

# The death agony of Stalinism: The Crisis of the USSR and the Degenerate Workers? States

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During 1989 a series of mass popular revolutions swept through Eastern Europe. The power of the Stalinist bureaucratic dictatorships was weakened or destroyed. In the first half of the year, the Chinese bureaucracy was momentarily paralysed by a mass student movement which began to draw in sections of the proletariat. The bureaucracy was only able to halt the developing revolutionary crisis by severe repression.

The heart of the crisis of the workers? states is Gorbachev?s USSR, which is wracked by nationalist revolts, by a continuing factional struggle between marketising reformers and bureaucratic conservatives, by the emergence of embryonic parties of the democratic intelligentsia and last but not least by the awakening of the proletariat?the re-birth of an independent labour movement.

The next historic period poses the stark alternative: proletarian political revolution or bourgeois social counter-revolution. A momentary?even a bloody?triumph of bureaucratic counter-revolution might preserve a restricted and shrunken area of Stalinist rule for a few years, but certainly not for decades. We are witnessing the death agony of Stalinism.

The present crisis of the Stalinist bureaucracies proves beyond doubt that they are castes. In the immediate post-war period many impressionistic theories sought to explain the unforeseen stability and longevity of the ruling Stalinist parties by suggesting that they had become ruling classes. Trotsky?s analysis of the caste nature of the bureaucracy has been vindicated. His error was one of perspective, telescoping the timescale for the collapse of bureaucratic rule.

The bureaucracy?s loss of confidence in its own economic system and its willingness to abandon this system for a completely antagonistic mode of production indicates that this caste has no legitimate or necessary role to play.

What ruling class ever voluntarily turned its back on its own mode of production?

Having developed on the basis of the destruction of capitalism, the bureaucracy obstructed the full operation of the law of value. During the Stalin and Brezhnev eras the bureaucracy recognised that the market tended to fragment and disrupt the cohesiveness of caste rule.

But its political dictatorship over the producers and consumers and the defence of its privileges ensured that its method of planning could never lead to a smooth and harmonious development of social production.

Throughout the decades of its rule, the bureaucratic caste was unable to transfer its economic and social

privileges from the realm of distribution (access to jobs for the family, preferential shops, special dachas etc) into the realm of ownership of the main means of production. Power and privilege were never separated from occupation of a bureaucratic post. The bureaucracy did not convert itself into a ruling class.

Unlike previous ones that have wracked one or another of the degenerate workers' states, this present crisis is a general crisis affecting them all. Its roots lie in the political and economic exhaustion of the reactionary utopian strategy of building 'socialism in one country'. This theory was the ideological expression of the defence and extension of the privileges of a parasitic bureaucracy.

Despite the boasts of Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and their imitators, it has proved utterly impossible for the degenerate workers' states to 'catch up and surpass' the leading capitalist states, let alone to achieve 'developed socialism' or 'communism'. The reasons for this lie not in a failure of planned economy itself, nor in the intrinsic impossibility of achieving of the socialist goal, but rather in the fact that neither can be achieved in national isolation from the world proletarian revolution, nor by means of a bureaucratic dictatorship over the proletariat.

Workers' states based on planned property have survived for between forty and seventy years. As Trotsky said, this shows that the planned economy—a modern society without capitalists—is not an impossibility. But without workers' democracy, without world revolution, these bridgeheads of the new order will ultimately suffer counter-revolutionary degeneration and collapse. Today's 'crisis of communism' is in reality a crisis of Stalinism. Trotskyism alone has a programme to save the social conquests of the workers, to restore or create a democracy qualitatively superior to bourgeois parliamentarism and to open the epoch of the final destruction of world capitalism.

The Stalinist project of building socialism in one country consciously cuts a workers' state off from the world capitalist economy and the international division of labour, restricting the workers' state to what can be achieved with the resources of a backward country.

Lenin and Trotsky's strategic insight that the capitalist chain could break at its weakest link did not imply that socialism and communism could be built in one backward country alone. For these revolutionary leaders, victorious proletarian dictatorships were seen as launching pads for international proletarian revolution.

A healthy workers' state might have to survive years or even decades of isolation whilst preserving proletarian power. Revolutionaries have a programmatic answer to this situation, as was shown by the actions of the Bolsheviks after 1917. On the basis of nationalised industry and infrastructure the prerequisites of socialism can be constructed.

This will require a constant battle with the remaining elements of capitalism within the workers' state (petty commodity production, private trade, the wages system) and the pressure of the encircling capitalist world economy. The weapons for waging this struggle are state ownership and direction of industry (planning) and the monopoly of foreign trade. Within this overall strategy and subordinate to it, limited concessions to foreign capital and even the market are permissible. Such was NEP, as conceived by Lenin in 1921.

During the transition to socialism and communism the market for consumer goods will exist as long as scarcity exists. This market will be the testing ground of the planned economy. In addition, certain sectors of production—private or cooperative—will for a long period remain outside of the planned economy. In agriculture this may have to be a very large sector.

However the planned economy and the democratically run political and economic organisations of the

proletariat (workers? councils, trade unions, co-operatives, women?s organisations) will supervise and control the private sector. With the key sectors of all large-scale industry and banking in the hands of the workers? state, the remaining operations of the law of value can be directed to aid the accumulation process in the socialised sector.

## **The degeneration of the USSR**

Stalinism was organically incapable of conducting such a revolutionary policy. From 1923 to 1928 Stalin, in alliance first with Zinoviev and Kamenev and then with Bukharin, did not strengthen the planned state sector. He allowed, and then positively encouraged, the unbridled growth of the rich peasant farmer and NEP man. At the same time, soviet workers? democracy, which had been heavily damaged and deformed during the years of the Civil War, was not restructured and expanded, but further restricted and finally replaced by a bureaucratic dictatorship. The Left Opposition was repressed. First the Oppositionists were driven from the party, then they were hounded into the camps. This constituted the Thermidor of the Russian Revolution.

The triumph of Stalin?s political counter-revolution thwarted the process of constructing a democratic plan for the whole economy. Only the great grain crisis of 1928 forced Stalin to turn violently to bureaucratically centralised planning and forced collectivisation. In 1929 the role of Gosplan, the planning agency, was finally upgraded and the first five year plan was instituted.

This was the panicky and pragmatic response of a bureaucracy that had encouraged the dramatic development of the market in a way that undermined the foundations of a socialised economy. The bureaucratic command structures were wielded in an attempt to wipe out those classes which had been nurtured in the early 1920s favouring private property.

After 1929 the Stalinist bureaucracy pursued a policy of autarky. This involved a brutal tyranny over the petty commodity producers (middle peasants as well as kulaks), a reckless abandonment of the convertible currency, forced labour and the abolition of trades and services that it could not replace. These bureaucratic measures were necessary because workers? democracy had been abolished. Stalin could not mobilise the masses in a conscious political and economic struggle against the law of value.

For Trotsky and the Left Opposition, planning would triumph because the goods produced by large-scale state industries would rapidly become better, cheaper and more plentiful than the products of petty commodity and small private capitalist production. The planned economy would thus steadily encroach upon and replace market relations. By contrast, the ruthless forced accumulation carried out by the bureaucracy was aimed solely at preserving bureaucratic power against both the bourgeoisie and the working class.

The principle objective of bureaucratic planning was not that of increasing workers? and peasants? consumption and of creating ever greater social equality. Any concessions made to these aims were solely in order to stabilise bureaucratic rule. The bureaucracy?s policy of socialism in one country involved the expansion of basic heavy industry at the expense of other sectors in order to provide the economic foundation for their rule and military defence.

In the 1930s the Stalinists denied that the law of value even existed in the USSR. Thus they were hardly able to manipulate it to the advantage of the state sector. The bureaucracy had no rational recognition or measure of the operation of the law of value within the Soviet economy.

Without the initiative and intelligence of the proletarian masses in supervising planning an ever more

complicated economy, Gosplan became increasingly incapable of directing and harmonising the various sectors of the Soviet economy.

In essence, the long utopian experiment of socialism in one country has been exhausted. The Stalinists were only able to conduct this experiment for so long due to a number of contingent factors.

In the 1930s the bureaucracy marshalled the vast natural resources of the USSR and directed them to the accumulation of producer goods (plant, machinery and infrastructure). This sector is more responsive to purely quantitative targets than is the consumer goods sector. This is because the creative input of the working class in determining the quality and range of consumer goods is essential.

This first stage of bureaucratic planning achieved impressive results because of the systematic terror exercised against the population (including against the bureaucracy itself); but it was also a result of the genuine self-sacrifice of the class conscious workers for whom the revolution was a living memory.

### **East of Eastern Europe**

Similar factors lay behind the relatively fast growth rates achieved by the degenerate workers' states in the periods of reconstruction after the Second World War in Europe and after the Civil War in China. As in the USSR in the 1930s, however, such growth was concentrated in heavy industry and in those sectors responsible for the re-creation of an effective infrastructure. But this growth was accompanied by disproportionalities which rapidly destabilised these countries both economically and politically.

For a while the limited economic co-ordination between the USSR and the new workers' states of Eastern Europe and Asia widened the international division of labour and helped fuel growth in the USSR itself. But at the same time the post-war boom and the fruits of a new exploitative international division of labour enabled imperialism to establish a technological and scientific lead over the degenerate workers' states which eventually had crippling effects on the latter.

