Leon Trotsky which tried to present the co-leader of the October Revolution and founder of the Red Army in a form palatable to the intellectuals who reject Leninism and the entire communist world-revolutionary outlook. As we argued in a review of his book (*Spartacist* 45-46, Winter 1990-91), Broué tailored Trotsky to fit the world view of the Gorbachevite intelligentsia of the time. But times have changed. Gorbachev is gone and now it's Yeltsin, who's trying to ram through the capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, whose horn Broué is tooting.

Broué enthusiastically applauded the Yeltsin/Bush counter-coup, writing: "We certainly understand that the new governmental executives, who are the masters of power at the top, need to eliminate the resistance of the *nomenklatura*, their clients, their dependants, their captive victims, encrusted at all levels of the

renewed Union, solid because freely accepted."

Finally, the letter of the WRP's Charlie Pottins in the current *Revolutionary History* is a paean to Menshevism and parochialism. He rails, "it is only from the ICL that we have seen such factionalism, whereby they arrive at meetings with a prior decision, regardless of what discussion ensues; or alternately,

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RIL...

(Continued from page 3)

but called on Soviet workers to observe Yeltsin's strike call—with the ludicrous aim of turning it against Yeltsin!

Behind Downing's of the RIL quibble over the perfectly self-evident statement that "both imperialism and the forces of internal counterrevolution were aligned on Yeltsin's side" is the attempt to equate the gaggle of NEPmen, fascists, black marketeers that were the core of Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary forces with the pathetic coup plotters. Boris Yeltsin's orders came on the direct line to the White House on the Potomac and today Yeltsin's entourage is crawling with Bush's advisers. He was, as the *Independent* has recently put it, the man "we must do business with". (As for Mitterrand, his statement "It was after all very beautiful and moving to see Boris Yeltsin on the tank, shaking the hand of the soldier" [*Le Monde*, 23 August 1991] is clear enough.)

RIL itself conceded this point in its polemic (16 September 1991) against the Slaughterite WRP's grotesque editorial in which they wrote of the abolition of the CPSU: "The fact is that Gorbachev had no choice. The winding up of the CPSU was brought about by the deep hatred of the working class for this Stalinist instrument of brutality and repression" (*Workers Press*, 31 August 1991). RIL retorts: "It was the counter-revolution that got the CPSU as every imperialist in the world knows. This is a blow to the world working class and a victory to imperialism." (our emphasis)

If Yeltsin's countercoup was a victory to imperialism, it is axiomatic that for Trotskyists the burning task was to *crush the Yeltsinite rabble*. But RIL balks precisely at this. Why? Because that would bring it in sharp collision not only with the imperialists, but with Kinnock and his reformist apologists—all of whom were backing Yeltsin to the hilt, proclaiming this a fight for "democracy" against "Stalinist totalitarianism". RIL is guilty of exactly what it accuses the WRP of when it points out that, "the WRP seek to distance itself from any defence of nationalised property lest they be identified in some respects with sections of the bureaucracy who wish to defend nationalised property...."

Calling for workers to sweep away Yeltsin's barricades would have meant a military bloc with any of the coup forces that moved to crush the counterrevolutionary rabble. This is the sticking point with the centrist RIL which, beholden to social democratic "anti-Stalinism", can't stomach being in a bloc with Stalinists even in defence of a workers state. Thus, they seek to distance themselves equally from the coup and Yeltsin. Against RIL's Third Campism in the August events we wrote: "in an armed struggle pitting outright restorationists against recalcitrant elements of the bureaucracy, defence of the collectivised economy would have been placed on the agenda whatever the Stalinists' intentions. Trotskyists would have entered a military bloc with the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counterrevolution", as Trotsky postulated in the 1938 Transitional Programme. This was precisely our policy towards Jaruzelski in 1981" (emphasis added).

Poland in 1981 posed the same question as the Soviet Union today, but in the earlier instance the Stalinists *did* take measures to temporarily suppress counterrevolution. In the face of this confrontation it was impossible to waffle, and RIL's Stalinophobia landed it squarely in the camp of Lech Walesa and capitalist restoration. Seeking to justify this line, RIL once again has to invent a fantasy world, denying the imperialists then supported Solidarność. But at the time Walesa & Co were backed by Thatcher and Reagan, as

well as by the Cold War AFL-CIA trade union bureaucracy and the social democracy here. That premier mouthpiece for American capitalism, the *New York Times* (3 January 1982) was very clear about the stakes involved in Solidarność' bid for power:

"Had Solidarity achieved its most sweeping demands, broken the Communist Party's monopoly of power, and taken Poland out of the Warsaw Pact, Soviet control over the rest of Eastern Europe would have been threatened. The other satellites might have followed suit.... The Iron Curtain could have been cracked."

The imperialists saw Solidarność as the best chance in decades to refurbish their "democratic" credentials and give the Cold War drive a "working-class" facade—one dutifully embellished by the fake left. Fortunately in the Soviet Union the proletariat showed more consciousness than to back Yeltsin. But in asserting that the Soviet workers should have supported Yeltsin's general strike call, RIL has already made clear that if Yeltsin were leading millions of workers it would be marching right alongside him. Thus RIL's position of "neutrality" in reality boils down to "for Yeltsinite counterrevolution".

As we said in the immediate aftermath of the coup: "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." But there were many Soviet workers who understood the task was to crush the Yeltsinites, and initially looked to the "emergency committee". Indicative of this was a leaflet sent to our comrades in Moscow from a Soviet worker, written hours after hearing of the state of emergency, in which he appealed for the working class to see the coup "as a basis for the unification of the workers movement for the struggle against liberal-bourgeois hypocritical defenders of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR". However mistaken in his illusions in the coup, this worker—unlike RIL—understood who the enemy was. He wanted to seize on the "emergency committee" to mobilise the workers against counterrevolution, but there was nothing to grab hold of. The "gang of eight" not only did not mobilise the proletariat, they ordered everyone to stay at work.

