

TROTSKYIST BULLETIN

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Theses in defence of Trotskyism

January 1992

Introduction

We are living in momentous times. In the space of less than three years Stalinism has collapsed in Eastern Europe and the USSR. A paroxysm of historic proportions has seen the disintegration of the bureaucratic dictatorship against which Trotskyism was initially defined.

The key events of this period weigh heavily in the minds of class conscious workers throughout the world: from the initial liberatory victory of the masses over the hated Stalinist tyranny to the current insecure domination of bourgeois, restorationist governments throughout Eastern Europe.

The enormity of these events, so far reaching in their possibilities and consequences, have, directly or indirectly, thrown all the major organisations which claim to be revolutionary into disarray. Who could have predicted, at the beginning of 1989, that within three years the USSR itself would no longer exist?

Marxist science can predict the direction of events with considerable certainty but if the timescale and tempo of events often deceived a Marx a Lenin or a Trotsky it is no surprise that the scale of the events of these years took everybody by surprise. The problem these events revealed was not merely one of predicting the precise tempo of events. The terrible crisis of Stalinism has revealed the acute political weaknesses of virtually all the leaderships around the world which head the mass organisations of the working class or the forces struggling against imperialism.

This in turn is having an effect on the smaller tendencies to their left, their critics, but who have maintained varying degrees of dependence on the Stalinist or Stalinised mass parties and movements, and consequently have made profound political accommodations to them. Just as the last years have revealed the astonishing degree of internal decay of Stalinism, so the coming years will wreak a profound transformation of the international "revolutionary" and "Trotskyist" left.

Those parties and movements in the imperialised countries which looked upon Stalinism in a more or less favourable light have lost everything: a political model and a source of ideological, political and financial support. Nor does this apply only to the traditional Moscow-line Stalinist parties. The pro-imperialist settlements which have followed in the wake of the collapse of the USSR will affect the anti-imperialist struggle for years to come. From the Middle East to South Africa, from Central America to the Gulf, the imperialists are trying to make the masses pay for the bankruptcy of Stalinism. The petit-bourgeois revolutionary nationalist organisa-

tions like the FSLN, PLO and ANC will not be able to ride out the coming storm unscathed.

As we wrote in March 1990: "In previous periods of massive crisis, both before and after the Second World War, international centrist currents 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." Indeed these transformations are already beginning before our eyes. In France and Argentina, two countries which contain between them the majority of the world's self-proclaimed Trotskyists, as well as the international centres of most of the contestants to the title of "Fourth International", the political and organisational disintegration is accelerating.

Faced with this growing crisis and confusion, thousands of conscious revolutionaries will be asking themselves two questions: how did we get into this situation, and what can we do to extricate ourselves and our organisation? Our Theses in Defense of Trotskyism provide an initial response to these questions.

In this document we examine the key questions of revolutionary politics, and detail the way in which international centrism has distorted, discredited and buried revolutionary Marxist slogans and analyses. By producing this document, we aim to encourage debate and political clarification between ourselves and those organisations, tendencies and individuals who are repulsed by the right-centrist or reformist antics of the major self-proclaimed revolutionary or Trotskyist organisations around the world.

These Theses do not constitute a programme. We have produced a programme, The Trotskyist Manifesto, which obviously gives a richer and more thorough account of our politics, and our resolutions on the crisis of Stalinism give a detailed explanation of our programme for political revolution. Nor are they a direct equivalent of the "11 points" around which Trotsky sought to rally left centrist forces in "the Bloc of Four" in 1933. They are limited to addressing the main political reasons lying behind the forty years of broken revolutionary continuity and the development and multiplication of these by the epigones of Trotsky's Fourth International.

These differences over tactics and strategy are not sectarian hairsplitting. Each and every one is a question where the wrong method has hampered workers' struggles around the globe. The following theses are designed aid the pin-pointing of agreements and differences with experienced individual militants as well as with organisations that are trying to break with the rotten tradi-

tions of the Hansens, Healys, Mandels, Lamberts, Morenos, Loras, Cliffs or Grants.

The theses are intended to serve as a way of provoking debate around the history, traditions and practice of the major "Trotskyist" organisations, and thus to point the way towards a truly revolutionary answer to four decades of revolutionary crises.

We concentrate on centrist distortions of the revolutionary programme carried out by organisations under the banner of Trotskyism because, on a world scale, "Trotskyism" and the various organisations which claim the banner of the Fourth International, are today the most widespread and developed form of centrism, despite their small size and relative isolation from the class struggle.

Furthermore, their apparent proximity to genuine revolutionary Marxism has led tens of thousands of conscious revolutionaries to enter their ranks. Unfortunately there they have been subjected to a regime of

I **The collapse of the degenerate workers' states, the weakening of Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries and the pro-imperialist settlements in South Africa, the Middle East and the Far East will have far-reaching consequences for the world proletariat. In Latin America and Africa, imperialism is pursuing its policy of militarised democracy and severe austerity programmes.**

The death agony of Stalinism has led to the collapse of totalitarian dictatorships in Eastern Europe and the USSR. The working class has won important democratic liberties which give it better conditions to think, organise and fight. But due to the absence of a revolutionary leadership it has developed democratic and even pro-capitalist illusions.

A series of counter-revolutionary governments have come to power with mass support, even with mass working class support. These governments have inaugurated a series of restorationist programmes which attack the historic gains as well as the immediate conditions of the working class.

But except in the former GDR these measures have not yet resulted in the final downfall of the workers' states. Working class experience of these attacks and growing disillusion with bourgeois parliamentarism and the market economy will mark the coming period.

The only way to defend workers' conditions and save the historic gains originating from the October Revolution is to carry out a proletarian political revolution.

This will have to be directed against the new restorationist governments as well as the remaining Stalinist regimes. The objective conditions for solving the crisis of leadership that afflicts the new workers' movements of Eastern Europe and the USSR are developing. The task of revolutionaries is to address themselves with the greatest urgency to resolving the crisis of the subjective factor.

Only the successful resolution of the crisis of leadership can open the road to the socialist revolution on a world scale. Yet those organisations which claim the banner of Trotskyism are in profound disarray. Some

programmatic miseducation and, all too frequently, to gross bureaucratic deformations of democratic centralism.

No doubt this document is not complete. Other examples could be given, other subjects could be raised and other groups could be tested against the revolutionary yardstick we outline here. In this sense, the current document is a draft, a proposal around which to centre international debate and discussion.

We encourage all those who agree the central axis of this document, but who would have criticisms of a number of its positions to contact us, to discuss with our sections and with our international centre. It is only through such debate, leading to programmatic clarification, and principled unification that the twilight of the Stalinist parties can rapidly be transformed into a new dawn for the building of revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) parties united as a new world party of socialist revolution.

are either secretly dismayed by the collapse of the bureaucratic dictatorship and are retreating into profound pessimism, questioning the most basic elements of Trotskyism (United Secretariat of the Fourth International—USFI).

Others are incapable of looking reality in the face and offering any programmatic response to the masses beyond that of cheering on the existing movement and the existing leadership (International Workers' League (IWL/LIT), Fourth International International Centre of Reconstruction (FI-ICR of Pierre Lambert), Committee for a Workers' International (CWI—Militant-GB), International Socialist Organisation (ISO—SWP-GB).

Still others take refuge in timeless abstract socialist formulas, hoping that the working class will spontaneously find its way to its new leadership like the International Communist Union (ICU-Lutte Ouvriere).

Revolutionaries all over the world have a duty to re-examine the nature of revolutionary politics and the decisive lessons of the last 50 years of international class struggle.

The first question that has to be answered is how the Trotskyist movement and the Fourth International degenerated and fragmented.

2 **The Fourth International definitively sank into centrism at the Third Congress of 1951 and disintegrated as a centralised International in 1953. From this date the Fourth International ceased to exist. In its place federations of centrist groupings have continued to survive.**

Despite the errors and accommodations of certain sections, the collapse of the Fourth International was not due to any betrayal of revolutionary internationalism during the Second World War, but rather due to a disorientation caused by the outcome of the war and a false re-adjustment of programme and tactics between 1948 and 1951.

A series of events falsified Trotsky's perspective and

prognosis for the post-war period: the triumph of the "democratic" imperialist bourgeoisies and the Kremlin bureaucracy in World War Two; the overthrow of capitalism in Eastern Europe and the triumph of the Chinese Stalinists and the subsequent stabilisation of capitalism.