In Eastern Europe the gains of bureaucratic planning were uneven. They were most dramatic in the formerly backward semi-colonial states: Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. They were less marked in countries that were once part of imperialist powers: Czechoslovakia and the GDR. As the long boom progressed growth rates in these states declined. The post-war attempts to shift resources into consumer goods industries fell foul of the established interests of the heavy industry and military sectors of the bureaucracy.

The application of technological innovations was thwarted by the conservatism of the managers. The corruption and theft by which all layers of the ruling caste obtain and disguise their privileges have destroyed any possibility of honest economic accounting which is essential to rational planning. As a result, Eastern Europe and Soviet growth rates have declined with each five year plan in the 1970s and 1980s.

At different periods in different countries the ruling bureaucracies have tried to inject life into their failing economies by reform programmes. From the early 1950s the Yugoslavian bureaucracy sought to be independent of the USSR. It thus had to rely to a greater extent on the working class through workers' self-management and a greater emphasis on consumer goods than was the case in the other degenerate workers' states. The bureaucracy also collaborated extensively with imperialism, giving international capital a massive influence on national politics as a result of decades of marketisation.

During Khrushchev's reign in the USSR the Lieberman proposals were advanced in order to increase enterprise autonomy and profitability. Kosygin's initial economic programme for the USSR and Sik's proposals for the CSSR (1968) attempted to circumvent the problems created by Stalinist planning through

the adoption of market mechanisms. The crushing of the Prague Spring, conservative resistance to the Kosygin proposals and the ascendancy of the Brezhnev faction dampened the pace of marketisation.

The 1970s was generally a period of economic conservatism, where bureaucratic planning was sustained by massive foreign borrowing or, as in the case of the USSR, by large hard currency earnings from raw material exports. Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland and Hungary were the first to borrow from the imperialist banks. The bureaucracy hoped these loans would be a rope to help haul Eastern Europe out of stagnation. In fact the rope became a noose of debt around the neck of these economies. Debt payments grew while the economies continued to produce goods for export that were unsellable on the world market.

The Polish bureaucracy's attempt to slash subsidies and social services to repay the debts led to the proletarian upheaval of 1976 and eventually to the revolutionary situation of 1980-81. The masses rose in revolt and created Solidarnosc, the first mass independent labour organisation in a degenerate workers' state. Romania, fearful of facing a similar revolt, drew back from the economic embrace of imperialism. This had dire consequences for the living standards of the workers and peasants.

Hungary staggered from one austerity plan to another and attempted to relieve social tension by normalising the black market and the twilight economy, thus stimulating a small commercial bourgeoisie. Even East Germany and Czechoslovakia, which were more developed and less indebted, sank into stagnation as their industrial base became more decrepit, their subsidies from the USSR declined and their trade with the west ran up against the problem of the inferiority of their goods.

In the early 1980s growing minorities within the Eastern European bureaucracies despaired entirely of correcting the deformations of bureaucratic planning. They sought to go beyond the introduction of market indicators and 'market socialism'. They looked to the day when they could return to a mixed economy or even a 'welfare capitalism'. But so long as their Kremlin masters insisted that they built stunted replicas of the USSR, so long as the Soviet Armed Forces (SAF) backed the bureaucratic conservatives, the reformers had to wait. Only with the changes in the USSR after Gorbachev came to power was it possible to open up a new phase in Eastern Europe.

### **The beginning of the political revolution**

After 1975 the creeping stagnation of the USSR economy was complemented by the political immobilism of the Brezhnev gerontocracy. In the early 1980s a new cold war was launched by Anglo-American imperialism which included a massive round of rearmament. This placed new burdens on the USSR at a time when it was least equipped to meet the challenge. The imperialists' declared aim was to break the back of the soviet economy and force a major political retreat upon the Kremlin.

After Brezhnev's death in 1982 a three year interregnum was followed by Gorbachev's rise to power. From 1985 a new interpretation of 'peaceful co-existence' was crafted. This was a recognition that imperialism was winning the Cold War. Major concessions to US imperialism would free the economic resources to radically transform the technological basis of Soviet industry and buy off domestic discontent with a sharp increase in the supply of consumer goods.

This was not a programme of capitalist restoration: it was a programme for the renewal of 'bureaucratic socialism' through greater economic ties with imperialism and the controlled, if extensive, introduction of market mechanisms.

The existence of old-style hardline regimes in Eastern Europe was a permanent threat to the Gorbachev faction in the Kremlin. In order to massively scale down the Soviet troop presence, Gorbachev needed

leaderships committed to this policy throughout Eastern Europe. He clearly hoped to carry out a slow controlled 'reform' of Eastern Europe. But Kremlin pressure on the old leaderships encouraged a movement from below for the legalisation of opposition groups; the apostle of reform unwittingly and unwillingly became the herald of revolution.

The political revolution in Eastern Europe went through an initial democratic phase. Its origins can be traced to the end of 1988 with the shifts inside the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (HSWP—the ruling Stalinist party) which called into question and then fatally undermined 'the leading role of the Communist Party'. Throughout the 1980s Hungary played a lead in experimenting with the market and in the creation of small-scale capitalist commercial enterprises.

The decision of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) to allow multi-party parliamentary elections in Poland in June 1989 deepened the process. Although the Stalinist apparatus guaranteed itself a third of the seats, its dismal election showing led it to concede a majority of governmental positions to the legalised opposition forces of Solidarnosc. The leadership of Solidarnosc evolved into a proto-Christian Democratic party with a brazenly restorationist programme. Tied to a government intent on imposing austerity and capitalist restoration, the Solidarnosc union has failed to grow to its former size.

These small breaches in the Stalinist monolith were to become a gaping hole over the following months as popular perception grew, first amongst the intelligentsia and later amongst the workers, that the Kremlin was sanctioning this process. Gorbachev's visit to China and later to the GDR aroused huge expectations. In May 1989, in the wake of the Polish elections, there was mass discontent with the old-style rigged elections in the GDR. In Hungary the social democratisation of the ruling Stalinist party encouraged a further growth in opposition movements.

The dam burst when Hungary, keen to demonstrate its pro-imperialist credentials, opened its borders with Austria, thus opening a direct line for refugees from the GDR to the capitalist west.

Mass demonstrations erupted in the GDR, fuelled by the evident crisis of the regime and by Gorbachev's visit for the fortieth anniversary celebrations. Growing popular protest in September and October 1989 faced the Honecker leadership with a choice: crack down or concede. They made ready to do the former. But Gorbachev could not allow bloody repression to destroy his modus vivendi with imperialism. The 19 divisions of the SAF, outnumbering their GDR hosts by over three to one, left Honecker no choice but to depart the scene in the face of protests from hundreds of thousands on the streets.

Once the bastion of the hardline resistance to Gorbachevism had fallen, the Jakés regime's days were numbered in Czechoslovakia. As November followed October, so Jakés followed Honecker. Mass opposition swept away the equally discredited successors to Jakés and Honecker.

In the GDR a new government of reform-minded SED leaders was only able to stabilise itself on condition that it conducted a permanent dialogue with the opposition and promised free elections. Eventually the new SED leader, Modrow, was forced to open the government to opposition leaders. In Czechoslovakia the keys would not stop jangling in Wenceslas Square until a new government with a majority of non-CP ministers was appointed and the dissident Havel was installed in the Castle.

In Bulgaria, the party sacrificed Zhikov in the hope of forestalling wider revolt. The process of reform, dialogue and legalisation of the opposition has hesitantly begun in an attempt to retain the initiative and preserve bureaucratic rule. In Romania a civil war was necessary to dislodge the most repressive of Stalinist autocrats. Years of autarky and severe repression had removed a 'reforming' wing from within the bureaucracy. Unlike the other Eastern European countries, there was no bureaucratic safety valve that

could release the steam of pent-up anger and allow civil war to be averted.

Together with the absence of the restraining hand of the SAF, this ensured that mass protest in Romania would be met with butchery and would precipitate revolution. After the overthrow of Ceausescu the rump of the Stalinist party, in collusion with the generals, disguised themselves within the National Salvation Front. Under this banner they hope to create a new popular front after the elections. Even in Albania, the initial repression of popular protest has been followed by the promise of free elections. Not even the present Tirana regime can avoid falling under the wheels of the political revolution.

Elements of independent proletarian organisation have appeared in every country during the opening months of the political revolution. Armed revolutionary committees and factory committees were set up in Romania; factory committees and shop stewards' initiatives were organised in the GDR; strike committees were formed in Poland; Czechoslovakia was paralysed by strike action. Yet in the first phase of the revolution such movements have been limited to fighting for democratic rights and even bourgeois parliamentary-type institutions, instead of for working class power.

In each case the political outcome of mass protest or revolution has been broadly the same: the promise of free elections, the legalisation of the opposition and the right to organise, the abandonment of the leading role of the Communist Party as enshrined in the constitution, the weakening of the hold of the Stalinists over the repressive apparatus and the conceding of a significant minority or even majority of governmental positions to the opposition.

In desperation at their impending electoral extinction the Stalinists are trying to embrace social democracy and bridge the chasm that opened up after 1914. This is also a clear indication that they are willing to play their part in the creation of a national bourgeoisie and to usher in an era of joint ventures with imperialism. On the other hand, it is also possible that the Stalinists, having been ousted from government can attempt to restore some workers' illusions in them by posing as the opponents of the austerity programmes or, as in Romania, resisting restoration.