The "gang of eight" was incapable of sweeping away Yeltsin in its pathetic excuse for a putsch because this was a "perestroika coup"; the coupists didn't want to unleash the forces that could have defeated the more extreme counterrevolutionaries for that could have led to a civil war if the Yeltsinites really fought back. And as the mass demonstrations on Revolution Day against Yeltsinite counterrevolution have underscored—there was a real potential for such a mobilisation. Several hundred Trotskyists in the Moscow region rooted in a few major factories could have exercised decisive influence; even one factory of 2000 workers could have dispersed the rabble at the "White House". Had this occurred we would have been witnessing the beginning of an incipient political revolution, the opening for the creation of genuine soviets. What was missing and what is desperately needed is a vanguard party that under the banner of Leninism and Trotskyism can lead the Soviet proletariat to defeat the forces of capitalist restorationism.

RIL v Trotsky

In RIL's polemic against the WRP, Downing correctly points out that Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism was based on the fact that the bureaucratic caste played a dual role, "balancing between imperialism and the nationalised property relations". He chides the Slaughterites that: "The bureaucracy has not undergone a qualitative transformation." But RIL's own programmatic conclusions are drawn precisely from

the Third Camp premise: thus the Soviet Stalinists are equated with the open Yeltsinite counterrevolutionaries, with each grouping supposedly backed by different wings of world imperialism.

Against the WRP, RIL writes "If... this is merely a conflict between anti-democratic capitalist restorationists and democratic restorationists then the Chile scenario is legitimate and we should be 'arm in arm with Yeltsin' against the Pinochet type coup as a leading member of Workers Power proclaimed." But in his answer to us Downing presents it as precisely the same kind of "conflict". RIL writes: "Your position leads you to support one wing of the bureaucracy, one wing of world imperialism and one wing of restorationism against the working class." The methodology is clear: for RIL there is no difference between a wing of the bureaucracy on the one hand and a wing of world imperialism and capitalist restorationism on the other. And of course if Stalinism is equated with imperialism, then the possibility of a military bloc with a section of the bureaucracy against capitalist restorationists is necessarily precluded, since by their lights this would boil down to a bloc against capitalist restoration with "capitalist restorationists". With its Third Campist methodology of "down with Stalinism, down with imperialism", RIL ends up crossing the class line whenever the question of defending the deformed workers states is concretely posed.

From the fact that the pathetic authors of the perestroika coup barred the masses from opening the road to fight Yeltsin and imperialism, RIL falsely deduces that the entire Stalinist bureaucracy is restorationist. It assigns to the Stalinist bureaucracy the attributes of a class committed to consistently defending capitalism. As Downing put it against the WRP, "This is more than half way towards a theory of state capitalism." Trotsky, pointing out in the *Transitional Programme* that "all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko)", rejected the idea that the bureaucracy could play an independent role. He wrote in the "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" (October 1933):

"A real civil war could develop not between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the resurgent proletariat but between the proletariat and the active forces of the counterrevolution. In the event of an open clash between the two mass camps, there cannot even be talk of the bureaucracy playing an independent role. Its polar flanks would be flung to the different sides of the barricade."

A powerful pull of attraction of the revolutionary current within the proletariat was a precondition for Trotsky's observation that the bureaucracy would polarise. It

has to be pulled in two directions. Right now it's being pulled in *one* direction; the demise of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe and the fracturing of state power in the Soviet Union has not come as the result of proletarian upsurges challenging the Stalinists' bankrupt rule but as the result of the relentless pressure and pounding of the world capitalist market. To assume that this will necessarily remain the case, however, is to write off in advance the Soviet proletariat as a revolutionary factor. Had a section of the working class moved against Yeltsin, it would have split the bureaucracy, compelling a section of it to defend the collectivised property forms—however treacherously and half-heartedly (and then there are the Pal Maleters). In mortal dread of any bloc with elements of the bureaucracy, the Stalinophobic RIL denounced our call on the proletariat to take down Yeltsin's barricades and ran for the cover of the Third Camp.

Once again on Poland

The behaviour of the Jaruzelski bureaucracy in Poland is perfectly explicable but only from the standpoint that the bureaucracy is a contradictory caste. We firmly placed the responsibility for driving much of the Polish working class into the arms of clerical-nationalist counterrevolution on the Stalinists' destruction of the important traditions of international communism in Poland, the abuse and mismanagement under Gomulka and then Gierék, the conciliation of the Catholic hierarchy and the mortgaging of the economy to the imperialist bankers. But in 1981 Jaruzelski took measures to suppress counterrevolutionary Solidarność, ie an effective and relatively bloodless coup—bloodless precisely because there was so little resistance. Here the pressure to move came overwhelmingly from the Brezhnev bureaucracy, then locked into Cold War II and a hot war in Afghanistan against the imperialists and their agents. Several years later Jaruzelski & Co ceded power to Walesa.

With Gorbachev giving the green light to capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe, the countervailing pressures had ceased to exist. But from the standpoint of an apologist for Stalinism, who sees the bureaucracy as consistent "defenders of socialism" or from the standpoint of a Third Campist who sees the bureaucracy as the main instrument for capitalist restoration, the apparently contradictory actions of Jaruzelski et al make no sense.