The leaders of the Fourth International—Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel, Pierre Frank, Gerry Healy and James P Cannon—were unable to correct Trotsky's perspective and re-elaborate the programme to take account of these developments. In the name of preserving Trotsky's 1939-40 perspective of breakdown and collapse for capitalism, bourgeois democracy and Stalinism, they revised the strategic and tactical method of Trotsky.

They maintained that the post-war perspective remained one of imminent catastrophe. Sanctifying Trotsky's erroneous perspective they revised his most important programmatic contributions. Events appeared to falsify a literal and dogmatic interpretation of Trotsky's characterisation of Stalinism as counter-revolutionary: how was it possible for Tito and Mao to overthrow capitalism? The pioneering capitulation came in 1948 when, following the Tito-Stalin split, the International Secretariat hailed Tito as a centrist and Yugoslavia as a workers' state needing no political revolution.

Thereafter the Fourth International leadership analysed Stalinism's bureaucratic overturns of capitalism in such a way as to draw a qualitative distinction between those in most of Eastern Europe and those in Yugoslavia and thereafter in China. The former were explained as being due to the expansion of the original workers' state and thus entailing no recognition of a revolutionary role for Stalinism. Yugoslavia and China presented the real problem: if Stalinism remained counter-revolutionary then the CPs which led the revolutions in these countries could not be Stalinist. A theory had to be developed to explain how they had transformed themselves.

Pablo and the International leadership impressionistically understood the outbreak of the Cold War to mean that a combined Third World War and revolution was approaching. The weakness of the Fourth International was unimportant because the tasks of the revolutionary party would be carried out by the objective process.

The coming economic crisis-war-revolution would transform Stalinist, social democratic and petit bourgeois nationalist parties into centrist parties capable of making revolutions and creating workers' states which, despite their deformations, were superior to the degenerated Soviet state.

In the name of avoiding sectarian isolation the programme of Trotskyism was reduced to a historic icon and replaced by a systematic accommodation to Stalinism, social democracy and petit bourgeois or bourgeois nationalism. This centrist method was codified in the main theses and resolutions of the Third World Congress in 1951, and the subsequent leaders of the major currents subscribed to these positions.

Shortly after the Congress the new centrist line was tested in the fire of the Bolivian Revolution. The Bolivian section, the POR, which had considerable influence amongst the strategic mining proletariat, supported the installation of the bourgeois nationalist MNR government. Allowing for the Fourth International's small size, this was a betrayal similar to the Comintern's support

for Chiang Kai Shek in the Chinese Revolution of 1926-28. Yet no section within the Fourth International opposed this.

The FI did not split or fragment due to these events, nor due to a belated yet principled fight against revisionism. Conflict arose from the logical carrying through of the tactic associated with pressuring the Stalinists, social democrats and nationalists: entrism of a special type (*sui generis*).

Unlike Trotsky's "French Turn", this tactic required the sections to enter Stalinist, Social Democratic and "petit bourgeois" nationalist parties and create "centrist currents" with centrist policies, not revolutionary factions.

It was not this method *per se* that provoked resistance. Rather it was the prospect and fear of entry into Stalinist parties by those sections which had already adapted to trade union bureaucracies and to social democratic or even bourgeois nationalist parties.

The "International Committee" (IC) revolt by Bleibtreu, Cannon, Healy, Moreno and Lambert was fatally flawed. It built into its foundations the centrist method of the 1951 positions vis-à-vis Stalinism and other alien class forces. Further, the SWP bounced the IC groups into deserting the Fourth International before its Fourth Congress, reflecting a profound national centred, federal approach to the whole question of the International.

The IC failed to deepen its very partial critique into a revolutionary analysis. It rested content with attacking "Pabloism". It utterly refused to re-constitute a democratic centralist Trotskyist international counterposed to Pablo and Mandel's pseudo-Fourth International.

Whereas the IS was Stalinophile, the IC was Stalinophobic. In Latin America they liquidated their organisation into the forces of the national bourgeoisie. In Argentina for example Moreno carried out an even more rightist policy than that of the IS representative Posadas. The thread of revolutionary continuity was broken.

The Fourth International no longer exists and has not existed for over a third of a century. We reject the view that it exists like some mystical essence through its fragments; or that today's warring centrist federations constitute a "family of Trotskyism" or a "world Trotskyist movement".

Likewise we reject the national isolationist method that the FI should not have been built, was a desperate gamble, and that internationals can only be built by federating "strong national sections" (ICU, ISO). We reject the idea that the "Fourth International" is in crisis because it is not sufficiently proletarian, as Lutte Ouvrière claim.

We also reject the vulgar sociological approach of Ramos (PORE-Spain), who declared the Fourth International "rebuilt" in 1976 (it subsequently fragmented and dissolved itself) and today wants to reunite what it designates the "proletarian" fragments of the Fourth International (Moreno's PST, Guillermo Lora's POR, Jorge Altamira's Partido Obrero) against the petit bourgeois elements (Mandel and the USFI). This workerism reflects an opportunist pragmatism and a scorn for an intransigent revolutionary fight for theory, programme and principles.

3 The key question for revolutionary regroupment is that of the revolutionary programme.

In the question of the international as in the question of parties we stand by Trotsky's injunction "programme first"! An international world party of social revolution must, and in our epoch can only, be built on the basis of an international programme.

Trotsky's Transitional Programme was based on the lessons of the immediately preceding decades and the experience of the Russian Revolution and of the revolutionary Comintern. It overcame the gap between immediate and socialist demands. In addition to this methodological advance it extended the Marxist programme to cover the new task of combating the bureaucratic degeneration of a workers' state. The Transitional Programme combined perspectives and programme, strategy and tactics into a revolutionary whole.

More than fifty years on our programme again needs to be extended and developed using the fundamental method and doctrine of the 1938 document. Only hopeless sectarians or cynical opportunists could maintain that a programme written over half a century ago could be sufficient to guide us in all today's conditions.

Are there no lessons to be learned from the massive expansion of Stalinism and from its death agony? Does the transformation of the colonial empires into four decades of a semi-colonial system have nothing to teach us? Do the emergence of mass movements of the socially oppressed not create new problems and new opportunities?

We are opposed to the revision of the fundamental method and demands of the Transitional Programme, or its conversion into a set of abstract principles which have no application to the class struggle.

Lenin did not build the Third International solely on the basis of the Communist Manifesto and Leon Trotsky did not found the Fourth International on the basis of the first four congresses of the Comintern alone. These correct and essential documents were no longer sufficient to explain the new phenomena or to select and train new cadres and sections. New programmes had to be re-elaborated.

Despite formal adherence to the Transitional Programme Trotsky's epigones have, in their practice, thoroughly revised it. The USFI and IC traditions reprinted the Transitional Programme but never utilised its methods and demands.

Other tendencies (ISO, UCI) frankly discarded it and rejected some of its basic pillars (transitional demands, the united front or the class character of the degenerate workers states, etc), returning to a caricature of the economism and spontaneism of the early 1900s.

The necessary leadership (national and international) will be forged in the fight to develop such an international revolutionary programme and win the masses to it.

Such a leadership is essential for the founding of a democratic centralist revolutionary international. To re-establish a real methodological continuity with Trotsky's Fourth International requires a critique of the errors and crimes of his epigones since 1951, not for historical curiosity, but so such errors can be avoided and the entire rotten method uprooted.

4 In the imperialist epoch the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois revolution cannot be resolved in the historic interests of the toiling masses except under the leadership of the proletariat.

The proletariat cannot restrict its class struggle to a "democratic stage" involving the resolution of the agrarian question, the ending of national oppression or disunity and the achievement of full democratic rights and liberties. Only the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship, in alliance with all the oppressed classes and strata, can ensure that these questions are resolved.

The slogan of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" is obsolete. Its revival by "left" Stalinists or ex-"Trotskyists" (SWP-USA) only prepares a Menshevik noose for the working class. The objective necessity of the revolution in permanence must, however, be translated into a conscious strategy by the proletarian party.

Centrist Trotskyists of both the IS (Pablo Mandel) and IC (Healy, SWP-US, Lambert, Moreno) traditions have turned permanent revolution into an objective process which uses differing leaderships—Stalinist, petit bourgeois nationalist or centrist—to achieve its ends. The inevitable result has been the capitulation of the proletarian vanguard to alien class forces.

The political and organisational independence of the revolutionary party from bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalism must be fought for in all phases of the struggle.

The experience of the Kuomintang and all subsequent bourgeois nationalist parties and fronts in the semi-colonial and colonial countries has shown the absolute necessity of the revolutionary party and of its complete organisational and political independence from all forms of bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalism.