This process has fractured the ruling Stalinist parties. In Hungary a cold split in the HSWP has taken place. A majority of the parliamentary fraction and of ministers, together with a minority of the bureaucrats, has formed the Social Democratic HSP. The majority of the Stalinist bureaucrats, now robbed of governmental power, have recently regrouped themselves. In Poland this process of Social Democratisation has created two parties, each calling themselves Social-Democratic. One of these parties still includes a series of old Stalinist leaders and maintains an organic relationship to the bureaucratic apparatus. It can not yet be characterised as Social Democratic in the scientific sense; it is rather a Stalinist party in extremis.

The Communist Parties in the GDR and Czechoslovakia represent different stages in the process of social democratisation. In the GDR the PDS (ex-SED) leadership is a clearly restorationist force that is still fundamentally loyal to the Kremlin. Its rapid demoralisation and decay continues. In Czechoslovakia the KSC survived only as a junior partner in government. Although it has not disintegrated to the same degree as the SED-PDS, it shows no sign of mounting any resistance to the restoration of capitalism.

The result of the revolutionary popular upsurges of 1989 is a situation that can be characterised as a kind of 'dual power' or rather, 'dual powerlessness'. This will last at least up to the planned elections of spring 1990. The Stalinists cling to power even where they are a minority in government, but this power is greatly diminished. The party militias have been dissolved and the police and the army dare not enforce a crack down. But the opposition is still confused, incoherent and unable to take power.

As a result of the first phase of the political revolution a kind of democratic revolution has taken place.

Different class objectives have been concealed behind common abstract democratic slogans. In the coming period this situation will have to be resolved. ?Democracy? can only be realised either as workers? council democracy or as bourgeois parliamentary democracy. The situation is pregnant with three possibilities: Stalinist bureaucratic counter-revolution, pro-capitalist social counter-revolution or proletarian political revolution.

### **Factions in the Eastern European bureaucracy**

#### a) The forces of bureaucratic reaction

Throughout the degenerate workers? states the conservative faction of the bureaucracy believes that discipline for the workers and for the bureaucracy can cut out corruption and restore efficiency to the bureaucratic plan. They idealise the period of the first and second five year plans in the USSR. They are vigorously opposed to democratisation: their real answer is a return to police state repression. In China this faction tightened its precarious hold on power after Tiananmen Square. In Hungary the reformed HSWP led by the conservative Grosz retains considerable support within the state administration.

In the USSR this faction is led by Ligachev. Subordinate to Gorbachev, the conservatives cling on to their posts and hope to return to power when the forces of reform are discredited and in disarray. Their base lies in the vast ranks of the party and state apparatus who are in a position to actively resist the implementation of social and economic reform. In particular this leaden rump looks to Ligachev to protect their positions, privileges and, in many areas corrupt mafia practices. However, the conservatives have no positive alternative programme to that of Gorbachev.

The bureaucratic conservative faction can rely on the support of the secret police, the army chiefs and above all on the powerful passive resistance of the lower echelons of the bureaucracy. This faction is the major force for brutal bureaucratic counter-revolution. It would trample on the democratic rights of the workers, the nationalities and the intelligentsia. The conservatives may use their ?defence? of planning and the workers? gains such as ?full employment? and ?price controls? as a way of appealing to the working class. They will demagogically use the anti-working class measures of the pro-market faction to rebuild support, as in the case of the campaign against rationing, shortages and unrestricted operation of the co-operatives in Leningrad.

Whatever the fortunes of the Stalinist bureaucracy in government, in every country it has retained control over the repressive apparatus and the levers of state administration, even though this control may have been substantially weakened. This illustrates one danger inherent in the present situation. So long as the Stalinist state apparatus is not smashed then the capacity remains for a bureaucratic counter-revolution which would wipe away the gains of the last period.

However, the likelihood of a bureaucratic counter-revolution in Hungary, Poland, the GDR and Czechoslovakia has receded and continues to recede. The national repressive apparatuses are greatly weakened, if not dissolved. Large parts of the state apparatus and the officer corps have defected towards the openly bourgeois parties. As dissent grows within the USSR, the SAF will be needed more and more within its frontiers. Moreover, any bureaucratic counter-revolution would only deepen and accelerate the crisis.

The Stalinists could not re-establish their dictatorship without a coup d'état which would probably split the armed forces and result in civil war. On the other hand, the new governments have, as yet, neither a crystallised party, nor officer caste, nor a restored bourgeoisie to rest upon. Both bureaucratic conservatives and restorationists thus face the danger that any conflict between them could result in power

falling into the hands of the workers.

## **b) The market reformers**

The 'market socialist' reformers of bureaucratic planning oppose the conservatives but do not have a programme of out-and-out capitalist restoration. Gorbachev is their model. They wish to enlarge the area of the economy under the sway of the market and private property, without entirely dismantling the planning mechanisms. This programme is contradictory, inconsistent and untenable. A significant section of the pro-market faction is marked by authoritarianism. They are deeply suspicious of democratisation and look to authoritarian rule to introduce the market.

For the moment this faction holds the reins of power in Romania and Bulgaria, and shares the ministries in Czechoslovakia and Poland. In the USSR this faction has been in power since 1985. This relatively prolonged experiment has been possible due to the initially less serious nature of the USSR's economic crisis. But in Eastern Europe this faction has more or less had its day. It held office in Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia and ran these economies onto the rocks of debt and stagnation. As the crisis develops the 'market socialist' factions elsewhere in Eastern Europe will disintegrate. They will either be ousted or will transform themselves into restorationists or bureaucratic conservatives.

## **c) The restorationists**

The third principal faction is that of the 'radical marketisers'—open or scarcely concealed restorationists. Radical marketeers can be found in both the increasingly authoritarian Gorbachev camp (Aganbegyan, Schmelev) and in the radical democratic camp (the late Sakharov, Gavril Popov). This faction remains weak in the USSR although it has various economists who speak for it and Boris Yeltsin is increasingly becoming a potential leader. The 'left' face of this faction is its espousal of democratic rights for citizens, its opposition to the leading role of the party, its support of the right to secession by the nationalities.

Its aim is the break up of planned property relations and the introduction of a 'mixed' economy. This faction has its strongest representation in Eastern Europe. It has evolved furthest in Hungary where the HSP has a commanding position in the pre-election government. This party also has a base amongst those enterprise managers who are busy privatising the factories by selling them off to themselves. The logical political home and final destination of this faction is social democracy and the Socialist International.

## **The opposition in Eastern Europe . . .**

In most of the workers' states the mushrooming of the unofficial opposition groups has proceeded at a faster pace among the intelligentsia than amongst the workers. Even in the progressive pro-socialist sections of this intelligentsia, however, this has created a situation where the far left is distanced from the workers and not relating to their concrete demands. A battle of ideas alone, an obsession with drawing up blueprints for the future, will only serve to allow the right wing to fill the vacuum. Now the burning need is to organise the masses to fight against the attacks that are being prepared.

A series of ad hoc united fronts of oppositionists has come into existence such as the New Forum in the GDR and the Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia. These groups initially consisted of prominent dissidents (often writers or academics) without any party affiliation and the nuclei of Christian Democrat, Social Democrat, and Liberal parties.

Social and Christian Democratic forces will seek to blind the working class to the cuts in subsidies and growing unemployment by preaching the benefits of bourgeois democracy and promising prosperity in an idealised capitalist consumer society. Clearly none of these represent the vanguard of the working class.

Nevertheless, the Social Democrats have had a considerable ideological success amongst sections of the Eastern European opposition and working class. The re-emergence of these parties is only one aspect of this influence, which spreads far further, penetrating the Stalinist parties and changing the terms of reference of political debate within the workers' states.

The political debates which marked the opening years of the century (reform or revolution, Leninist or Social Democratic party organisation, workers' power or parliamentary democracy etc, are being replayed, with the Social Democrats currently having the upper hand. It is on the result of this battle for proletarian leadership in the degenerate workers' states that the outcome of the current crises will be determined.

None of the left wing tendencies in Eastern Europe have been able to advance a programme of working class power. The Left Alternative in Civic Forum, led by the self-proclaimed Trotskyist Petre Uhl, has acted as a left cover for the bourgeois leadership through their supine policy of 'critical support' for Havel. He is now press officer for a pro-restorationist government.

In Poland the Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution (PPS-RD) is small but it is nevertheless the most developed political organisation in Eastern Europe. Its programme is left reformist, combining bourgeois democratic forms (two chambers of the Sejm) with syndicalist proposals for the economy. This programme cannot defend the workers against the use of bourgeois democracy to install restorationist governments nor can it prevent the triumph of the market over planning.

The left wing opposition within the PPS-RD around Josef Pinior does defend planning but has no clear revolutionary strategy for the struggle for power. It has no programme for the building of workers' councils; it does not call for a clear break from the government, but concentrates its fire on the Mazowiecki-Jaruzelski austerity programme. Equally tellingly, it does not seek to build a revolutionary Leninist party.

The United Left in the GDR proved itself to be thoroughly reformist with regard to the weakened Modrow government. It entered, if only briefly, the Roundtable talks with the government, tailing the SED and New Forum's 'defence of the GDR'. It has concentrated on discussing 'forms of alternative structures to parliament' instead of seeking to mobilise the workers to create factory committees and workers' councils for the seizure of power.

### **. . . and its role in the revolutions of 1989**

The original project of New Forum and of Civic Forum, rather like that of political Solidarnosc in Poland, was simply to pressure the Stalinists into a process of reform. Contradictory class forces with different objectives could at least agree on a reformist project of parliamentary democratisation. The ends differed but the means were identical.