With repetitive lurid references to "butchery", Downing is especially heated in his attack on our position of military support to the Jaruzelski countercoup which spiked Solidarność counterrevolution. For revolutionary Marxists it was ABC that Walesa & Co's bid for power had to be stopped as an elementary act of military defence of the Polish deformed workers

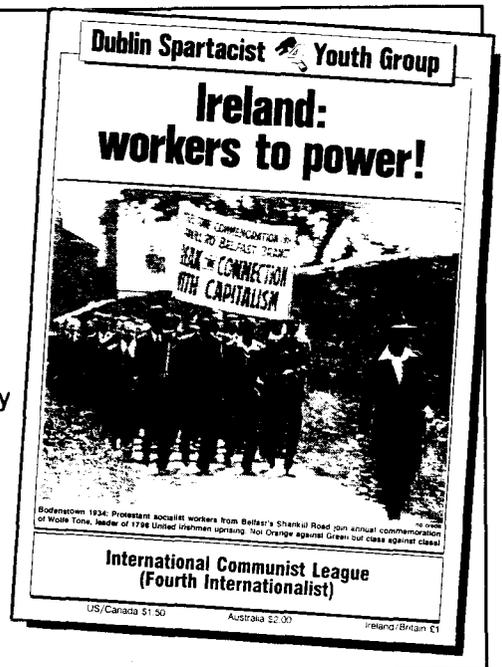
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Berlin demo demands: Fourth Reich: Hands off Honecker!

DECEMBER 16—On 11 December, the Russian government of Boris Yeltsin announced its intention to deport Erich Honecker to Germany, where the former head of East Germany (DDR) would face a show trial. Because of his anti-fascist underground organising in Nazi Germany, Honecker was jailed for ten years during the Third Reich. Today the triumphalist Fourth Reich of German imperialism wants to put him behind bars again. He would be “tried” by the same judicial system that emerged intact from fascism and took over the bloody judges or gave them honorary pensions. Today the bourgeoisie of Auschwitz wants to take revenge on Honecker for the victory of the Red Army over Nazi Germany.

In response to this outrage, our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD) and the Committee for Social Defence (KfsV) immediately initiated a protest demonstration demanding “Fourth Reich: Hands off Honecker!” and “Down with the anti-Communist witch hunt!” The protest on 13 December in front of the Tiergarten court in Berlin also called for defence of former DDR border guards being tried there, for hands off Markus Wolf, the former head of East Germany’s highly successful espionage service, and freedom for former DDR defence minister Heinz Kessler and former state security minister Erich Mielke, who are being held for trial charged with state crimes.

In addition to the SpAD and KfsV, a representative of the KPD (Rote Fahne) spoke at the Tiergarten protest. In response to the demo call, the Berlin state government’s Social Democratic (SPD) justice minister Jutta Limbach said that she would not be deterred by a couple of ultraleft organisations. She has a cell waiting for Honecker in Moabit prison, next door to the court where Rosa Luxemburg was jailed during World War I

and where she was supposedly to be locked up in January 1919 when she was murdered with the help of Limbach’s SPD forebears. As in the annexation of the DDR by the capitalist West in 1990, the Social Democrats continue to act as bloodhounds of the counterrevolution.

Meanwhile, in Moscow, Honecker received temporary refuge in the Chilean embassy. From there he issued a statement declaring his threatened expulsion to be against international law, as he had applied to the Soviet Union for asylum from political persecution. Since the deportation order was announced, Yeltsin and Gorbachev have reportedly received

hundreds of letters daily demanding that Honecker be granted asylum. As the SpAD was demonstrating in Berlin, hundreds of leftist protesters began surrounding the Chilean diplomatic mission in Moscow with Soviet flags and singing communist songs. ICL representatives in Moscow have joined these demonstrations and delivered a protest to the Chilean embassy.

The media report that North Korea has offered to take the 79-year-old Honecker for medical treatment (he is suffering from cancer), but the Russians are refusing. In the Chilean embassy, he is the personal guest of Ambassador Clodo-

miro Almeyda, a leading figure in the Socialist Party, who had received political asylum for ten years in the DDR—as did many left-wing refugees from rightist terror—following the bloody Pinochet coup of 1973. Almeyda was earlier refused sanctuary by the prime minister of the West German state of Baden-Württemberg, the notorious Nazi *Blutrichter* (bloody judge) Hans Filbinger.

The grotesque persecution of Erich Honecker is part of a generalised witch hunt against all representatives of the former DDR. Former state security chief Mielke is being tried on charges stemming from the Third Reich, and former defence minister Heinz Kessler is hated because he deserted from the Wehrmacht during World War II and then fought against the German army as a Red Partisan in Byelorussia. With the deportation of Honecker the forces of capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union want to make a blood sacrifice to German imperialism, opening the floodgates for the pillaging of the Soviet working people and strengthening Germany’s “drive to the east”.

Turning Erich Honecker over to the vengeful rulers of German imperialism is a slap in the face of all Red Army veterans who fought against the Nazi invasion. Yeltsin spits on the graves of the millions of Soviet citizens who were killed in freeing humanity of the genocidal Nazi regime, to which the Federal Republic of Germany is the legal successor. As SpAD spokesman Renate Dahlhaus said at the 13 December protest: “In Germany immigrants are persecuted; Soviet Jews, refugees and Soviet soldiers are under attack from Nazi gangs. The Fourth Reich means racism in the streets and anti-Communist witch hunting, such as we experience here at this court.”

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 541, 27 December 1991.



Berlin, September 1991: Spartakist Workers Party demands: “Hands Off Border Guards and Honecker!” “Stop the anti-Communist witch hunt!” Right: Erich and Margot Honecker.



state and the Soviet Union itself. But Downing ludicrously tries to deny the reality of imperialist backing of Solidarność. Talk about “economy with the truth”! According to RIL the imperialists supported the Polish Stalinists in the suppression of Solidarność in order that the Warsaw bureaucracy could restore capitalism “at its own pace”; after Solidarność was suppressed with their blessing, they turned around and gave it “unqualified support”.