We condemn as unprincipled the political support given to such movements by the centrist FI. The International as a whole did this with regard to the MNR during the Bolivian revolution of 1962 and thereafter the different centrist fragments repeated this method; thus in Algeria the IS capitulated towards the FLN and the IC towards the MNA). In the 1950s the IC section, the Morenoites assimilated to Peronism in Argentina and Belaundism in Peru.

The USFI has made similar adaptations: in Cuba with regard to the Castroites, in El Salvador (FMLN), in Iran (Khomeini), in Grenada (NJM) and in Ireland (IRA). The Healyites used the same method to adapt to the PLO, Khomeini, Gadaffi and the Ba'athists. The USFI, the LIT, the IC and the FI-ICR all tailed and adapted themselves to the FSLN.

5 The proletarian vanguard must seek unity in action with petit bourgeois or even bourgeois forces, whenever or wherever they are in actual combat against imperialism's military, political or economic oppression and exploitation of the semi-colonial and colonial countries.

As long as imperialism supports or installs regimes compliant with its wishes in the semi-colonial countries and as long as it economically exploits them, broad strata

of non-proletarian classes—the peasantry and the urban petit bourgeois—will be driven into struggle around slogans of nationalism and democracy.

Even sections of the indigenous exploiting classes and their military and ideological representatives may, from time to time, be driven to oppose this or that action of imperialism despite the fact that in general these classes act as agents for imperialism within their respective countries.

When battle is joined between these nationalist forces and imperialism or its local agents the proletariat cannot remain neutral, it has to engage in and indeed initiate joint actions against imperialism. At the same time it must maintain its absolute class independence—observing the principle “march separately—strike together”.

The Leninist position of “unconditional but critical support” means unconditional support for all those fighting against imperialism combined with the duty to politically combat the overall strategy and methods of struggle of these movements.

We defend the tactic used by Lenin, Trotsky and the revolutionary Comintern—the anti-imperialist united front. But we reject the opportunist distortions of this tactic that aim at creating popular fronts with the “anti-imperialist” bourgeoisie up to and including forming “popular” or democratic bourgeois governments.

This distortion is not only typical of the Stalinists but also of various “Trotskyist” fragments. All of the Fourth Internationalist groups in Bolivia, for example, supported “co-government” between the COB and the MNR in 1952, the CODEP in 1965-66 and the FRA in 1971-72. We reject the concept of a strategic bloc with the national bourgeoisie in the semi-colonial world.

Partido Obrero (Altamira) of Argentina call for the election of a common presidential candidate and election platform with openly bourgeois forces. The FI-IC offer electoral support to bourgeois forces calling on them to form a government and suspend payment of the external debt. United action must not be a pretext for the confusion programmes.

The proletariat can never give political support to a bourgeois government nor set itself the object of installing one. It must never renounce its objective of establishing its own class rule. Tactical alliances must not become strategic ones, that is, popular fronts. The working class must reject the deceitful slogans and ideology of nationalism and populism (Sun Yat Senism, Arab nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, Sandinism etc.)

The answer to the centrists’ abandonment of an elementary class standpoint is not to reject the anti-imperialist united front tactic. Sectarian rejection of the anti-imperialist united front is generally the other side of the coin of opportunist or pro-imperialist positions.

The international Spartacist tendency (iSt — today International Communist League — ICL) and its splinter groups refused to support Argentina or Iran when these countries were at war with imperialism or with its puppets.

But at the same time the iSt maintains illusions in the non-bourgeois character of the Nicaraguan state. The LIT’s criticism of the anti-imperialist united front is only an orthodox cover for its own participation in democratic or popular fronts, or worse, entry into openly bourgeois parties (Peronism or Belaundism).

6 In all anti-imperialist struggles we have the clear perspective of the fight for a workers and peasants’ government: an anti-capitalist government based on workers’ councils and militias. A resolute fight is needed against opportunist distortions of the “workers’ government” and “workers’ and peasants’ government” slogans.

The only workers’ and peasants’ government which it is possible for communists to give political support to, or under certain circumstances to participate in, is one which emerges out of a period of victorious mass struggles and is based on armed working class and peasant organs of struggle. It must be a government committed to defending the workers’ organisations and solving the political and economic crisis at the expense of the bourgeoisie.

The most elementary programme of such a government must consist of arming the proletariat, disarming the counter-revolutionary bourgeois organisations, expropriating all capitalists who sabotage production, installing workers’ supervision over production and ensuring that the burden of taxation falls on the rich not on the workers and peasants. It must actively support the struggles of workers and peasants internationally, seeking to spread the revolution.

We reject the concept that a workers’ and peasants’ government distinct from the government of a revolutionary Bolshevik majority is a necessary or inevitable stage on the road to the proletarian dictatorship. The exceptional circumstances in which left reformist or centrist forces might be forced to install a government independent of the bourgeoisie and transitional to the proletarian dictatorship does not mean that we set such a goal at the apex of our programme. Such a government will, if it is not rapidly replaced by a communist-led administration, either itself move to the right and attack the working class or fall victim to an attack from counter-revolutionary forces.

We also reject the identification of the workers’ government slogan with the call for the formation of governments of reformist parties or unions. Whilst it is legitimate to call on the masses to put the reformist leaders to the test of government, we always explain that such a government would be bourgeois in its policies and actions. Centrists have mistakenly claimed that a normal parliamentary administration can carry out socialist policies (FI-ICR, Healyism, CWI) or that trade union bodies can create a proletarian dictatorship (“COB or Solidarnosc to power” in Bolivia and Poland respectively, as advanced by the POR(Lora) or the LIT).

In revolutionary situations where mass workers’ organisations exist it is necessary to call upon and mobilise the workers to force them to take the power. But at the same time we must expose their counter-revolutionary programme, announce that we will constitute an opposition and make clear that our “support” is limited to defending them against reaction.

We reject the LIT’s use of the call for governments of popular fronts without capitalists (e.g. the IU in Argentina or the FSLN) as a synonym for the workers’ and peasants’ government. We reject the call for bourgeois “left” governments (FI-ICR), or for governments based on a capitalist constituent assembly (USFI, LIT, FI-ICR

in Peru 1978). We also reject the LIT's call for a government of the "Comando del No" with Patricio Alwyn in Chile. We condemn any call for governments which are not workers' governments.

We fight for the overthrow of the entire capitalist class. We cannot link our call for the overthrow of a particular cabinet or bourgeois president to the formation of a new bourgeois government. In Peru the FI-ICR want to replace Fujimori with a new government from a parliament dominated by neo-liberals. In Argentina the LIT want to replace the president with a candidate drawn from the bourgeois congress.

We condemn the entry of worker ministers into any bourgeois government. It is impossible to change the nature of the bourgeois state by putting ministers into a bourgeois government.

We condemn Lora's attempts to join the 1952 and 1970s Bolivian bourgeois nationalist cabinets, Política Obrera's call for a Peronist worker's cabinet alongside the Campora presidency in 1973, etc.

We completely reject the characterisation of a government which is openly committed to defending "mixed economy" capitalism and which attacks workers' organisations and the right to strike, as a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government. We thus reject the USFI's designation of the Sandinista government as having been a "proletarian dictatorship".

Such a characterisation is both absurd and reactionary. Even after the transferral of power to the right wing UNO government of Violeta Chamorro in the 1990 elections, the USFI continue to maintain this absurd fiction because the Sandinistas continue to control the army high command. The USFI are oblivious to the fact that Sandinista general Ortega declared his loyalty to the UNO government and has attacked those fighting to maintain the gains of the 1979 revolution.

7 It is necessary to mobilise the masses under transitional and immediate slogans corresponding to the concrete situation in each country.

The transitional programme consists of an interlinked series of demands which, in their entirety, constitute an overt and direct challenge to capitalist rule. These demands address the fundamental objective needs of the masses. Their validity is not dependent on their acceptability to the reformist consciousness of the masses, nor are they invalidated if the capitalist or bureaucrats are forced to grant them.

Transitional demands seek to organise the masses independently of the open political representatives of the bourgeoisie and their reformist agents within the labour bureaucracy. Each transitional demand embodies a fight for some element of direct workers' control over the capitalists or the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Transitional demands are both the means of transition from today's immediate struggles to a revolutionary assault on the whole capitalist regime or bureaucratic dictatorship and they are a means of educating and organising workers in the tasks of the transition to socialism itself.