The speed of events was too great to allow this comfortable schema to be realised. Rapid changes occurred as a result of shifts in the international balance of power and the pressure of the masses for democratic change. The population refused to place any confidence in the 'reformed' Stalinist leaders. They reacted vigorously against their manoeuvres, such as the KSC's attempt to hold onto a majority of the ministries or Modrow's attempt to re-form the Stasi.

After the first major concessions by the bureaucracy, the opposition leaders tried to put an end to 'street politics'. Unsurprisingly, the Stalinists immediately stopped making concessions. When the mass mobilisations continued the Stalinists completely collapsed. The SPD, the CDU and even the proto-fascist 'Republikaner' seized the leadership of the masses. The working class saw no possibility of reform either economically or politically and swung inexorably behind 'the only way out': re-unification. The SED, the

New Forum and the United Left all tried to rally the masses behind them by alleging that unification would lead to the rise of fascism. Despite one big demonstration this policy failed to bloc the reunification momentum.

The oppositionists were obliged to take either formal or informal responsibility for government (Czechoslovakia and GDR, respectively). The calling of early elections has proved to be the only road of escape for the powerless governments. In Czechoslovakia, the GDR and to some extent in Poland and Hungary too, the democratic phase is coming to a climax. The question of power is posed point blank.

This fact highlights the acute crisis of leadership which faces the reviving workers' movements. The working class has spontaneously rejected the Stalinist leaders but has found no alternative leadership with a strategy of class independence and workers' power. The vacuum has been filled by Social Democrats and social democratising former Stalinists or even by Christian Democratic or bourgeois nationalist forces.

Only Romania is a partial exception to this. In Brasov, Timisoara and the mining regions the NSF committees which were initially imposed by the army and the remnants of the RCP were purged or re-elected from below by the workers. Managers and officials of the Ceausescu regime who tried to hold onto their posts were ousted by mass pressure. However, the local committees remain loyal to the crypto-Stalinist NSF at a national level. The committees are rightly opposed to the restorationist forces of the National Peasant Party and the Liberal Party.

In Poland the Mazowiecki-Jaruzelski government is proceeding with its austerity measures, using the Walesa union leadership of Solidarnosc to prevent or abort strikes. Rank and file resistance exists within trade union Solidarnosc although it remains confused by anti-communist and nationalist ideas.

The March-June 1990 elections will give the pro-bourgeois forces in Eastern Europe the chance to ensure that the Stalinists are placed in a permanent minority. If the oppositions present themselves as a unified front on a democratic platform the Stalinists will undoubtedly be swept away. If they fragment then the Stalinists may be able to stabilise their position.

However, popular front governments which include Stalinist ministers are not the probable outcome of the coming elections. If the Stalinists are excluded or reduced to minor posts within these governments then they could well try and take advantage of workers' resistance against the effects of capitalist restoration. But without a credible programme or perspective they will not succeed for long. In most countries openly restorationist governments will be formed, led or supported by the Social Democrats, determined to quickly demolish the Stalinist apparatuses.

All this suggests that unless the crisis of proletarian leadership is resolved the main or sole beneficiaries of the revolution will be the pro-capitalist forces intent on a pushing through a programme of capitalist restoration. Apart from sections of the bureaucracy, these forces will include small-capitalist elements inside the country, minority sections of the crumbling bureaucracy, the imperialist trans-nationals and the exiled bourgeoisies.

### **The phases of capitalist restoration**

Capitalist restoration will require the carrying through of several interlinked political and economic tasks. First of all, the restorationists will have to struggle for complete control of the state machine. They will have to secure and deepen political pluralism, free elections, the abolition of the leading role of the party, abolition of the party militias and of the Stalinist controlled secret police. They will have to totally destroy the Stalinists' hold over the interior and defence ministries; the hardliners' will have to be deprived of

these bases for organising a backlash.

The establishment of a government, able and willing to separate the state power from the Stalinist bureaucracy and use its monopoly of armed force to defend private property, constitutes the bourgeois counter-revolution. From this point on, the state is bourgeois. It must then proceed to dismantle the remaining proletarian property forms—the state monopoly of foreign trade and central planning. After this is accomplished, private property can be restored to a commanding position in economic life over a more or less prolonged period.

Although their state apparatus is not yet completely in the hands of pro-bourgeois elements, Hungary and Poland have already set the pace for the first phase of the economic restoration of capitalism. There have been massive rises in prices and taxes, and reductions in state subsidies for health, transport, housing and food. The aim of these measures is to restore a balanced budget, conquer inflation and forge a stable convertible currency. This will go hand in hand with legislation to allow private and foreign ownership of industry. There will also have to be an effective accounting of the national wealth (and debt) of each country.

These elements do not constitute in themselves the introduction of capitalism. But they are the pre-requisites of such a restoration. Without them no major investment and accumulation can be undertaken, no stable native capitalist class can emerge, no extensive pattern of trade with the capitalist world will evolve, no viable long term market for goods and services can be built.

Overlapping with this phase, but taking longer to fully implement, will be the radical restructuring of industry and finance. A national capitalist class will have to be created by stimulating small private commercial enterprises and entrepreneurial industrial capital. This process will be accompanied by the wholesale closure of unprofitable industries, particularly in the heavy industrial sector.

Most or all of these industries (even in Hungary or Yugoslavia) are in the state sector. Those that can be made profitable will be privatised; some will fall into the hands of the imperialist trans-nationals, some will be sold to bolster the indigenous capitalists. The closure and privatisation programme will create a huge reserve army of labour, thus providing a pool of workers essential to the creation of a genuine 'free' labour market and a fully stratified system of wage rates; without this a competitive capitalism is impossible. In the course of this the fact that capitalism means savage inequality will become plain to millions.

When Eastern European industry is pared down to its narrow, potentially profitable, base then a fully functioning stock market would need to facilitate and regulate the free movement of capital in each of these countries. The bureaucratic planning mechanisms will be dismantled in direct proportion to the success of this process of restoration. The centralised regulation of investment, prices and labour would end, although an indicative planning system may remain for residual state industries. The conversion of the stratified economy into a mixed economy composed of private and state capitalist trusts would mark the final definitive act of the restoration of capitalism.

### **Is a peaceful restoration of capitalism possible in Eastern Europe?**

In the 1930s Trotsky argued that the restoration of capitalism in a workers state could not take place by a process of gradual transformation: 'The film of reformism cannot be wound backwards'. A qualitative leap must take place in the nature of the state, he argued. In the case of the USSR he insisted that a social counter-revolution would not and could not take place peacefully, but would necessarily involve a civil war. However, in some countries in Eastern Europe the seizure of state power by the bourgeoisie and the

decisive liquidation of planned property relations may take place without immediately provoking civil war. The possibility of a relatively peaceful counter-revolution in certain countries of Eastern Europe is opened up by a particular constellation of factors.

Firstly, the policy of the USSR and the action (or inaction) of its armed forces. Gorbachev has already accepted the inevitability of restoration in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the GDR and Poland. The prospect of bureaucratic armed resistance by the indigenous bureaucracies is opposed by the leading faction of the Soviet bureaucracy.

In those Eastern European countries where Soviet troops are stationed (GDR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland) a relatively peaceful capitalist restoration is not impossible because their ruling bureaucracies are not independent. They are subordinate to the Kremlin's military diktat. If the USSR were able to stitch up a deal with the west over disarmament, economic assistance and a common European security system, the Stalinists would be willing to police a 'peaceful transition' against working class resistance. Indeed, the first stages of such moves are well underway.

Although the Soviet bureaucracy has used the degenerate workers' states of Eastern Europe as a strategic buffer zone since the Second World War, it has never totally abandoned the idea of a double layered buffer zone. Countries near to the USSR like Poland and Romania should be 'friendly' or allied to it, and a broad band of neutral states, (e.g. Austria and a united Germany) would further ensure the USSR's security. A capitalist Eastern Europe with trading links firmly tethered to the east could be a useful conduit of necessary goods and finance.

As a second condition for a peaceful restoration the imperialists would have to approve and economically support such a process. For the moment they are cautious. Talk of a Marshall Aid package for Eastern Europe is misplaced. If the imperialists were to invest heavily in Eastern Europe, it would not be to reconstruct these nations as subordinate imperialist partners but rather to turn them into stable semi-colonial spheres of influence.

The dismantling of state property in Eastern Europe will be a long and difficult process, fraught with political dangers and likely to provoke resistance. Imperialist investments and loans can never be secure while a strong native bourgeoisie is absent and there is no stable standing army loyal to this class. They are unwilling and unable to intervene militarily to secure their ends, and, with the partial exception of the FRG, there are no vast supplies of surplus capital to invest in Eastern Europe.

The decisive condition for such an initial period of relatively peaceful social counter-revolution would be for the working class to voluntarily accept the restoration of capitalism. The reasons why this might take place are not hard to find.

Firstly, in none of the Eastern European states do post-capitalist property relations have any historic political legitimacy. The bureaucratic social overthrows of the post-war period were imposed upon the working classes of these countries against the rhythms and natural development of the class struggle. These were not workers' revolutions, but military-bureaucratic decisions emanating from Moscow. They were accompanied by the bureaucratic destruction of independent workers' organisations and, frequently, by forced population transfers.

In the absence of a revolutionary leadership, and beguiled by promises of better living standards and greater freedom under capitalism, the workers of Eastern Europe may be prepared to accept the initial stages of social counter-revolution (e.g. German reunification, destruction of the plan, creation of Social Democratic governments etc) without civil war. This is most likely in the GDR where a large majority of the

masses have been won to immediate and almost unconditional reunification.