RIL’s fantasy-land notwithstanding, it was before the coup in October 1981 that Walesa, *Time* magazine’s “Man of the Year”, held a special meeting with 20-odd American businessmen including top executives from Ford, Westinghouse, General Dynamics, IBM, TWA, etc. Furthermore, we recall vividly the *Wall Street Journal*’s editorial “Communists and the AFL-CIO” (29 September 1981) following the Spartacist protest outside the opening of Solidarność’ office in New York at the headquarters of Albert Shanker’s teachers’ union. Our picket exposed the “solidarity” between Solidarność and the AFL-CIO tops as brokered by the CIA. The *Wall Street Journal* was not amused; the article ended with the unmistakable threat that “Anyone seeking to delegitimize” the AFL-CIO’s crusade for “political freedom” “should be aware of just how serious an attack he is launching”.

It’s common today for even the most craven Solidarność supporters to make noises against the IMF austerity policies of the Polish government, to “oppose

privatisation”. But when defence of the Polish workers state was posed pointblank, they stood with imperialism and internal counterrevolution, usually proclaiming some version of “ten million Polish workers can’t be wrong”. As we wrote in “Stop Solidarity’s counterrevolution!” (*Spartacist Britain* no 36, October 1981):

“What do revolutionaries do when the Marxist programme stands counterposed to the overwhelming bulk of the working class, a situation we of course urgently seek to avoid? There can be no doubt. The task of communists must be to defend at all costs the programme and gains of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Today Trotskyists find themselves in such a position over Poland, and it is necessary to swim against a powerful current of counterrevolution.”

Capitulation to the imperialist/social-democratic drive to smash the Soviet workers state has driven the British fake left to the right and ever more deeply into the Kinnockite camp since the onset of Cold War II—Poland and Afghanistan. This rightward lunge was intensified after the Berlin Wall went down and today the connection between cheering the Yeltsinite scum and pimping for the arch-scab Kinnock is palpable. That there may be more state capitalists in Britain than anywhere on the rest of the planet attests to the pervasive pressure of the Labour Party. For its part RIL now seeks to take over the centrist terrain Workers Power vacated in

its hard right turn over Germany and subsequent straight line return to its Third Camp origins. Naturally, the RIL is loyally calling for a vote to the vile Kinnock in the upcoming elections—no “neutrality” in the fight for a Labour victory for them.

RIL lectures us on “the struggle for the hearts and minds of the working class”. The homeland of the great October Revolution is in mortal danger. Just as the seizure of power by the proletariat in 1917 was the greatest gain of the world working class so the untrammelled victory of Yeltsin/Bush counterrevolution would represent an unprecedented defeat not only for the Soviet masses but for the workers and oppressed of the world. The destruction of the Soviet Union is no small matter in the “hearts and minds” of black South African trade unionists, South Asian militants, anti-imperialist fighters in Latin America, the devastated Iraqi people, Irish opponents of British imperialism, the Palestinian people, those still battling

Mujahedin counterrevolution in Afghanistan. The Cuban deformed workers state in particular faces grave menace from unfettered Yankee imperialism.

The traitors who sided with Yeltsin and the flinching Third Campists who refused to oppose him will have to answer for the misery, the economic chaos and disintegration, the national oppression, the rise of fascism, the buttressing of imperialism that triumphant counterrevolution would bring to the Soviet Union. In April 1940 Leon Trotsky wrote: “no matter what crimes Stalin may be guilty of we cannot permit world imperialism to crush the Soviet Union, reestablish capitalism and convert the land of the October Revolution into a colony. This explanation likewise furnishes the basis for our defense of the USSR” (*In Defense of Marxism*, p176). When it answered the strike call of Yeltsinite counterrevolution at the hour of mortal danger, the Third Campists of the RIL clearly rejected this course. ■

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USSR...

(Continued from page 1)

at the beginning of the year, but these negotiations were put off and now most plants have no more than two weeks of supplies.

Yeltsin's Western imperialist godfathers and even many fellow Russian counterrevolutionaries fear that his New Year price shock will backfire. Russian "free market" economist Grigory Yavlinsky—an author of the notorious 500-days-to-capitalism programme last year—argues that without the privatisation of industry and agriculture, and a balanced state budget, the price increases will lead only to accelerated hyperinflation and the further "dollarisation" and "barterisation" of the economy. Another prominent "free market" economist, Nikolai Shmelyev, likens the New Year price shock to the amputation of an arm without anaesthesia. And he adds: "The patient's hands are not tied. What if he picks up a knife and attacks the surgeon?" (*Los Angeles Times*, 2 January).

Why, then, have the victims not yet attacked the pro-capitalist butchers? Why have the widely predicted food riots not yet occurred? The quiescence, even paralysis, of the Soviet working masses reflects the absence of revolutionary leadership, and the *misleadership* by those Stalinists who falsely claim to be communist and to oppose Yeltsin's drive towards capitalist restoration. Following the botched Kremlin coup and Yeltsin's countercoup in August, remnants of the "patriotic" wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy regrouped as an opposition. On the 7 November anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, the Stalinist oppositional groupings were able to tap into the widespread fear of "free market" economics. As many as 90,000 people, predominantly working-class, marched through central Moscow to denounce Yeltsin and Gorbachev.

But what is posed now is not a protest rally but *action* in the streets and in factories against the counterrevolutionary government and mafia. The longer an effective fightback is not mounted, the more demoralising the situation becomes. Workers committees must be set up to seize the government warehouses, confiscate the private hoards and oversee the distribution of food and other consumer necessities. This requires the formation of *workers defence committees*, ie, the nucleus of workers militias, in coordination with pro-socialist elements of the still-existing Soviet Army. The struggle for control over the food supply can open the road to the overthrow of the capitalist-restorationist Yeltsin regime and its counterparts in the Ukraine and other republics. For what you have in the disintegrating Soviet Union today is a series of "governments" that are counterrevolutionary through and through, intent on dismantling the Soviet degenerated workers state. This creates an impossible, explosively unstable situation which can only lead either to collapse into capitalist chaos, degradation and ultimately fascist rule, or to a workers political revolution to establish genuine soviet power.