But revolutionaries are not sectarians: we fight for minimum demands, and in every partial struggle we are

the most thorough and most meticulous tacticians and organisers. We stand in the front line trenches of every struggle of the working class, no matter how partial: it would be false to counterpose the transitional programme to the existing struggles of the masses.

It is a centrist distortion of the transitional programme to separate individual demands from the interlinked system and present them as thinly disguised isolated trade union demands. Similarly any attempt to present transitional demands as "structural reforms" (USFI) of capitalism is grossly opportunist.

We reject the method of the CWI which presents transitional demands to the working class as good reforms winnable under capitalism but, in the privacy of its own meetings, declares that if these demands are fought for and won then capitalism will be overthrown.

We oppose the centrist distortion of the workers' control element of transitional demands into joint participation schemes with the bosses (workers' co-ops, autogestion on the Pablo model, Lora's majority co-gestion, workers' plans on the model advanced by the USFI for the Lucas engineering company in Britain).

We oppose the "Third period" ultimatism which characterised the SLL/WRP and the POR(Lora). Centristism treats the programme as a box of tricks all of which can be played on the working class in order to help build the sect.

Tactics are separated from principles. Principles become dogma, tactics become opportunist adaptation to alien class forces and their programmes. The very purpose of transitional demands is to mobilise the masses against capitalism. The task of the revolutionary vanguard, therefore, is to use particular demands in the immediate struggles of the masses within the context of a fight for the programme as a whole.

8 Where the ruling classes attempt to deny democratic rights we mobilise around revolutionary democratic slogans.

Transitional demands must be supplemented by revolutionary democratic demands whenever there is a struggle against the remnants of pre-capitalist agrarian relations, against national oppression or against openly pro-imperialist dictatorship (Bonapartism—both military and civilian, fascism and all anti-democratic methods of rule within parliamentary democracies). Key revolutionary democratic demands include support for the struggle for democracy, for the constituent assembly, for liberties of the press, trade union rights or other kinds of democratic slogans.

Revolutionary democratic demands retain their full force even against left Bonapartist regimes (e.g. FSLN, Velasco, Nasser), wherever these regimes restrict the freedom of organisation and action of the working class and the progressive petit bourgeoisie.

We reject the method which sees the struggle for democratic demands as synonymous with the struggle for workers' power. This method presents the achievement of a democratic constituent assembly as the strategic path to establishing a workers' and peasants' government (FI-ICR, USFI and LIT in Peru 1978-80; FI-ICR world-wide today).

9 The crowning slogan of the programme of transitional demands is the call for workers' councils (soviets).

Workers' councils draw in representatives of all those groups and strata fighting for the revolution, and co-ordinate the struggles of these groups. They are the highest organisational form of the class struggle and are embryonic organs of working class power. The fight for workers' or workers' and peasants' councils remains a central task in revolutionary situations.

These bodies must draw in the organised proletariat and the oppressed strata—the unemployed, the sub-proletariat and the impoverished petit bourgeoisie, women workers and housewives, shanty town organisations and tenants' groups, peasant organisations, poor peasants and agricultural proletarians as well as the rank and file soldiers.

They must organise on the basis of the widest democracy with complete freedom for all parties which enjoy the support of the toiling masses with the exception of fascist parties. During an open conflict with the class enemy we would propose the exclusion of those parties or their delegates which flout or sabotage the decisions of the workers' councils and those actively involved in spying and other counter-revolutionary activities.

Where other embryonic forms of proletarian state power exist which can embrace the mass of the exploited and oppressed (e.g. the factory committees in Germany 1923) we do not counterpose the building of workers' councils. Rather we strive to extend these embryonic forms into real workers' councils, as with the self-management committees and Solidarnosc committees in Poland in 1981 or the the trade union rank and file committees in Bolivia in 1985.

Attempts to find a substitute for workers' or workers' and peasants' councils inevitably leads to a capitulation to alien class forces (e.g. in Poland 1981 the USFI adapted to Solidarnosc and its second parliamentary chamber strategy; they had previously made a similar adaptation to the MFA in Portugal in 1974-5).

We reject the position that organs of "popular power" can be substitutes for workers' and peasants' councils where these organs are thinly disguised, powerless transmission belts for left Bonapartist regimes—for example Communal Councils of Nicaragua and Grenada (1979-83), where they are based on delegates nominated by trade union federations (1971 Bolivian Peoples' Assembly) or are bureaucratised and with limited mass support (Peruvian ANP).

We reject the classification of primarily trade union organisations as substitute workers' councils (Solidarnosc or the Bolivian COB outside of the 1952 revolutionary situation).

The classification of existing bureaucratised trade union bodies as workers' councils has been used by the LIT, FI(ICR), Politica Obrera and the POR-Lora as a way of avoiding the fight for workers' councils in order to avoid confronting the reformist trade union leaders.

We reject the idea that "popular assemblies" made up of delegates chosen by the trade union bureaucracy or cabildos hegemonised by them or by representatives of the bourgeois or petit bourgeois parties can be characterised as workers' councils. Only bodies elected by the rank

and file of the workers, peasants and the urban poor merit this characterisation.

In 1971 the POR(Lora), the Lambertists, Politica Obrera, and Varga all made such an adaptation to the Bolivian People's Assembly (Varga called it the first workers' council in Latin America). The USFI, LIT and the FI-ICR characterised the Peruvian Popular National Assembly as the embryo of a new state, demanding all power be granted to it. If these bodies are not simply a bureaucratic diversion revolutionaries demand that they are transformed into workers' councils through election by rank and file assemblies, that their delegates be accountable and immediately recallable by their electors, that they form armed workers' militias etc.

10 We defend the Leninist-Trotskyist strategy of armed insurrection. This is the only way that the working class can take power into the hands of its councils. For the insurrection to succeed the revolutionary party must win the support of the peasants, the urban poor and the rank and file of the army.

The only way to defeat the bourgeois army is to accelerate the class struggle between the rank and file soldiers and NCOs, and the officer corps. We fight for political and trade union rights inside the army and police force, with the aim of creating soldiers' councils allied to the workers' movement.

We reject the political support given to left Bonapartist coup-makers by Posadas, the USFI and Lora. We reject the current policy of the POR(Lora) which is aimed at winning a whole sector of the officer corps by demanding higher salaries for officers, the "nationalisation" of the army and the recreation of the "true national frontiers" (ie the restoration of previous annexations by neighbouring countries).

We fight for militias of the workers, poor peasants and the petit bourgeoisie. These could emerge from strike pickets or from self-defence committees against state repression or against large scale criminal activity. We have to resist all attempts by the bourgeois state to limit such militias or integrate them into the state. They have to be under the democratic control and mandate of rank and file assemblies and be expanded and centralised onto a regional and national level.

Trotskyists reject guerrilla warfare as a strategy because it isolates, politically and physically, the revolutionary fighters from the proletariat. Its methods—concentration of decisive forces in rural or urban guerrilla war—cannot be participated in by the mass of the working class.

These methods easily degenerate into banditry in the countryside and individual terrorism in the cities. They objectively act as a provocation, giving the bourgeois state a pretext to smash the proletarian mass organisations. Some guerrilla organisations, especially of the Stalinist variety, (e.g. Sendero Luminoso) have used assassination and terror against the leaders of workers' organisations under the pretext of fighting reformism.

Whilst Trotskyists must defend petit bourgeois revolutionaries against bourgeois state repression and may themselves tactically utilise subordinated guerrilla operations in circumstances where they will assist and not

stand in contradiction to the mass struggles and armed militias of the working class, we completely reject the bankrupt guerrillaist strategy in all its varieties.

All guerilla based armies have had their main roots in classes other than the proletariat. The results of their struggles have been many and varied, but none has resulted in the creation of a healthy workers' state based on workers' councils. Some—e.g. the Colombian M-19—have compromised with, and surrendered to, the bourgeoisie.

Other movements have led to bloody catastrophe for the urban and rural masses (Malaya in the 1950s, Indonesia in 1976, various countries in South America during the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, Kampuchea 1974-79). Others again have created Bonapartist nationalist regimes that later became pro-imperialist (Algeria, Angola). In exceptional circumstances (China, Vietnam, Cuba) they have resulted in the creation of a degenerate workers' state where the working class does not hold political power.

The Guevarist conception seeks to substitute an armed petit bourgeois elite, the foco, for the workers' party, workers' councils and militias.

The Maoist "peoples war" strategy seeks to suppress the independence of the working class struggle, subordinating it to the peasantry and tying it to a Stalinist democratic stage. Both these strategies are popular frontist, seeking to share governmental power with a wing of the bourgeoisie.