The real price of the restoration of capitalism will rapidly become clear, in the form of soaring prices, massive unemployment and attacks on social services and working conditions. The immediate and dramatic reduction in living standards due to the 'adjustment crisis' will coincide with the masses using to exercise their newly won rights and organisations to defend themselves. In short, the workers will fight back. However, they would then be faced with a bourgeois state which has resolved the dual power situation in its favour.

The conditions for an initially peaceful counter-revolution are not present in all the countries of Eastern Europe. Although West German imperialism has massive resources with which it can smooth the path of the first stages of the 'reconstruction' in the GDR, in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland the transition will be much more socially disruptive and workers' resistance will undoubtedly be sharper.

Apart from the GDR, the new indigenous bourgeoisies will be relatively weak, and the armed forces will be uncertain in their allegiance to their new masters. Under these conditions a return to a dual power situation and a revolutionary counter-attack by the proletariat is possible given the right leadership.

The participation of the Romanian working class in a prolonged general strike and armed insurrection has created a situation where a peaceful overturn of planned property is highly unlikely. Even an electoral victory of counter-revolutionary parties could lead to a revolt by the workers and the rank and file of the army, and thus to civil war. Romania could stand in the forefront of the political revolution and provide an impulse and encouragement to proletarian resistance to restoration in the whole of Eastern Europe.

### **The reunification of Germany**

The economic prestige and resources of the West German bourgeoisie and its democratic credentials vouched for by its Social Democratic lackeys, creates the most favourable conditions for a peaceful and 'democratic' restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe. Further, the restoration of capitalism in the GDR would not have to overcome the huge obstacle of the lack of a capitalist class.

Although immediate unification is not the FRG imperialists' only method for restoring capitalism, it provides the shortest route to the creation of a framework within which West German finance capital could directly intervene to restructure and rationalise the economy of the GDR.

Re-unification would mean incorporation of the territories of the GDR into the bourgeois Federal German state: the degenerate workers' state would thus be destroyed. However, capitalism could also be restored in the GDR by the dismantling of the essential elements of the degenerate workers' state by a pro-capitalist GDR government before the completion of formal re-unification.

Although Gorbachev does not want a united Germany as part of NATO, the Soviet bureaucracy is too weak to insist on this as a precondition. The Polish regime wants Germany to stay in NATO as a way of preventing any claims on former German territories that are now part of Poland. Imperialism is proposing a compromise solution according to which there would be no US troops in the ex-GDR. The USA is trying to convince the USSR that in the interests of Soviet security faced with future German imperialist expansion, better a united Germany dominated by other imperialist forces, rather than a 'neutral' Germany which may later develop its own nuclear weapons.

Revolutionaries have to continue to argue in principle: no to capitalist re-unification, defend planned property, for revolutionary re-unification and a Socialist United States of Europe. But after the election the task will be to resist each and every attack on the workers and prevent a grossly undemocratic fusion of

the two states.

## **The paralysis of the Soviet bureaucracy**

The politics of Gorbachev and his factional grouping have developed pragmatically in response to the deepening crisis of bureaucratic rule, the failure of successive proposals for change and confrontations with various bureaucratic oppositions. He has constantly adjusted his economic policies to what is possible given the existing balance of forces within the bureaucracy.

Between 1985 and 1987 Gorbachev tried to inject life into the stagnant economy by redirecting investment and enforcing disciplinary measures against the workers. The situation only deteriorated even more. This led him to recognise that the opposition to economic reforms could only be addressed by a series of political reforms that would remove the obstructive layers of the bureaucracy.

From this point onward Gorbachev has stood firmly in the marketising camp of the Politburo. His closest advisers are explicitly pro-capitalist. He wants to significantly downgrade central planning and create a major role for the market and private property. Gorbachev seeks to use incentives and a restructured wages system to persuade the working class, and especially the skilled labour aristocracy, to support his plans.

The non-Gorbachev pro-market section of the bureaucracy is centred on the Inter-Regional group of deputies. This group is deeply divided over both programme and tactics and is one of the many potential bases for the formation of liberal democratic or Social Democratic parties. In the eyes of the masses the leader of this faction is the maverick populist demagogue Boris Yeltsin, who has increasingly put forward restorationist solutions to the crisis.

The economic changes involved in perestroika have not satisfied any section of the bureaucracy, and they have made life even more difficult for the masses. The laws on co-operatives, and on leasing property and enterprises have failed to meet the demands of the marketeers. At the same time these measures have alarmed the bureaucratic conservatives, who have it in their power to obstruct and sabotage any reform. In the aftermath of the 1989 miners' strikes the central planners, from Ryzhkov through to Ligachev, were able to postpone and stall certain reforms. The outline of the 13th Plan is far from a victory for the pro-market faction. Large elements of the old system have been dismantled but no attempt has been made to create a functioning new system.

## **The Soviet opposition**

The range of political positions represented within the Soviet bureaucracy is also to be found within the oppositional groups. The Great Russian chauvinist unreconstructed Stalinist wing of the bureaucracy has links with the anti-semitic proto-fascist Pamyat and the United Front of Workers (UFW). The UFW is led by party functionaries and academics, but has a real resonance amongst those workers for whom perestroika has meant economic chaos and for whom glasnost has brought no gains.

The various popular fronts, which came together under the umbrella of the Russian Popular Front, are blocs of forces ranging from Eurocommunists and Social Democrats through to Cadets and monarchists. Unable to establish a clear alternative political programme, the popular fronts have become footsoldiers of the Inter-Regional Group. The expulsion of the Ivanov and Gdlyan from the party for investigating corruption at the highest levels and Yuri Afanasyev's project of forming a new party, will tend to push the popular fronts into becoming a formal organisation under the leadership of sections of the bureaucracy.

The Democratic Union (DU) a self-proclaimed political party occupies a similar terrain. It too spans a

political spectrum from Eurocommunist CPSU members through to Christian Democrats. Its two key demands are democratisation and the social market economy, posed in an ever more consciously bourgeois and reactionary manner.

The self-proclaimed left of the informal opposition is influenced by Social-Democracy and Eurocommunism and is set on forming a Socialist Party. For a significant section of the left, Scandinavian Social Democracy is the model. According to Boris Kagarlitsky, who stands on the left of this spectrum, their main strategy is that of reform from below. But in practice the left has formed blocs with the Yeltsin wing of the apparatus.

Apart from the new independent workers' committees, the only section of the informal opposition that does not echo the programme of a wing of the bureaucracy is the confederation of anarcho-syndicalists (KAS). However, by their rejection of the struggle for power and for a vanguard party the KAS effectively leaves the political initiative to the bureaucracy.

### **The trap of 'self-management'**

Much of the leftist official opposition to the bureaucracy advocates some form of self-management as a way out of the present economic chaos. Because the bureaucracy's plan appears as an alien dictatorship the workers do not spontaneously recognise the urgency of fighting for a plan based on the democratic will of the masses. The danger exists that rank and file workers will limit themselves to a syndicalist struggle to destroy the punishing work norms and to oust dictatorial enterprise managers. They seek through the introduction of self-management at the individual enterprise level to achieve partial or total independence from the plan. It is envisaged that the allocation of resources and the placing of orders between factories will either be left to the market, to decentralised 'planning from below', or to a series of bilateral agreements.

The origins of the slogan of 'decentralised self-management' lie in Yugoslavia, where this system led to an extreme bureaucratisation at factory level and to extreme fragmentation of the economy into factory and local party fiefdoms. In Poland in 1980-81 Solidarnosc was won to an idea of 'self-management' with no clear answer as to how enterprises should be linked.

Yet all modern production must be organised nationally and internationally. Local and regional isolation will lead to economic chaos and breakdown. If the operation of the law of value/the market is the predominant relation between enterprises, then sooner or later the big majority of these will be forced into private ownership. Co-operative ownership and self-management are no barrier to this.

Indeed, self-management degenerates into a struggle to raise the efficiency and potential profitability of each enterprise within the existing system. If a restorationist political leadership is entrenched in government, the self-management movement will easily be co-opted by the restorationists. The market will be presented as the only mechanism for governing relations between the self-managing enterprises. As self-financing co-operatives they will be forced to turn to the banks and become indebted. In turn this will force them into bankruptcy or into accepting large scale capitalist investment.

### **The developing crisis and the role of Gorbachev**

From the outset Gorbachev has faced stiff opposition and has been obliged to mobilise forces outside the bureaucracy and the party. This was the reason for his policy of glasnost. In the spring and summer of 1988 the bureaucratic factions were in more or less open conflict. In June Gorbachev succeeded in modifying the Constitution, became state President with enlarged executive powers and introduced multi-candidate elections.

Nearly all political prisoners were released and between the summer of 1988 and early 1989 there was a substantial growth of 'informal' and non-party organisations.

The immediate result was the creation of a series of popular fronts in the non-Russian republics and in some Russian cities. The 1989 elections were a resounding defeat for the conservative faction, which only maintained a strong presence in the Congress of People's Deputies because of undemocratic restrictions on voting. Local elections in the 'Slavic' republics in 1990 swept away even more conservatives.

Gorbachev seeks to create a power base for his policies outside of and independent of the party and the state apparatus. This is the meaning of the executive Presidency and Presidential Council which will give Gorbachev a new constitutional authority on an all-Union and republic basis.

This would put him beyond the control not only of a conservative majority in the Central Committee and Politburo but also of the CPSU Congress itself. He hopes to be able to overcome bureaucratic resistance to move against the new mass organisations should they escape his influence.