The Stalinist "patriots" have no intention of overthrowing Yeltsin, much less fighting for a regime of proletarian political power based on soviet democracy. In

fact, the "Toiling Russia" grouping has called for a 12 January protest demonstration against the price increases in which they actually invited Yeltsin as "the President of Russia to come to Manezh Square to speak before us"! Viktor Anpilov and other leaders of the misnamed Russian Communist Workers Party (RKRП) seek to become a quasi-parliamentarist loyal opposition while accepting capitalist restoration. Shot through with Russian nationalism (often linked to vile anti-Semitism), the Stalinist "patriots" likewise accept the break-up of the Soviet Union. Only the working class under a Leninist-Trotskyist leadership can reforge the Soviet Union and save Russia, the Ukraine and other republics from becoming



Trotskyists protest Moscow mayor Popov's threats to close Lenin Museum. ICL sign (left) reads: Return to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky. Defend the Lenin Museum!

ing degraded neocolonies of Wall Street, Frankfurt and Tokyo.

Reforge the Soviet Union on Leninist principles!

Yeltsin's New Year price shock intensified the conflict between Russian and Ukrainian nationalists over economic and military power, and exposed the fictitious nature of the so-called "Commonwealth of Independent States" as a successor to the USSR. The vice president of the Ukrainian National Bank, Aleksandr Savchenko, on a visit to Paris stated: "The word commonwealth is in small letters. In a month, no one will talk about it any more" (*Newsweek*, 30 December 1991). In fact no one is talking about the "CIS" even now. This fiction played no role in the recent hostile exchanges between Moscow and Kiev.

The Ukrainian and also Byelorussian governments implored Yeltsin to postpone the New Year price shock for fear of the ensuing social unrest. But Yeltsin disregarded these concerns and declared that Russia would go ahead no matter what. The capitalist-restorationist regime in Kiev had no choice but to raise prices in line with Yeltsin's Russia. Otherwise the Ukraine would have suffered a massive outflow of food and other consumables to Moscow, Leningrad and other Russian cities.

The Ukrainian Federation of Independent Trade Unions voiced a strong protest over the price increases, demanding

the indexation of incomes. However, the regime of Leonid Kravchuk—a longtime Stalinist apparatchik who played the Ukrainian-nationalist card quite late in the game—is trying to blame the hardships of capitalist restoration on Russian economic dominance. The nationalists are stepping up their demands for a separate currency, customs stations, border guards, trade protectionism. The principal Ukrainian-nationalist outfit, Rukh, has called for "closing the borders" with Russia.

The attempts at national economic self-sufficiency will bring even greater economic chaos and immiseration for the toiling masses of the Ukraine. Almost all of the Ukraine's trade is with Russia and the other Soviet republics. The coal and

degenerated workers state fractures and disintegrates along national lines. Many officers feel angry and humiliated over Gorbachev's abandonment of Eastern Europe and the collapse of Soviet power. Now Soviet troops in the Caucasus as well as Central Asia are being attacked and abused by local nationalist bands. And officers and enlisted men alike face desperate economic conditions, whether they remain in the service or return to civilian life. The *Boston Globe* (22 December 1991) reports:

"The first rumblings of discontent are beginning to surface, with border troops in the south threatening acts of disobedience if they feel they are being abandoned. The risk of local military unrest—mutinies, clashes with the local authorities or revolts—cannot be ruled out, many Soviet observers feel."

The discontent among the Soviet officer corps has found a spokesman in Yeltsin's own vice president, Aleksandr Rutskoi, a former air force general. In the last period of the Gorbachev regime Rutskoi, who set up a group called "Communists for Democracy", represented the openly capitalist-restorationist wing of the decomposing Kremlin oligarchy. But in recent weeks Rutskoi has been voicing the concerns of conservative elements in the armed forces. He lashed out at Yeltsin's policy to cut to the bone military procurement. And he harshly criticised the New Year price shock, declaring: "Everything is sliding into an abyss: the economy, finances and the main thing—the people's faith." There is widespread talk of a military coup, with Rutskoi's name prominently featured.

At the same time, one can see outright fascists looming, like "Liberal Democrat" Vladimir Zhirinovskiy who is now organising hunger marches. A former "dissident", Lev Timofeyev, predicts: "We will soon have 40 million unemployed, and not the kind of unemployed you have in the West, but hungry mobs. The leader who survives in such a situation will be the leader who is willing to create detachments of storm troopers to control the crowds. In other words, a fascist-type leader." In fact, capitalism cannot be imposed by "peaceful, democratic" means, it will take a hard-fisted, brutal regime. That is what Tsar Boris's "reforms" portend.

In general, the attempt to restore capitalism without major injections of capital poses big problems. Throughout Eastern Europe, Western capitalists have been reluctant to rush in because they can't make a short-run profit. Instead, they have used nationalism as a battering ram to mobilise counterrevolutionary forces in what is essentially a wrecking operation. Nationalism is also the reactionary last resort of the decomposing Stalinist bureaucracy. So that looking at events from Yugoslavia to the Soviet Union, nationalism is not merely the result of counterrevolution but a driving force for capitalism in the absence of capital.

The remnants of the Stalinist bureaucracy—whether military or civilian—have no intention of opposing the drive towards capitalist counterrevolution, despite occasional foot-dragging. Only the working class under a Leninist-Trotskyist leadership can save the Soviet Union from dismemberment, capitalist exploitation and impoverishment, fratricidal war and imperialist subjugation. It is urgently necessary to build a new Bolshevik party in the Soviet Union, uniting the most class-conscious workers with revolutionary Marxist intellectuals. Only the programme of proletarian internationalism, carried out by a communist vanguard with a multinational cadre, can reforge the Soviet Union on the basis of national equality and socialist economic planning.