Certain Castroite groups have used guerrilla warfare to win themselves a place in bourgeois political life (FMLN, ELN, FARC). Despite its extreme sectarian radicalism, Sendero Luminoso's strategy is linked to the project of an alliance with native capitalists, especially in the coca growing areas.

Despite our principled opposition to the guerrilla strategy we condemn any support for bourgeois repressive actions such as the LIT's letters of condolence to officers "murdered" by the guerrillas during the seizure of the Tablada Barracks in Argentina in 1989, or the involvement of USFI leader Socorro Ramirez in the government's "peace commission", which was used as a cover for the massacre of the guerrilla forces when they failed to surrender promptly.

We condemn the USFT's capitulation to this guerrillaist tendency, especially in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, and that of the IC Latin American sections in the early 1960s. We condemn the USFT's continued equivocation on this question, namely its effective endorsement of the guerrillaist strategies of the ANC, Philippines Communist Party, IRA, ETA and others.

11 We are for systematic communist fraction work in the proletarian mass organisations, especially the trade unions. We recognise that it is also necessary to apply the tactic of the workers' united front within the trade unions with the aim of transforming them into revolutionary instruments in the struggle against capitalism. We argue for a trade union rank and file movement against the bureaucracy on the basis of action programmes which orient to the current tasks of the working class.

The trade union bureaucracy is a privileged caste which arbitrates and negotiates within the framework of capitalism. In the imperialist epoch it is increasingly turned into an economic police force over the working class.

We are for the construction of alliances of rank and file militants to oust the reformist bureaucrats in the struggle to democratise the trade unions, turn them into fighting industrial unions and unite them into one big union confederation. Communists must struggle for revolutionary leadership with the avowed aim of transforming the trade unions into organs of struggle against capitalism.

We reject the tactic of building organisations which act primarily as electoral machines for left talking candidates but fail to transform the unions themselves into real organs of struggle (USFI), or of burrowing away within the unions and gaining positions of leadership without fighting for, or even revealing, "Trotskyist" politics (PCI-Lambert).

We reject the building of "class struggle left wings" which are aimed primarily at winning over "left" bureaucrats by curbing criticisms of their vacillations, errors and betrayals.

We reject the syndicalist approach to rank and file movements which merely tails the immediate demands of the workers and rejects the key task of mobilising rank and file workers for struggle around transitional demands and under the leadership of the communists.

In the unions and workplaces we fight for workers' control over the production process and against the bosses' attempts to manage production in their interests. Workplace organisations, including factory committees, have a vital role to play in this struggle.

But we also reject a syndicalist-style counterposition of rank and file or base committees to national trade unions as such or to centralised leadership in the unions. Such a position has been taken up by some "Trotskyists", especially with regards to the Coordinations in France and the Cobas movement in Italy.

We reject any mimicking of the Stalinist Third Period policy of forming red unions out of the minority of militant or revolutionary workers. The forerunner of Lutte Ouvrière adopted this line following the Renault strike of 1947. Today they tend to set up their own local and even national strike committees and counterpose them to the unions (1987 railway strike, 1988 health strike).

Communists should stand for the maintenance of trade union unity so as not to be excluded from the masses of reformist workers by the bureaucracy. Of course if the democratically chosen leaders of workers are expelled by the reformist bureaucrats for leading struggles we are in favour of union branches defying the leaders up to and including forming a new union.

But we defend ourselves against the reformists' charge of having split the union's strength by proposing unity in action and re-unification of the unions on a democratic basis.

12 The popular front implies the surrender of working class interests and of the proletariat's fighting capacity to the interests of the bourgeoisie. Far

from fighting fascism or reaction it prostrates the proletariat before them.

Stalinist and social democratic parties are willing to form electoral pacts or governmental coalitions with openly bourgeois parties. Stalinism systematised this policy with the strategy of the popular front. This "noose around the neck of the proletariat" is disastrous in all situations and especially so in a pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation (France 1936, Spain 1936-39, Chile 1973 etc).

Revolutionaries must give no political support to a popular front but must fight within the mass workers' organisations for a break with the bourgeoisie and all its parties. Revolutionaries must use the varied tactics of the workers' united front to aid the breaking up of the "people's front" with the bourgeoisie. This may necessitate entering mass base organs of a popular front and fighting to expel the bourgeois parties. However we reject entry by revolutionary organisations into the bourgeois parties themselves.

Only firmness in principle but flexibility in tactics can avoid either adaptation or self-isolation. We defend all democratic rights of the masses against military, Bonapartist or fascist coup d'états.

Where an "anti-imperialist" regime finds itself under attack by the pro-imperialist military, a temporary united front with forces defending it will be necessary unless the working class is in a situation to take power immediately.

In such circumstances, faced with an imminent putsch we would not agitate for the immediate overthrow of such governments, whilst insisting on this a strategic necessity. But as with the case of the Bolsheviks and the Kornilov Coup, this tactic must not express confidence or political support for such governments or the abandonment of the struggle for a workers' and peasants' government.

13 **Fascism is not just any form of bourgeois reaction, any military or Bonapartist regime. It is a movement of the plebeian classes, the reactionary petit bourgeoisie and the lumpenproletariat, maddened by a deep and prolonged political and economic crisis of capitalism and the inability of the proletariat to resolve it because of its reformist or centrist misleadership. This movement is utilised by the bourgeoisie to smash the workers' movement and atomise the proletariat.**

The answer to fascism is not a separate struggle or stage of "anti-fascism" or "the defence of democracy". Revolutionaries must defend the democratic rights of the masses but not the "democratic right" of the bourgeoisie to exploit the workers.

The only strategic answer to fascism is the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship. The anti-fascist struggle can and must be the beginning of an uninterrupted struggle for workers' power.

Revolutionaries should always argue: no platform for fascists. It is neither possible nor permissible to conduct a dialogue with fascism. Fascism threatens the very existence of the workers' organisations. We have to explain the importance of smashing fascism to all class conscious workers.

We fight for a workers' united front against fascism, including the unions and the workers' parties, however reformist. We fight to bring into this united front the mass organisations of the national minorities, the racially and sexually oppressed and even any religious minorities singled out for persecution and pogrom by the fascist bands. The genuinely popular strata of students, the petit bourgeoisie and the sub-proletariat can also find their place in such a united front.

We fight for the creation of an armed workers' militia that can take defensive and offensive action against the armed hirelings of capital. Through such a united front we seek to smash the fascists and to expose the reformist and centrist leaders, to deprive them of the support of the masses and to win the proletariat and its allies to the struggle for power.

We condemn the tactics of groups like the Militant and the SWP in Britain or the LCR (USFD), the PCI (FI-ICR) and Lutte Ouvrière in France who refuse to implement a no platform position or who promote or support popular front style "anti-fascist campaigns" (Anti-Nazi League or SOS Racisme).

14 **Democratic institutions—parliaments, municipal councils etc—are part of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Their purpose is to deceive the masses that the exploiters' rule is "the government of the people, by the people, for the people". Revolutionaries participate in elections whilst the masses still entertain illusions in them, to shatter these illusions and to prepare the overthrow of the bourgeois state including its parliamentary institutions.**

We reject the policy of the USFI, the FI(ICR) and the LIT that treat bourgeois parliaments or constituent assemblies as if they were workers' councils or could be persuaded to act like workers' councils, as they did in Peru in 1978.

Wherever materially possible revolutionaries put forward candidates on their full action programme for working class power. They reject with contempt the arguments of the centrists and reformists that this breaks "the united front against reaction" or that they should subscribe to an immediate, practical programme of reforms. Nor do we support the drawing up of confused centrist programmes by blocs of small sects.

Wherever the forces of revolutionary communism are too weak to stand candidates and the masses still put their confidence in reformist or centrist workers parties we can utilise the tactic of giving critical support to such candidates at the polls.

We do not express any political support for their programme or the slightest confidence in their future actions in government. We mobilise the workers to put class demands on their leaders and to resist their attacks when and if they become the bourgeois government.

In any forced choice between rival reformist parties we do not ask which of them has the "best" programme but which has the strongest roots amongst the most combative and class conscious layers of the workers.

Such support would be impermissible where the proletariat and its vanguard were in open and direct conflict with the reformist party and where the latter was seeking

an electoral mandate to crush the workers.