For the moment Gorbachev's balancing act is threatened by the independent organisations which have come into existence by glasnost. The oppressed nationalities, the civil rights activists and the working class have all taken action. The workers are fighting for their democratic rights (free trade unions, assembly, right to strike), for improvements in wages, for greater equality, and against bureaucratic corruption. The conditions for political revolution are being created in the USSR.

### **The national question in the USSR**

The most de-stabilising factor that Gorbachev has faced is the national question. A history of national coercion, forcible annexation and Russian settlement has meant that the USSR is not a free federation of peoples and that the right of self-determination up to and including separation, although contained in the Constitution, is completely fictitious.

Although Gorbachev initially won the support of the nationalities against the conservatives for his exposure of Stalin's crimes, these movements are now outside his control. Secession and independence are the order of the day from Lithuania to Azerbaijan. In general, the popular fronts were formed as a bloc between pro-perestroika party officials and nationalists. As the crisis has deepened, the fronts have given birth to crystallized separatist and restorationist forces?e.g. in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Lithuania. The bureaucrats have been eclipsed despite their attempts to swim with the nationalists.

The Baltic republics were particularly important to Gorbachev's programme of economic renewal. The resurgence of nationalism has posed a particular problem. A great degree of economic independence and political autonomy has already been accorded to the Baltic republics, but this has not defused the movement. The nationalists in the Baltics are weakened by the existence of large Russian minorities which could be mobilised against them, and the region's economic dependence on Soviet markets, but their movement shows no sign of abating.

Were Gorbachev simply to concede independence there would be a massive wave of similar demands in the Caucasus and the Ukraine: the USSR would begin to disintegrate. On the other hand, blunt refusal to allow independence would be ignored, and it would undermine Gorbachev's Bonapartist role. To use force would fatally alienate his supporters. The bureaucracy is effectively paralysed. Gorbachev will seek to embroil the Baltic Popular Fronts in a long process of discussion to try and exhaust the mass movement. This may involve negotiations around a treaty of independence for these countries in order to establish a relationship with them such as occurred with Finland during the 1920s or in the post-war period.

In the Caucasian republics Gorbachev has already been forced to use repression against nationalist uprisings. The brutal massacre ordered by the authorities in Tbilisi (Georgia) led to a wave of hostility and the development of extreme nationalist forces calling for complete independence. Gorbachev's policy on Nagorno Karabakh has proved dangerous for himself and tragic for the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The bureaucracies of both republics were old-style corrupt Brezhnevites. They stoked the fires of Azeri and Armenian chauvinism in order to preserve their social base.

The population of Karabakh used the new freedoms to demand the transfer of their region to the Armenian Republic. Gorbachev has repeatedly rejected this elementary and justified democratic demand. The Azeri masses, suffering very high levels of unemployment and detesting the old party leadership, were diverted by the local Stalinist leaders and by national chauvinist forces into a totally reactionary campaign to retain Karabakh.

Moscow's imposition of direct rule after one bout of murderous rioting and its return of the region to Azerbaijan as a result of a prolonged Azeri blockade led to a situation of impending civil war and the Baku pogrom.

It was, however, not concern for the welfare of the Armenians, but the imminence of the complete collapse of Moscow's authority and the outbreak of a full-scale war over Karabakh, that forced Gorbachev to send in the troops. This in turn resulted in a bloodbath. Intervention to protect the national minorities, to prevent civil war and the seizure of power by sections of the Azeri popular front and to break the blockade of Karabakh, were fully justified. However, these were not the central objective actions of the Moscow bureaucracy. What was at stake was Gorbachev's Bonapartist position.

The Kremlin probably feels that the current struggles in the Caucasus and elsewhere are fatally flawed by the internecine conflict between the various nationalities. In Bulgaria, Turkish workers have been expelled in a wave of racism; in Uzbekistan the Meskhet minority has been oppressed, and in Azerbaijan and Tadzhikistan the Armenian and non-Turkish minorities were attacked. The Central government can demonstrate the continuing necessity of its rule by can by holding the ring between these contending forces; it can also unload the blame on the local and regional bureaucracies for stoking up ancient antagonisms. The imperialists—who have few designs on this area—have not objected to Moscow's military intervention.

Nationalist upheavals have also occurred in Tadzhikistan, but certain key republics have yet to be touched by the nationalist contagion. Were secessionist demands to spread to the Ukraine and to Central Asia it would be difficult if not impossible to repress.

However, virulent separatism is relatively weak in most of the Ukraine—with the partial exception of the western areas which were annexed in 1939. The reasons for this lie in the history of the Russian Empire itself, in the integration of the Ukrainian bureaucracy into the Soviet bureaucracy, the relatively privileged nature of this republic and the highly nationally integrated nature of its proletariat. All these features are expressed in the relatively progressive original programme of the popular Movement for the Reconstruction of the Ukraine (RUKH), adopted at its September 1989 congress.

Nevertheless, if the crisis deepens and there is a delay in the emergence of a powerful working class movement then there is a real danger that religious and separatist ideas will become more influential in the Ukraine.

Justified alienation from Stalinism, the absence of a revolutionary party and the re-emergence of bourgeois and pre-capitalist prejudices mean that popular protests are deformed by xenophobic and reactionary attitudes and religious bigotry. Sections of the Stalinists can flirt with these sentiments in order to preserve

their own privileges and strengthen their hand against other sections of the bureaucracy.

We have to fight against all forms of bourgeois nationalism or religious fundamentalism, whilst of course supporting the right of secession for nationalities which have clearly expressed their wish to do so. We do not support the installation of a bourgeois nationalist regime in these states but fight for an independent revolutionary workers' state.

### **The situation of women in the Stalinist states**

The degenerate workers' states have radically altered the position of women. In the USSR and in Eastern Europe women form a large proportion of the workforce. Women are included in many professional layers of the working class, and in certain traditionally male dominated industries such as engineering and mining. The political history of the workers' states also means that women have generally been granted full legal and political equality; there exists a formal ideological commitment to the liberation of women. Social provision for childcare has also been developed, although this varies considerably between countries.

Within the state and party apparatus women remain a small minority. Alongside a formal commitment to women's equality, Stalinist ideology also includes support for a strong family unit within which women play a central role. This proved necessary because of the Stalinist Thermidor in the family inside the USSR in the late 1920s.

Women had to play a central role when collective provision for childcare and household labour was ditched as a political priority in the USSR.

Command planning has proved incapable of providing the consumer goods which could ease the daily life of the workers. The resulting burden rests primarily on women. They have to queue long hours for inadequate quantities of food for their families. They have to cook, clean and care for children in overcrowded and inadequate housing, with very few labour saving devices. All this ensures that women endure long hours of hard domestic labour on top of their factory or office work.

### **A revolutionary crisis in the USSR**

The USSR is moving rapidly towards a revolutionary situation. This is shown by the mounting economic shortages, the mushrooming of independent workers' organisations and the results of the spring 1990 local elections, which saw wholesale defeats for party candidates

Faced with this growing crisis of bureaucratic rule and the threat of revolution, the Stalinists may launch a pre-emptive strike in the form of a Bonapartist coup by Gorbachev or by one of his opponents. But in a period of mounting mass struggles this could be only a temporary bureaucratic solution: there would inevitably be a massive protest and resistance. The crackdown would probably be defeated and usher in a dual power situation such as occurred in Eastern Europe in 1989.

Of course, it is by no means excluded that Gorbachev will put off the crisis for a while by making further concessions or by resorting to ever more bonapartist measures. But it is increasingly clear that his Bonapartism is an expression of the senility of the bureaucratic caste. He is the Kerensky of the political revolution: his rule will merely be an interlude in the inevitable decline of Stalinism.

Whatever the future holds for Eastern Europe, even an initial period of peaceful restoration of capitalism in the USSR is impossible. As in Eastern Europe, developments will be determined by three forces: the Stalinist bureaucracy, the imperialists and the working class. In each case, different conditions apply to the USSR as compared to Eastern Europe.

In both the USSR and Eastern Europe, the whole bureaucracy will not go over to the politics of restoration. At the moment such a policy is not widely held amongst leading sections of the Soviet party. The leading faction hopes to be able to use technological renewal and some market mechanisms to revitalise the existing social relations.

As the crisis develops, the bureaucracy will split into pro-capitalist and bureaucratic retrenchment factions who will mobilise different forces in society. Splits within the Soviet bureaucracy cannot be decided upon relatively peacefully by occupying armed forces, as was the case, for example, in GDR. The fractures will run throughout the state apparatus, including the armed forces.

The fact that USSR is by far the most powerful industrial economy of the degenerate workers' states and also the military command centre of the Warsaw Pact means that imperialism's attitude will be very different. They will intervene economically, and, finally, perhaps, militarily in the event of civil war and the danger of proletarian political revolution. Imperialism's policies have to ensure that Gorbachev opens the road to capitalist restoration but at the same time they must endeavour to make sure that he is not able to stop or slow down the process.

The Soviet working class has a different relationship to planned property than is the case in Eastern Europe. Although the Stalinist dictatorship itself has no historic legitimacy, the Soviet working class actively participated in both the creation of the workers' state in 1917 and in its defence during the Second World War. The introduction of the market, privatisation, growing inflation and inequitable wage differentials will all represent attacks on what remains of the historic gains of 1917. This will increasingly provoke a strong resistance from the Soviet working class, and the development of new independent workers' organisations which can and must become the organs of political revolution and of future workers' power.