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 542, 10 January 1992.

Spartacist League/Britain

Glasgow PO Box 150
Glasgow G3 6DX
041-332 0788

London PO Box 1041
London NW5 3EU
071-485 1396

Dublin Spartacist Youth Group

PO Box 2944
Dublin 1
01-974617

The various nationalist politicians and movements seem to regard the Soviet armed forces as a kind of pie to be divided among them. But it is far from given that the military cadre will remain passive as the Soviet bureaucratically

Asylum...

(Continued from page 12)

alliance with Labour Party politicians such as Neil Kinnock, bishops, rock musicians and football managers. While fascists were rampaging through the streets of the heavily Asian neighbourhood of Brick Lane in 1978, the SWP organised tens of thousands to sit it out at a rock concert organised miles away. (Now a move is afoot to exhume the ANL in the name of the "Anti-Racist Alliance"—including not only the SWP but the usual cast of characters such as Diane Abbott, Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Ken Gill, Ralph Miliband, Lord Pitt, Dennis Skinner, Vanessa Redgrave, witch-hunting CND hack Marjorie Thompson, *ad nauseam*.) Today the SWP oscillates between a line of "ignore the fascists" and outright liberalism, circulating petitions "calling for the police to act and for the BNP HQ to be closed" (*Socialist Worker*, 23 March 1991) after the racist murder of Rolan Adams in Thamesmead. Predictably, the only action the cops took was to protect the BNP from anti-fascist militants.

Workers Power gives some lip service to the role of Labour in the racist Asylum Bill while holding fast to its support for Labour in the election. And Workers

Power is now collaborating with Red Action in Anti-Fascist Action. What unites the deeply Labourite WP with the ex-Cliffites of Red Action, who are oriented to white lumpen youth, is pure and simple anti-Sovietism. In its article on the Asylum Bill, Workers Power proclaims hypocritically: "Capitalism's wars and dictatorships create millions of genuine refugees from political terror and torture every year. The collapse and fragmentation of the Stalinist states have created even more" (*Workers Power*, December 1991). But the Mozambican, Vietnamese and Cuban workers in what was the DDR have little to thank Workers Power for; these Stalinophobes joined in the imperialist-orchestrated *Anschluss* of the East German deformed workers state, just as today WP tails Yeltsinite counterrevolution in the USSR.

The Revolutionary Internationalist League (RIL) criticises Anti-Fascist Action for ignoring racial minorities and for adapting to anti-gay and anti-Irish prejudices. RIL asserts that "Any serious working class mobilisation against the fascists will inevitably come into conflict with the state. It will be undermined from the start by policies which tie it to capitalist politicians, the churches, etc.." Yet its version of an "alliance" with the oppressed in practice means capitulation to liberal "community leaders" and Labourites. Thus in the same (10 November 1991) leaflet it uncritically promotes a

rally to "Lobby Bexley Council, Close Down BNP National HQ", organised by the Rolan Adams Family Campaign. Hence, when push comes to shove, for RIL "no platform for fascists" means pressuring the state, and particularly the Labour Party politicians, to ban the fascists. RIL's "action programme for a united front against fascism" absurdly calls on a Labour government to repeal everything from racist immigration laws to all anti-trade-union legislation, as if Kinnock would not be just as much an enforcer of racist anti-working-class austerity as Thatcher and Major.

Major and Kinnock differ only in name. Neil "I am a reactionary" Kinnock has promised to deliver a compliant British working class to the City in a vain bid to stem the terminal decay of moribund British capitalism. We say: No vote to the scab-herder race-hater Kinnock! After decades of industrial decline, the British economy is in the midst of a deepening recession, unemployment is over three million, large mining and industrial centres in Scotland, Wales and north-east England have been reduced to economic wastelands, and inner-city ghettos and minority communities are under siege from rampaging cops.

Revolutionaries call for full citizenship rights for all foreign-born workers. However, all democratic rights in bourgeois society have to be won by the working

masses through bitter class struggle. Even where they are won, such rights remain partial and would be subject to erosion by the bourgeois state at the earliest opportunity. To achieve genuine social justice for the working class and the oppressed, it is necessary to fight unflinchingly to overthrow capitalism.

For this we need to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist party, splitting Labour's working-class base from the pro-capitalist leadership. But the British fake lefts, as an article of faith, are gearing themselves to campaign for the election of a Labour government even as these Labour fakers have become ever more discredited in the eyes of large sections of the working class and ethnic minorities.

British workers and oppressed face conditions bordering on those in Third World countries. Indeed you have to be really desperate to want to come and live in Britain. Remember Ahmed Shek—the Somali student who came to Britain as a refugee and was stabbed to death by racists in Edinburgh in January 1989. Nothing short of a thoroughgoing workers revolution can rebuild the devastated industrial base of the British economy. It is urgently necessary for the proletariat to seize power and lay the basis for the socialist reconstruction of society, in which all racial and national minorities will feel at home. *Smash the Asylum Bill! For trade union/minority mobilisations to crush race terror!* ■

Voronezh...

(Continued from page 4)

in the front ranks in the fight against the restoration of capitalism and for the overthrow of the counterrevolutionary Yeltsinite regime.

He stated that the workers of the west have never stopped the class struggle and called on the soviet working people and communists to be in solidarity with the international workers movement.

After the rally the demonstrators of Voronezh laid flowers on the monument to V.I. Lenin.

We took part in the demonstration, proceeding to the central street of the city, Revolution street. The demonstrators carried a portrait of Lenin. There were two red flags (one of which was ours). The demonstrators laid flowers on the monument to the fighters of Voronezh killed in the Civil War. We concluded by singing the "Internationale".