This critical support for reformist and centrist workers' parties can never be extended to parties or presidential candidates of the bourgeoisie. We condemn the electoral support given to Paz-Estensoro/Siles by the POR and the whole Fourth International in 1951.

We equally reject the support given to Frondizi and Belaunde by Moreno in the 1950s, to the Argentinian UP by Politica Obrera (Altamira), to Cauatehmoc Cardenas in Mexico by the FI(ICR) and to the nakedly pro-imperialist politicians Aquino, Alwyn and Fujimori by the USFI or its sections.

The only circumstances in which it is permissible to call for a vote for petit bourgeois parties is when they are actually leading a serious struggle against imperialism and where the election has the character of a referendum against imperialist rule or national oppression, or could act to block a reactionary settlement in a constituent assembly etc. (e. g. Northern Ireland, Namibia, Palestine).

We reject the anti-parliamentary cretinism typical of the anarchists but taken up by those like Lora in Bolivia after the POR's electoral fiasco in 1985. Active boycott campaigns are usually justified only in periods where the masses are mobilising for direct revolutionary struggle.

In no circumstances can we give critical support to a popular front list in a governmental election. A popular front is a class collaborationist coalition in which the mass workers' parties and/or the trade unions form an alliance with the parties of the bourgeoisie to support its programme and class power.

Our tactic towards such popular fronts starts from the demand: workers' organisations break with the bourgeoisie! For this reason we reject the electoral support given to popular fronts by the centrist Trotskyists e. g. to the Chilean Popular Unity, the Uruguayan FA and the Brazilian FBP by the USFI and the LIT. Equally, however, we reject the sectarian position of refusing to vote for the candidates of a mass workers' party when it forms part of a popular front (iSt/ICL).

15 **The social democratic and Stalinist parties in the imperialist countries are bourgeois parties; more specifically bourgeois workers' parties. Their leadership, programme and organisations have a bourgeois political character, but these parties are organically linked to the working class through their proletarian origins, through trade unions/co-operatives, or through mass working class membership or electoral support.**

The united front tactic must be used to exploit the contradiction between the working class base and the leaders of these parties and break the rank and file away from the reformist leaders and programme.

We reject the views originating from "Third Period" Stalinism, Bordigism and Maoism which see social democracy as a bourgeois party no different from the Christian Democratic or Conservative parties. This view rejects the united front tactic or allows for it only "from below".

In all circumstances it is permissible to place demands on the established leaders of working class organisations.

Where revolutionaries are not sufficiently strong to form an independent party and where the relative

openness of the working class base of the reformist parties allows Trotskyists to fight openly for their politics, it is permissible and indeed desirable to carry out a revolutionary intervention.

Under certain conditions—extreme crisis and disintegration within the reformist parties or the formation of left centrist wings within them—Trotskyists may carry out a "French Turn", that is, total entry on a relatively short term basis. Where such conditions do not prevail it is permissible for revolutionaries to carry out fraction work on a relatively long term basis, whereby an open organisation is maintained but a portion of the organisation enters the reformist party and carries out systematic work within it including united front struggles, with the objective of building a revolutionary tendency inside the reformist party.

We reject the entry tactic as a strategy whereby Trotskyists conceal their real programme from the rank and file and enter into uncritical blocs with left reformists. This distortion of Trotskyism has been a central part of the practice of many of the degenerate fragments of the FI (LIT, IC, USFI etc).

The task of Trotskyists is to constitute a revolutionary wing, not to disguise themselves as left reformists or centrists. It is possible to form united fronts with left reformists or centrists, but not propaganda blocs—separate banners, separate contingents. We reject as right centrist the notion that the reformist

parties can be transformed into revolutionary parties, or that they can form governments "pledged to socialist policies" which can abolish capitalism (e.g. Militant-GB). We also reject the sectarian abstentionist position that entry into the reformist parties is *ipso facto* liquidationist (SWP(GB), Lutte Ouvrière etc). This sectarianism, akin to that of Hugo Oehler which Trotsky had to combat in the mid-1930s, conceals a gnawing fear of their own insufficient political differentiation from reformism.

We reject the centrist tactic of setting up propaganda blocs, centrist or left reformist parties. Trotskyists stand by their programme and do not dilute it by building an organisation on a purely reformist programme (e. g. the various "Workers' Parties" set up by the FI-ICR) or on the basis of demands selectively chosen from the programme of transitional demands but which exclude its crowning points: workers' councils, the workers' militia and the need for insurrection (e. g. the MAS and PO in Argentina).

We also reject the slogan of building "Revolutionary Fronts" like Moreno's FUR or Lora and Altamira's FRA, which are neither genuine united fronts, open to all mass workers organisations willing to fight together on a given issue or issues, nor are they the party the proletariat needs to make the revolution. Rather they are a criminal confusion of, and substitution for, both of these.

16 **We reaffirm Trotsky's position that Stalinism is a counter-revolutionary force within the world workers' movement.**

The fact that Stalinist or Stalinised armies, parties or popular front movements were able to overthrow capitalism in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, Korea,

Vietnam and Cuba does not invalidate Trotsky's characterisation of Stalinism as counter-revolutionary nor does it prove that those who overthrew capitalism were not Stalinists.

These overturns were qualitatively different from the October Revolution. They were bureaucratic social overturns that had an overall counter-revolutionary character: the working class was expropriated from political power from the outset and a parasitic caste blocked the use of the necessary political and economic weapons to advance towards socialism and world revolution. Without a political revolution the Stalinists inevitably led these states to collapse, even playing a key role in the restoration of capitalism.

Certain common features can be observed in the various Stalinist overturns. Firstly the Stalinists gained a military victory over an enfeebled and discredited bourgeois regime. Decisive armed power fell into their hands. They then sought a popular front governmental alliance with bourgeois forces, even if they were only a shadow of the bourgeoisie rather than a significant fraction of it.

The Stalinists sincerely proclaimed that they intended to preserve capitalism and defend it against the working class. The governments they formed were pro-capitalist, counter-revolutionary popular fronts if formed with bourgeois partners or reformist, counter-revolutionary workers governments if formed alone or with social democratic partners. The former sometimes gave way to the latter.

During this phase the Stalinists demobilised the working class movement, destroying or bureaucratising its independent class organisations, with the support of the local and world bourgeoisie. When the bourgeoisie, in turn, tried to remove the Stalinists from power by internal and external economic, political and military pressure, the Stalinists were obliged, in pure self-defence, to expel the remaining bourgeois political forces from the government. The state apparatus was then purged of all forces loyal to the capitalist class.

Assured that the proletariat could make no independent bid for power, a bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers government expropriated the bourgeoisie and created a bureaucratically planned economy on the Soviet model with the aid of the pre-existing workers' states. Such workers' states are bureaucratically degenerate, like the USSR. The only qualitative difference lies in the method of their creation—capitalism was not overthrown by a healthy proletarian revolution and never replaced by a regime of workers democracy organised in workers' councils.

The degenerate workers' state does not represent the embryonic form of a new mode of production as the bureaucratic collectivists claim. Those conceptions which argue that the forms of organisation of the degenerate workers' state are inherently progressive (USFI) are an adaptation to Stalinism. The degenerate workers' state contains gains which we defend, but which cannot, by definition, assure the welfare and prosperity of the masses. We reject those theories which argue that the USSR is some form of state capitalism (ISO) or a "new class" (modern versions of Shactmanism). Such analyses end up rejecting basic Marxist categories and cannot explain the current crisis of Stalinism. We reject the IC

position that Cuba has always been a bourgeois state and that Castro was merely a Chiang Kai Shek.

We also reject the idealist conception that only the USSR is a degenerate workers' state, the other Stalinist states being some form of capitalism (ICU). This view is completely undialectical, based on the notion that there can only be a workers' state—even degenerate—where there has been a workers' revolution. It is a recipe for impotence in intervening in other workers' states and cannot explain the fundamental identity of the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states.

17 Stalinism is the twin of social democracy, the "agent of world imperialism within the workers' state" (Trotsky).

Stalinism's roots lie in the ruling bureaucracy within the workers' states. This bureaucracy has either usurped power from the proletarian vanguard or prevented it from taking power even where capitalist rule has been abolished. It blocks the road to the creation of socialism both within the workers' states and by sabotaging the international spread of the revolution. Its politics are those of class collaboration and nationalism.

Stalinism's justification for its policy is the doctrine of "socialism in one country". This reactionary and utopian creed has laid the basis for the various "national(ist) roads to socialism" peddled by the Stalinist parties. It undermines the existence of the workers' states by preaching economic autarky in the era of the world market. The case of Kampuchea reveals just how devastating this policy can be when it is taken to its logical conclusion.