### **The Chinese bureaucracy tries to stop the wheel of history**

The particularity of the crisis in China lies in the fact that its dynamic does not directly stem from the changes within the USSR after 1985. As such it shows the USSR and Eastern Europe many features of the road ahead of them. Since its victory in the Civil War in 1949, the Chinese CP (CCP) has exhibited all the characteristic features of Stalinism but in a manner inevitably influenced by its unique circumstances. At the time of its victory the CCP already had 15 years experience of territorial government behind it and a battle-hardened bureaucratic administration; the party itself was militarised to a greater degree than any other. In addition, Chinese Stalinism came to power by its own strength, based on the 500 million strong peasantry.

This peasantry was to shape many of the unique features of Chinese Stalinism in power after capitalism was liquidated in the 1951-53 period.

Highly centralised industry and aid from the USSR allowed rapid economic growth in the first five year plan (up to 1956). The CCP leadership, however, was already divided over the extent to which the Soviet model could be further emulated without alienating the peasant base of the regime or destabilising the economy by too great a concentration on heavy industry.

The debacle of the 'Great Leap Forward', involving the withdrawal of Soviet aid and technicians, the onset of famine and its alleviation by market reforms in the countryside, all underlined the faction-ridden nature of the Chinese Stalinists. This was to be further emphasised when the factionalism broke out of the bounds of the party and assumed virtual civil war proportions during the Cultural Revolution.

The beginnings of working class self-mobilisation forced the warring factions to agree a truce but the

ensuing stalemate, presided over by the aging Mao and the 'Gang of Four', saw a steady decline in growth rates in all sectors except heavy industry. It was against this background that a radical turn towards reliance on market forces to stimulate production was adopted under Deng Xiaoping in 1978.

The first phase of this strategy effectively restored private farming to China and, by virtue of removing the strait-jacket of bureaucratic supervision, generated a rapid increase in output.

Increased rural prosperity, however, necessarily entailed a rapid increase in inequality as capital was accumulated by a minority of farmers. Continuing central control based on state procurement at below market prices antagonised farmers and encouraged corruption within the bureaucracy.

The second phase of Deng's strategy was aimed at repeating the market experiment in the industrial sphere. Bureaucratic controls were relaxed on the basis of increased enterprise autonomy, and investment was increased by encouraging foreign capitalist investment and loans. Although some branches of production saw rapid growth this was by no means uniform, nor was it beneficial to the economy as a whole.

Factory-based decisions to alter production to suit foreign markets, regional rivalry to attract foreign investment, corruption to obtain scarce raw materials overheated the economy and created dramatic shortages and bottlenecks. By 1988 the consequences had spilled over into agriculture. Farmers found it more profitable to produce industrial crops than foodstuffs and the proliferation of investment projects was driving inflation up towards 40% per annum.

The technical intelligentsia played a central role in the growing political crisis. Based in factory management, in the university and research institutes and in the ministries, this stratum demanded freedom of speech and publication as it tried to grapple with the contradictions and rigidities of the economy. Leading sections of the bureaucracy recognised the importance of such academic and scientific freedoms and encouraged discussion as a way of building support for their own factional battles, in particular against the proponents of a return to more traditional centralised planning.

Against a background of steadily mounting economic disorder the debate again broke out of the ordained bureaucratic channels and poured onto the streets and into the Tiananmen Square. Typically, it was the students who opened the floodgates and generalised the demands into an attack on bureaucratic rule, privilege and nepotism which was then taken up by workers in all the major cities of China. It is a measure of the disunity of the bureaucracy that more than two months of steadily developing mass mobilisations passed before the movement was broken under People's Liberation Army tank tracks. It is also testimony to the deep social roots of Chinese Stalinism that it was able to inflict such a crushing blow to so widespread a movement.

The prime mover behind the repression of the Democracy Movement was Deng Xiaoping, but he had to rely on forces—principally the generals—whom he had attacked in earlier phases of his economic plans. In the aftermath of Tiananmen these forces have now insisted on a return to centralised planning and imposed tight restrictions on all economic development.

Neither the army nor the CCP is able to fully enforce these decisions. They are split over the question. Key figures, particularly in the foreign and economic ministries, are fundamentally opposed to this policy. Whilst no mercy has been shown to plebeian opponents of the regime there has been no systematic purge of the bureaucracy. The factions continue to battle behind closed doors.

Repression has driven opposition underground but it cannot eradicate it, nor motivate the workers to raise

production. The growth of working class organisation during the spring of 1989, expressed in strikes throughout China after the massacre of Tiananmen, was too great to be totally or permanently liquidated. The bureaucracy tried desperately to limit coverage of the downfall of Ceausescu; nevertheless there were demonstrations in support of the Romanian revolution, showing that an organised opposition still exists.

The political character of this underground movement is far from crystallised. The Federation for a Democratic China—the leading force in the external opposition—shows the powerful influence of the overseas Chinese bourgeoisie with its overtly restorationist programme. However, the decision of the major imperialists to continue to do business as usual with Beijing has tended to cut across the development of a coherent and organised opposition leadership. The decline in industrial production—2% per month since September 1989—shows the hostility of the working class and the economic impasse created by the bureaucracy's attempt to return to autocratic central planning.

Unlike the East European regimes, Beijing is not dependent on Moscow for its short term survival. It will not collapse overnight as Honecker or Jakés did. The accumulating contradictions will be resolved on the basis of rhythms and tempos not directly related to events in the USSR. Nevertheless, the contradictions of bureaucratic planning which produced the crisis of the USSR also operate in China. Indeed they have produced far greater crises, at almost ten yearly intervals since the 1950s. Given the resources of the Stalinists, over and above the support they retain within the peasantry, the convulsions of the political revolution in China will be longer, bloodier and more contradictory than any seen before.

### **The international effects of the crisis of Stalinism**

The Gorbachev reforms in the USSR have resulted in pressure on an international level for a strong right turn by the movements and regimes traditionally linked to Moscow. In Mongolia the regime has advanced its own version of perestroika and has allowed street demonstrations and the organisation of democratic movements. The Mongolian Stalinists are now planning joint ventures with multinational companies like Amoco and British Petroleum.

In the wake of Gorbachev's strategic retreat on a world scale, Vietnam was forced to withdraw its 26,000 armed forces from Cambodia and institute its own version of perestroika. Now the Cambodian government is negotiating the formation of a united national government that will include Prince Sihanouk. But no serious attempt at glasnost has been tried as yet.

Cuba and Korea also retain the old one party system with the addition of a cult of the personality. Castro has said that instead of permitting democratic freedoms he will reinforce his party's monolithic discipline, and that instead of permitting mixed companies or 'group capitalism' Cuba will become more 'socialist'. In the past Cuba has been economically and militarily dependent on the Kremlin. During both détente and cold war, the USSR used Cuba as a base to pressure the USA, as a bridge to Latin America and the semi-colonies, and for military intervention in Africa. The USSR no longer wishes to continue with this scale of subsidies. The Kremlin is pressing Cuba to open itself to the market political liberalisation and to pursue a less militant foreign policy.

Castro does not wish to relax his dictatorship. He aims to reinforce his position in order to bargain with imperialism. His verbal support for the insurrection of the FMLN in El Salvador was an example of this. Castro is offering his services to the semi-colonial bourgeois governments as a point of support against the USA and also as a brake on the forces of proletarian revolution.

Gorbachev's foreign policy has meant that Moscow's client states have been told to make their peace with imperialism. The MPLA government in Angola, together with SWAPO in Namibia, was urged to

compromise with South African imperialism and its UNITA puppet. In Mozambique, FRELIMO abandoned its designation as a Marxist-Leninist party and the Chissano regime is now congratulating the De Klerk government in order to attract investment. In Ethiopia the beleaguered Mengistu government has sought and achieved good relations with Israel, and the Zionists are supplying arms against the Tigrean and Eritrean rebels. The government of Benin has also abandoned its claim to Marxism-Leninism.

The USSR has forced Syria to abandon its attempt to reach military parity with Israel, and under Soviet pressure Syria has re-established good relations with Egypt and other Arab regimes. The Qadhafi regime has improved its relations with the most conservative Arab regimes and the Afghan regime wants to make a coalition government with reactionary Islamic guerrillas.

Gorbachev's policy has also meant that national liberation movements backed by Moscow have come under pressure to compromise. The PLO has recognised the Zionist state. The ANC is rapidly abandoning all its radical anti-imperialist and revolutionary postures and is prepared to accept a democratised version of the white racist state.

In Latin America the Stalinists are pressurising the guerrilla and left movements to move to the right. In Colombia the M-19 abandoned its weapons and is seeking to become a moderate bourgeois party. In Nicaragua the FSLN was suffered a major electoral defeat that will profoundly affect Guatemalan, Salvadorean, Colombian and Peruvian guerrilla movements. Already the majority of these guerrilla leaderships are preparing to betray the struggle by negotiating to form national unity governments with the same regimes and armies who have been murdering them.

### **Centrist confusion over the political revolution**

The present upheavals in the degenerate(d) workers' states are of historic significance. As such, the weaknesses of a wide range of political tendencies are being clearly revealed under the test of events. This is particularly true with regard to the centrist organisations which claim to be Trotskyist. Every one of the major international tendencies has failed to meet the challenge of charting the road to political revolution.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), true to its right centrist reflexes, has sought to pressure the reforming wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy into pursuing a policy of 'deep glasnost'. The USFI has not even attempted to develop a programme for political revolution, culminating in workers' council power. Despite the desires of certain layers of the membership, the USFI has essentially become transformed into a cheerleader for one wing of the bureaucracy, as has previously happened with regard to Cuba and Yugoslavia.