After the 7th of November there was an article published in the newspaper of Alexcei Gusev, leader of Moscow group "Socialist Workers Union". This is the organization of the "Workers International" which is led by Cliff Slaughter. In the article it is stated that the Voronezh Trotskyists intervened on the 7th November on behalf of the "SRS" [Socialist Workers Union]. This does not correspond to reality. We had contact with the Gusev group but our attitude towards them was always critical. We were very familiar with the position of the "SRS" at the time of the August coup, when they defended the Yeltsin barricades. The ICL intervened for the overthrow of the counterrevolutionary Yeltsin leadership and called for proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucrats. I completely share this position.

This letter can be seen as a statement on Alexcei Gusev. We did not intervene on behalf of the SRS on the 7th of November.

2/XII/1991.

Vladimir K.
Member Voronezh group
of Trotskyists

Workers Power...

(Continued from page 4)

ominous parallel here, too, with the last months of the East German workers state in 1990. When 250,000 mobilised in Berlin's Treptow Park to protest the Nazi desecration of the Soviet war memorial, the West German bourgeoisie and its social-democratic running dogs smeared the protest as a Stalinist "Nazi trick"—a yellow lie which duly found its echo among British fake lefts, including Workers Power.

It takes a lot of chutzpah not to mention gross cynicism from Workers Power to try this on. After the infamous Yuri Butchenko scandal Workers Power has some real, documented expertise in the dirty business of dealing with outright fascist outfits. As is widely known, Workers Power and its CSWEB partners Socialist Organiser sponsored a speaking tour to Britain of the Russian "worker" Yuri Butchenko knowing that he was connected and indeed sponsored as well by the Russian fascist NTS. They hid this fact from the labour movement until Butchenko staged a well-publicised press conference with the UDM's Roy Lynk as part of the campaign to crucify miners leader Arthur Scargill on a cross of "Russian gold".

As for Pamyat, Workers Power has maybe mentioned this fascist bulwark of counterrevolution twice in as many years. Of course in our actions at and coverage of the Revolution Day protests we—as we always have—took this scum head-on. When a handful of anti-Semitic thugs, encouraged by the Stalinist "patriot" organisers of the rally, tried to assault our comrades, they were quickly rebuffed by sections of the crowd, who understood that such chauvinist rabble had no place in a Revolution Day march.

But our clear and long-standing fight for workers mobilisations to sweep the Pamyat scum off the streets has nothing to do with anything Workers Power will say or write. Its Big Lie has the stench of the bloodhounds Noske and Scheidemann about it. It is in the service of the counterrevolution with which they have sided.

Yuri Butchenko

ON 11 JULY Workers Power issued a statement on the Yuri Butchenko affair in which we stated that in a telephone call with Butchenko he informed us that his official invite papers to this country had been signed by George Miller, British representative of the right wing Russian organisation, the NTS. This was true. In the August issue of our newspaper we said that we only learnt that the official invite came from Miller when Butchenko actu-

ally arrived in Britain. This was a mistake.

It arose whilst attempting to put together an honest account of the Butchenko affair relying on the memories of translators and intermediaries.

Considerable confusion surrounds the bureaucratic procedures needed to get people from the USSR into this country. CSWEB itself had sought to get Labour MPs to issue such invitations to the independent

Soviet miners' organisations. We are only too happy to correct this simple mistake in our account. A variety of pro-Stalinist organisations, such as the Spartacists, have suggested that the discrepancy between our two versions of the "invite" means we were involved in some nefarious plot aimed at smearing Arthur Scargill and collaborating with imperialism's spy agencies. Having corrected the factual error we can only ask our accusers, what does this prove? We stand by the political reasons for organising and then terminating the CSWEB tour. ■

workers power

—no 135,
October 1990

Workers Power's mendacious
alibi of their sponsorship
of NTS, UDM-connected
Yuri Butchenko.

Where were these Yeltsinite fellow-travelers on Revolution Day? Along with the WRP, Militant and sundry anarchists, Workers Power tagged along with the "alternative march" organised "opposing both hard-line Stalinists and 'democrats'" (*Workers Press*, 16 November 1991). "By the time it reached Red Square it had swelled to 300-strong"; "Participants in the hour-long meeting were of one mind about the bureaucracy who betrayed the revolution and now attempts to transform itself into a new capitalist class." In Leningrad co-thinkers of this bunch, the Revolutionary Proletarian Cells (PRY) held their "alternative" demonstration in the same place and at the same time as

the Yeltsinite counterrevolutionaries. (Fitting, although perhaps not good for their health—PRY militants have been arrested by Yeltsinite thugs even as they handed out anti-coup leaflets.)

Workers Power surely belongs with this motley crew, all of them creatures of British social democracy—virulent enemies of the Soviet Union since 1917, and all of them on the counterrevolutionary barricades in August with Yeltsin, his NTS supporters, Orthodox priests with icons of Tsar Nicholas the Bloody, black marketeers and yuppie creeps. We wonder if Workers Power has had a chance to look up George Miller's Russian NTS friends yet. ■

Spartacist League  public meeting

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Tories/Labour united in racist offensive

A new Asylum Bill has been proposed by the government which will make it even more difficult for refugees to enter or remain in Britain. In the run-up to the general election later this year, the Tory government of John Major is seeking to shore up its racist anti-immigrant credentials. With a feeble mumble over certain specifics of the Bill, Kinnock's Labour Party has given its nod of approval.

With the ascendancy of imperialist-sponsored counterrevolutionary regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, an orgy of social reaction has gripped Europe. Violent attacks on black people, Jews, Gypsies, Asians and other ethnic minorities and immigrants have escalated. As the imperialists trumpet the "death of Communism" while working people face rising unemployment and falling living standards in a deepening global economic recession, fascist political parties such as Le Pen's National Front in France have grown ominously. Traditional bourgeois parties are openly vying for the racist vote. During the recent wrangle among European Community countries about the move towards a European economic and political "union", they were all agreed on one thing: the need to keep out dark-skinned peoples from the Third World and prevent immigration from Eastern Europe as these countries face IMF-dictated "shock treatments", ie starvation and greater immiseration in the imperialist "New World Order". Cynically the British government claims that the way to "stop fascism" is to keep blacks and Asians out. Thus the human blimp Nigel Lawson as well as Norman Tebbit have linked their opposition to monetary union with warnings about the growth of British counterparts to Le Pen.