Other workers' states (Albania, Romania, China) have suffered economic catastrophes as a result of pursuing this programme. Since the mid-1920s "socialism in one country" has served the Soviet bureaucracy by subordinating the world revolution to the strategic and reactionary goal of "peaceful co-existence" with world imperialism, a policy which has cost the lives of millions of workers. Under no circumstances can Stalinism play a socialist, revolutionary role.

The bureaucracy's parasitism and its dictatorship (in form no better than a fascist one) at first slow, then block and finally reverse the transition to socialism. The worst crime of Stalinist rule is that it liquidates the proletarian vanguard and atomises the worker and poor peasant masses. Through its brutal repression and its mismanagement of the planned economy it almost completely destroys the proletariat's confidence in its historic gains and its willingness to defend them.

By usurping the prestige of the Leninist workers' state, the Stalinist bureaucracy sabotages the revolutionary struggles of the workers and peasants against capitalism and imperialism, supporting and then betraying them, treating them as bargaining counters with imperialism. Nevertheless for nearly half a century the bureaucracy was also obliged to defend, maintain, and even expand the workers' states as the basis of their own privileges and power. This embroiled the bureaucracy in a series of conflicts with the rapacious imperialist powers, which had never reconciled themselves to the existence of the workers' states.

Out of this dual role comes a dual tactic for the proletariat. Since the working class in all countries has a direct interest in the preservation of the historic gains—the planned property relations which were and are prerequisites for socialist construction—it is obliged to unconditionally defend these states against the forces of capitalist restoration.

The only strategic way of saving the planned property relations is to remove the parasitic stratum that is leading them to inevitable collapse and to smash its dictatorship over the working class. Only workers' council democracy and a democratic plan can save the workers' states from destruction.

The essence of Stalinism is defined by the programme of "socialism in one country" and a positive attitude to the degeneration of the USSR under Stalin. We reject the idea, originating in the FI after the war, that Stalinism means loyalty to the Kremlin or to the ruling caste of one specific degenerate workers' state. The followers of the IC from Bleibetreu-Favre ("Where is Comrade Pablo Going?" 1951) to Altamira (Politica Obrera—Argentina) have maintained that CPs that break with Moscow cease to be Stalinist, creating the illusion that CPs have changed their counter-revolutionary nature, becoming progressive centrists or even revolutionaries.

This position leads to the rejection of the political revolution and the denial of the Stalinist character of bureaucratic dictators such as Tito (FI), Mao (LIT, IC, USFI) or Castro (USFI, LIT, PO).

18 We reject "Stalinophobia"—a differential hostility to Stalinism over social democracy or other alien class influences. With its emphasis on Stalinism's supposedly monolithic nature for Stalinism ("counter-revolutionary through and through"), this policy has led to softness and accommodation to social democratic reformism. We also reject Stalinophilia—the notion that Stalinism has a "dual nature", that sometimes it acts in a revolutionary manner and sometimes in a counter-revolutionary manner, and that for specific stages or specific tasks (e.g. defence of the workers' states) it can be relied on or accorded a leading role.

After the war, the "successes" of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and China, together with the outbreak of the "cold war" led to Pablo's capitulationist theories. The world was divided into two "camps" with Stalinism representing the proletariat. The political consequences involved centrist errors of perspective ("war-revolution") and of programme (entrism sui generis and the abandonment of political revolution).

This line has been continued by the IS/USFI and by some within the IC "tradition". The SLL/WRP adapted to Maoism during the "Cultural Revolution", whilst the iSt tailed Moscow's bloody repression in Poland and Afghanistan during the "second cold war" period, and bemoaned the loss of Stalinist power in East Germany and the USSR after 1989.

The pressure of the cold war period and the brutal crushing by the Stalinists of workers' risings in East Germany and Hungary led the Stalinophobes—the FI-ICR, the Vargaites and in certain phases the LIT—to tail the existing leadership of the political revolution, even

where this consisted of clerical reactionaries (Walesa) or open restorationists (Yeltsin). They one-sidedly interpret the defeat of Stalinism as a total victory for the working class, since the so-called "chief prop of imperialism" within the working class has been destroyed, opening the way to revolutionary advance.

Stalinism's internal contradictions arise from its origins in the degeneration of a workers' state and from the parasitism of the ruling bureaucracy upon the nationalised and planned economy. Trotsky held that this gave the Stalinist bureaucracy a dual role. The two main pillars of the IC - Healy and Lambert - asserted that the Stalinist bureaucracy was counter-revolutionary "through and through".

The iSt/ICL, belatedly adopting Pablo's method, claim that Stalinism has a dual character which enables it sometimes to act in a progressive, sometimes in a reactionary way. Faced with the destruction of planned property relations Stalinophobe tendencies refuse all possibility of a united front with sections of Stalinism against the restorationists.

Similarly, stalinophiles such as the iSt/ICL and their brethren look to the Stalinist bureaucracy as the only possible defender of the planned property relations. Both tendencies misunderstand the contradictory nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which has a predominantly counter-revolutionary character.

To be true to Trotsky's method, revolutionaries must struggle against Stalinism in all the arenas of the class struggle. But this must not lead to a refusal to operate the united front tactic where the Stalinists act against the proletariats class enemies, if only for a moment, and where they (mis)lead sections of the proletariat. Despite the centrality of the programme of political revolution, a united front may prove necessary with the Stalinists, or a section of them, against restorationist forces, when and if the Stalinists are willing to defend the gains of the workers' state.

19 The caste rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy rested on a dictatorship over the working class and the systematic plunder of the planned property relations. The mismanagement of the planned economy in the USSR and Eastern Europe has brought it to a dead end. This has created a revolutionary crisis in which proletarian political revolution is the only alternative to social counter-revolution. The acute crisis of leadership has given the initiative to the restorationist forces, but their triumph is not assured or inevitable.

During its first two decades of existence the soviet economy was relatively dynamic. This was the result of working class enthusiasm for the building and defence of the workers' state, as well as due to the Stalinist terror which restrained the bureaucracy's parasitism. Acute crises of disproportion and disequilibrium existed, however, caused by the blind nature of command planning.

In the 1950s and 1960s the bureaucracy threw off the terror, replaced Stalinist "egalitarianism" with the promotion of inequalities and promise to duplicate the mass consumerism of the imperialist countries. Trapped within the confines of socialism in one country, the sclerotic bureaucracy was unable to catch up with the capitalist

world economy. The growth of the productive forces dipped below the average for the capitalist world. After 1975 chronic stagnation set in.

Leading sections of the bureaucracy increasingly lost faith in the centrally planned economy. Faced with no alternative, the Gorbachev leadership embarked on the fatal twin track of democratisation and marketisation. But the reforms of glasnost and perestroika did not dynamise the economy or raise productivity. They only produced chaos, nationalist agitation, strikes, and a challenge to the privileges and power of large sections of the bureaucracy.

The caste split into open factions. Bureaucratic conservatives who had no alternative to Gorbachev except to go slower and save their own jobs blocked the reforms. In the Republics of the oppressed nationalities the bureaucracy either split from Moscow and took on a nationalist character or was rapidly ousted.

The same process occurred in Eastern Europe. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the DDR, non-Stalinist restorationist forces used the economic failures of the old regime and national and democratic slogans to mobilise the masses and oust the bureaucracy from power.

In Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia the Stalinists renounced "communism", used nationalism as a legitimating ideology and retained their leadership of the workers and peasants on the basis of promising a restoration that would not harm their fundamental interests.

In all these states the proletariat today faces restorationist governments attempting to destroy the central planning and distribution mechanisms in order to allow the uninhibited operation of the law of value. A mixed economy of state capitalist trusts and private enterprises is the first stage after restoration. East Germany leapt into this stage by economic union, closely followed by political fusion with the premier European imperialism.

The other countries will follow a more agonising road: hyper-inflation, mass unemployment and the destruction of a majority of industry will all take place unless the proletariat acts. A profound revolutionary period involving revolutionary and counter-revolutionary situations will accompany the attempts at restoration. Revolutionaries must resolve the proletariat's crisis of leadership.

The planned property relations identify the bureaucratic regimes as having the class character of a workers' state. Stalinist political power and totalitarian dictatorship are not an essential feature. Stalinists can hold power for years without transforming the state they rule into workers' states (Eastern Europe 1945-1948). The driving of the Stalinists from political power does not mean that the workers' state has been transformed into a capitalist state.