The International Workers' League (Fourth International), founded by Moreno, and the Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction) led by Lambert, have both refused to put forward a programme for political revolution. Like the USFI, they have peddled a programme of reform for the USSR. On the reunification of Germany, both groups call for unconditional and immediate reunification. Neither the defence of planned property relations nor the fight for workers' power interests these 'democratic' cretins.

For the Morenoites, reunification will supposedly lead immediately to the seizure of power by the masses, so chronic is the crisis of imperialism. The organisation that called for 'Solidarnosc to power' in Poland in 1980 today looks forward to power being in the hands of the various bourgeois democratic forces in Eastern Europe. The Lambertists have had a pro-capitalist position on German reunification for several decades. Their current campaign for capitalist reunification under a counter-revolutionary SPD government and their enthusiastic building of the pro-capitalist Chinese Democracy Movement in exile also shows how

far this supposedly 'orthodox' tendency is from proletarian politics.

The tiny Spartacist sect has made much noise about its intervention into the GDR. Like the Stalinophobe Lambertists, with whom the Spartacists share a common political tradition, these puffed-up Stalinophiles seek to hide their fundamentally right centrist politics under a gloss of orthodoxy and ludicrous bombast. Afghanistan, Poland and now events in the GDR show that they have a fundamental affinity with the other pseudo-Trotskyists: they concentrate their activity on support for one wing of the bureaucracy (in this case the most hard-line Stalinist elements) rather than fighting to organise the working class for political revolution.

Those tendencies which claim that the workers' states are in fact some form of capitalism have been particularly disoriented by the current crises. In every case, their passive acceptance of an extended period of bourgeois democracy has been revealed.

The tendency around the British SWP do not even attempt to put forward a programme for workers' power, preferring to wait for the spontaneous struggle to advance, and the French group Lutte Ouvrière happily awaits the overthrow of the Stalinism in Eastern Europe as a herald of a phase of bourgeois democracy within which the workers' can learn about politics and . . . standing in elections!

In previous periods of massive crisis, both before and after the Second World War, international centrist tendencies underwent dramatic changes, splits and fusions. It is scarcely believable that the physiognomy of international centrism - especially that considering itself to be Trotskyist - will still be the same in five years time.

Rank and file militants in the workers' states who seek the road to political revolution will not find it in the writings and activities of the centrist groups. Quite the opposite. All that these organisations can offer is confusion, false promises and the building of a road-block to revolution inside the workers' states. Only the unfalsified programme of proletarian political revolution can steer workers to the overthrow of the hated Stalinist dictatorship and the defeat of the menace of capitalist restoration.

### **Towards a proletarian political revolution**

Throughout the workers' states all the bureaucratic and pro-bourgeois forces have an interest in preventing the intervention of the working class as an independent force, fighting for workers' democracy and against capitalist restoration. Over the coming months and years the formation of factory councils and workers' councils will open up a new duality of power and a new, proletarian, phase of the political revolution.

Years of repression and the devaluation of the idea of socialism have scarred the proletariat of the workers' states. Trotskyists must be prepared to support and participate in the ousting of Stalinist dictatorships even where the majority of the working class has no other clear objective and even when pro-capitalist forces are involved. Whoever expects a pure political revolution will never live to see one. The task is to struggle within the revolutionary mass movement against the Stalinist dictatorship for a political revolution, for workers' democracy and against bourgeois counter-revolution.

There will be a more or less prolonged struggle between the enfeebled but still vicious bureaucracy, the increasingly confident and aggressive bourgeois counter-revolution and an at first confused working class movement. As the events of 1989 showed, the political revolution rapidly comes up against the limits of a more or less concealed dual power situation. From here on the key task is to quickly develop concrete action programmes for political revolution and Trotskyist parties to fight for them.

Such parties would have to centre on the need to oust the Stalinists from their remaining hold over the state apparatus and prevent the bourgeoisie from seizing power. The workers cannot rely upon the ?hardliners? in the bureaucracy to defend the gains of the post-war system. It is they who have undermined the planning system, they who would rather see it dismantled before the god of profit than see the plan transformed from below in the interest of the toilers.

Of course, we recognise the possibility of a tactical united front with those in the bureaucracy who are willing to obstruct the process of dismantling of the planning mechanisms, who agree to refuse to co-operate with the accounting procedures demanded by the IMF and so on. But the tasks of fighting for independent working class power and for the defence of planned property relations are indissolubly linked. There can be no question of an initial stage of defending the plan against the restorationist threat and only when that threat is over being prepared to move against the bureaucracy.

The workers can only defend their gains by building their independent organisations in order to crush the bureaucracy. This will entail seizing the current bureaucratic planning mechanisms, purging the bureaucrats, and restructuring the functioning of the plan from top to bottom, creating new arms of accounting and control and revitalising the old ones.

Union branches and committees of workers in agriculture and distribution should uncover the bottlenecks, the shortages, the irrationalities and corruption imbedded in the system of the bureaucratic command economy. All the resources of the economy must be accurately accounted for and the democratic organisations of the masses must set out an emergency one year plan. Any concessions or joint operations with capitalism must be approved by the workers? organisations. The right to work and the maintenance and extension of benefits must be guaranteed; rationing and price controls must be checked and approved by the workers.

The spontaneous demands of women and the new independent trade unions reflect the dual burden which women face. The Soviet miners? strike of 1989 and the newly formed union Sotsprof have raised demands for the protection of women workers so that they can carry out their household tasks. This has led to demands for seven years maternity leave.

Against this approach it is necessary to put forward the Marxist position on women: women?s liberation requires that women be drawn into social production and not isolated in the home. In order to make this possible, and to go forward towards liberation, women must stay in work outside the home, with protection from work which may be injurious to their health, and the working class must fight for adequate child-care, housing and domestic labour saving goods.

Finally, there can be no prospect of a thorough economic regeneration of the workers? states while the workers have not seized political power. This can only be carried out by an armed workers? militia and by winning over decisive sections of the rank and file of the standing army. Workers must advocate the formation of soldiers? councils, the election of officers and the removal of the high command. The extent of the violence and civil war will depend on the roots and stability of the bureaucratic regime and its external support. The bureaucracy may depart the scene relatively peacefully in the face of a general strike and the loss of control over the armed forces, or it may engage the workers in a bloody civil war.

A revolutionary vanguard party is crucial to the success of the revolution. It will not emerge spontaneously; it can be built now by the bringing together of a nucleus of cadre around an action programme for the present crisis of Stalinism. Armed with this these cadres will not rest content with idle discussion or drawing up blueprints for the future. They will intervene in the workplaces, in the unions, on the mass demonstrations and the elections that the regimes have been forced to call. The spontaneous vanguard

elements will be those who fight the Stalinists? and the restorationists? anti-working class attacks. It is to these layers that revolutionary Marxists must turn in order to create a conscious vanguard party.

An action programme for the political revolution must centre on the following points:

? For the complete destruction of the Stalinists? hold over power! Down with the secret police! For a workers militia and workers? councils! For rank and file soldiers committees!

? For a democratic workers? plan to meet the economic crisis! For workers management in the plants and offices! For a congress of workers? councils to determine a new plan.! Down with capitalist restoration! Stop the destruction of the planning mechanisms, nationalised property, the state monopoly of foreign trade, the right to work and social security!

Only a centralised plan and a centralised state power can co-ordinate non-capitalist production and thus protect the workers against exploitation, unemployment, social insecurity and bad working conditions. But only workers? democracy and centralisation can raise the productivity of labour and give a strong impulse to technological innovation so that an ever greater variety of new, improved, and cheaper goods can be produced.

Factory, local and regional representatives of the workers must have absolute freedom to discuss and initiate proposals and have their own local spheres of competence in economic management. National and international economic decisions must be taken by appropriate congresses. Only thus can conscious direction supplant the blind economic laws of capitalism or the diktats of a centralised bureaucracy.

? For international revolutionary solidarity, including armed support for all those fighting Stalinism, capitalism and imperialism.

The present series of elections in the USSR and Eastern Europe are an attempt by the Stalinists to gain pseudo-democratic validity for their continuing hold on power. At the same time the most pro-restorationist forces within the opposition hope to be able to grab the economic levers of power by means of the elections.

Should neither succeed completely in their aims, a Polish type solution is possible: agreement on a thoroughgoing package of pro-capitalist measures that stop short of restoration itself. Workers must resist all these potential outcomes, use their own power and put forward their own candidates to prevent bourgeois or Stalinist triumph at the polls.

? No to four or five year parliaments. For a maximum of one year for any parliament.

? Nominate workers? candidates in every factory, shop and office on a platform of opposition to capitalist restoration! Defend workers? living standards and overhaul the centralised planning mechanism. All such workers? candidates should be accountable and recallable to the workers? committees and assemblies that choose them.

? All party candidates must present their programmes to workers? mass assemblies in the factories and the estates.

In this way workers? illusions in bourgeois democracy (secret ballot, universal suffrage, multi-party elections, parliamentary assembly) can be tested by the emerging workers? organisations. Real workers? democracy can be tested against the alienated character of the parliamentary talking shops so beloved of bourgeois politicians.

With the formation and growing strength of the workers' councils the slogans of the vanguard will strike deeper and deeper roots:

? All power to the workers, poor peasants? and soldiers? councils!

? For a revolutionary workers' government!

? For the proletarian political revolution!

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