In the past decade of Thatcher and Major's viciously racist reign, the immigration rules have become so tight that they virtually eliminate any possibility of immigration into Britain from Africa and Asia. The new Asylum Bill will however make it easier still for the immigration authorities to ignore the appeal of asylum-seekers whose applications to remain in Britain are denied. Under this "fast-track procedure", "An adjudicator will be able to dismiss an appeal without an oral hearing upon deciding that there is manifestly no substance to the claim" (quoted in the pamphlet *The Governments Asylum Proposals* produced by the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association). A refugee could then be speedily deported to the country he or she was fleeing from.

The British state simply wants to provide a legal cover for atrocities they already perpetrate against refugees and other immigrants. During the Gulf War, more than 170 Iraqi, Palestinian and other Arab nationals were rounded up, interned and in many cases deported. Indeed, of all the Western countries lined up behind Bush's filthy colonialist war in the Persian Gulf, only Britain interned Arab civilians resident in the country. This was but the most recent outrage in a long line of recent atrocities. Thus, on

Smash the Asylum Bill!



Frank Martin

Tamil refugees who suffered persecution in Sri Lanka after British government denied them asylum. Asylum Bill seeks to strengthen hand of racist British state against immigrants.

5 October 1989 twenty-six-year-old Siho Iyigüven died from severe burns suffered after he and a fellow Kurdish asylum-seeker set fire to their cell at Harmondsworth detention centre. As we wrote at the time: "The Home Office is as guilty of Siho Iyigüven's death as if it had lit the fire which took his life. This act of desperation by the two incarcerated Kurdish men reveals starkly the criminal treatment being meted out by the government" (*Workers Hammer* no 110, October 1989). In a recent case, a Zairean teacher, who was fleeing after being subjected to torture by the brutal Mobutu regime, was callously sent back to Zaire by the British immigration authorities, despite frantic efforts by solicitors handling his case. In an exceptional ruling which has obviously stung the government, the court found the Home Office guilty of contempt of court.

To avoid such litigation by refugees against repression and harassment by the immigration authorities, the new Asylum Bill proposed to withdraw all independent legal aid for asylum cases. The Bill will also introduce the compulsory fingerprinting of asylum-seekers, a move clearly

aimed at criminalising dark-skinned immigrants. To make it still more difficult for refugees to enter Britain, bigger fines are to be imposed on airlines carrying passengers without valid travel documents, and more thorough immigration checks of "suspects" will be conducted at foreign airports as well as on arrival in Britain. Among the "practical" results of the Immigration Service giving carriers the names of passengers, "Asylum seekers who travel on documents in their own name, may find that their families are put at risk as information seeps back to the authorities at home that particular family members have succeeded in fleeing" (*The Governments Asylum Proposals*).

As the Tory government and the Labour Party unite in a racist offensive against immigrants and racial minorities in the inner cities, fascists and skinheads have stepped up their deadly atrocities against blacks and Asians. In many housing estates immigrants from the Indian sub-continent live under a permanent state of siege. As one typical report in the *Guardian* (12 September 1991) described:

"Thirty Asian families on an east London housing estate are living like

prisoners in their homes after suffering nearly 250 racial attacks in the past 10 months, including serious assaults which have put victims in hospital.

"One teenage boy on the Teviot estate in the Poplar area was knocked unconscious with a baseball bat, leaving him with a partly paralysed face. A 13-year-old had his leg badly gashed when a knife was thrown at him. He is now in plaster, walking on crutches."

The fascist vermin responsible for these atrocities must be crushed! A mobilisation of the racially integrated trade unions, concentrated for example in London Transport, could teach these scum a basic lesson in proletarian justice.

The organised working class must be mobilised to defend foreign-born workers and oppressed who face victimisation by the British state, the cops and the fascists. However, the chauvinist trade union bureaucrats and the Labour Party misleaders betray such struggles in the service of rapacious British imperialism. Roy Hattersley muttered hypocritically that the Bill was racist. Hattersley, notorious for his chauvinist attitude to the heavily minority members of his Sparkbrook constituency, is almost a household word for Labour Party racism. Labour Party leaders accepted the Home Office's lies about the "threat" posed by "bogus" asylum-seekers, quibbling only over details.

The Labour Party's own record on immigration legislation is plenty sordid. As the *Guardian* education supplement (19 November 1991) put it:

"Although the Labour Party had been against the 1962 [Commonwealth Immigrants] Act when in opposition, it introduced still more restrictive measures once in government. In 1968, a Labour government passed a Commonwealth Immigrants Act (in just three days) which deprived East African Asians (who were being expelled from their home countries) of their previous right, as British passport-holders, to enter the UK freely."

A Labour government in the 1970s was also responsible for instituting the despicable virginity tests for Asian women seeking to join their husbands in Britain and the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act which was designed to sanction naked state terror against Irish people living in Britain. As the next elections approach, Kinnock's Labour Party has made it amply clear, if it wins, it has no intention of reversing any of the racist and anti-working-class laws enacted by Thatcher and Major.

This of course has not dissuaded the fake left from using the Asylum Bill as yet another vehicle for pimping for a Labour Party victory in the general election. *Socialist Worker's* (4 January) headline "Stop the Asylum Bill—Blame the Tories not refugees" deliberately amnesties the Labour Party. The SWP's Anti Nazi League (ANL) in the seventies was built on the basis of a popular front

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