As long as the decisive elements of the means of production remain state property and operate according to bureaucratic planning rather than the law of value, the workers' state has not been definitively overthrown. Large scale privatisation is not a necessary part of restoration. The restoration of capitalism centres on the destruction of the plan and its associated non-commercial banking and credit system.

When the decisive majority of the state trusts produce

on the basis of profitability or commercial loans then they assume a state capitalist character.

20

A political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy is necessary in all the degenerate workers' states. Integally combined with this task is the defence of the planned property relations against the restorationist forces and governments that have taken political power in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Independent working class parties with a Leninist-Trotskyist programme must be constructed to accomplish this successfully.

The task of the political revolution is to preserve and complete the dictatorship of the proletariat by destroying the dictatorship of the bureaucracy. In all states where the bureaucracy holds power either totally or partially, this remains the central task. In 1989-1991 revolutionary communist forces should have led the assault on the hated Stalinist dictatorships.

In their absence, pro-capitalist restorationist forces, at first cloaked as classless "democrats", were able to seize the initiative and establish their hegemony over the masses. It was essential to expose and break the hold of the restorationist forces. This was the case when the restorationists were fighting for democratic rights and even when Trotskyists stood in a limited bloc with them against the Stalinist tanks and secret police.

Without the destruction of the Stalinist dictatorship over the proletariat and the peasants no possibility of political revolution exists. This revolution cannot be accomplished by reforms alone: the bureaucracy has to be forcibly removed from power.

The bureaucratic-military state machine is not a capitalist state in terms of the property relations it defends (its class character). In its form and structure, however, it is an alien, bourgeois formation that needs to be smashed and replaced with the commune type semi-state envisaged by Marx, Engels and Lenin.

In Eastern Europe and the USSR a period of dual power between conservative bureaucratic elements resting on the planned property relations and the open restorationists resting on the new bourgeoisie was opened up by the revolutionary events of 1989-91. In general power has been vested in the bourgeois-democratic parliaments inherited from the Stalinists. The proletariat does not constitute an independent pole of this dual power. The new unions, which as yet only represent a minority of the proletariat, support the bourgeois restorationist faction.

We reject the opportunist and processist theory of the LIT that the whole of the period since 1989 constitutes a "February" stage of the political revolution which will evolve inevitably towards an "October".

This view ignores the reality that there are no workers' councils or revolutionary parties anywhere in Eastern Europe and that for the moment the initiative lies with the restorationists. Worse, it ignores the fact that counter-revolutionary governments are in power and are attacking the planned property relations, that the social counter-revolution has begun.

The establishment of bourgeois democratic rights, the legalisation of parties, the freedom of the press, the

freedom of assembly and demonstration and the ability to create trade unions independent of the state and party, all allow revolutionary communists to organise and to agitate amongst the masses.

These rights also imply a grave danger if the restorationist forces can deceive the masses into supporting their elevation to power and the carrying out of their programme. We do not fight for, or support the creation of, bourgeois parliamentary institutions in any degenerate workers' state. We reject the calls by the LIT and the USFI for constituent assemblies and parliaments whilst the workers' state still survives.

We also reject the USFI and FI-ICR's call for bourgeois democratic "pluralism". The bourgeois restorationists have no inalienable right to actively organise for the overthrow of the workers' state. Calls for "pluralism" devoid of class content sow crass democratic illusions and obscure the very necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat, based on organs of working class democracy.

We reject the pseudo-radical assertion made by Moreno in 1978, that the suppression of all pro-capitalist political forces is a matter of principle. The only guiding principle is the effective defence of the workers' state by the actions of the workers' themselves.

Against all forms of parliamentarism we fight for a superior form of democracy: workers' council democracy. This alone can safeguard and transform the proletariat's gains. Starting from the proletariat's demands for greater social equality and the abolition of privilege, and for democracy in the workplace, in the unions and in society, Trotskyists must fight for real workers' councils as an alternative to the fake parliaments or "soviets".

However, as long as the great majority of the masses have illusions in the democratic rights and institutions then we have to defend them against the military coups or police repression of the hardline faction of the bureaucracy. We have to use democratic and transitional demands to expose the undemocratic nature of bourgeois parliamentarism.

Where the Stalinist bureaucracy still clings on to its dictatorship we must fight during the inevitable uprisings for the immediate creation of democratic workers' councils and for the right of the workers and peasants alone to decide which parties are theirs by elections in the workplaces and proletarian and peasants' areas. All bureaucrats must be excluded from these organs and the executive power must arise from them and be answerable to them. This programme of political revolution must be counterposed to all wings of Stalinism, whether liberal and democratising or hard line. New revolutionary parties need to be built on this programme.

We reject the open denial of the need for political revolution in countries like Cuba and Vietnam on the grounds that Castro and Ho Chi Minh "made revolutions" and that their regimes simply "lack the forms of proletarian democracy". They lack not only the form (workers' councils) but also the content, the direct political power of the proletariat. Cuba faces a growing crisis which is of key importance to revolutionaries in Latin America.

In both economic policy and its support for reactionary imperialist "solutions" in Nicaragua, Colombia, El Salvador, Namibia, South Africa and Israel, Cuba is turning to

imperialism. It supported the first UN sanctions against Iraq. Castro's only hard line "anti-imperialist" policies have been viciously anti-working class—his support for Ceaucescu, Honecker and the Tiananmen massacre.

The only way to save the Cuban workers' state is through a political revolution led by an anti-Castro Trotskyist party. None of the major degenerate fragments of the FI dare call for this. Even supposed "lefts" like Socialist Action (USA) equivocate on the question. We reject the historical adaptation of the USFI and all its fragments to Castro. We oppose the opportunist distortion of Trotskyism which calls only for a multi-party parliament in Cuba (USFI) or drops all call for political revolution, concentrating on the slogan of the defence of Cuba against imperialist pressure (POR(Lora), FI-ICR).

The crisis of Stalinism has exposed the centrist method of all the pretenders to Trotsky's mantle. The USFI refused to call for the political revolution against Gorbachev or advance a programme for it. Instead it concentrated on urging a process of "deep glasnost", mildly criticising marketisation and asserting that it was impossible for capitalism to be restored. At first uncritical of the democratic restorationist and nationalist forces, they then turned to promoting a faction within the CPSU (the Marxist Platform). Up to the very eve of the collapse of the Stalinist party, they refused to call for the building a revolutionary party in the Soviet Union. The CWI (Militant) likewise declared the impossibility of restoration on the grounds that the workers' state represented a "superior mode of production".

The LIT argue that the political revolution is progressing despite the installation of capitalist restorationist governments and the defeats they have inflicted on the working class. The USFI, LIT, the FI(ICR), the CWI and the WRP(GB), despite their conflicting Stalinophile or Stalinophobe standpoints, all use an identical method. They leave to a supposed objective historical process the tasks of defending the planned property relations and of exposing and fighting the restorationist forces.

The mirror image of this error was shown by the iSt/ICL. First, they uncritically hailed the Chinese Democracy Movement as the political revolution. Then, in December 1989, they rushed into the arms of the Stalinists and their secret police apparatuses, urging them to crush the mass anti-bureaucratic movements in Eastern Europe and the USSR and "save the gains of October".

Disappointed at the bureaucratic conservative faction's weakness they refrained from supporting the August 1991 coup only because it was so ineptly organised. Their more consistent offshoot, the IBT, supported it a position that ironically put them into the same camp as the arch "Pabloites" the Posadists.

21 **Against imperialist war—only the proletarian class struggle and its victory can end the threat of nuclear annihilation.**

War is endemic to imperialism. With the development of atomic weapons capitalism has discovered the means to destroy civilisation. The choice facing humanity is, in the most literal sense, "socialism or barbarism", perhaps the total extinction of our species. This fact cannot transform the war question into an all-class or non-class

issue to be answered by a special ideology or movement—pacifism.

This ideology and these movements remain what they were pre-1914 or in the 1930s—petit bourgeois. They are incapable of the objective they set themselves—persuading the imperialists to lay down their arms and live peacefully or, more recently, persuading the “superpowers” to give up their nuclear arsenals.

Only the proletariat’s struggle for power can disarm those preparing a nuclear holocaust, and to do this it does not need the popular front of movements like CND. Trotskyists can and should intervene in the mass base of these movements (where they have one) to combat pacifism, to expose the clergymen, the retired generals and bourgeois politicians and to win the idealistic youth for the class struggle.

We reject the USFI’s view that the peace movement is “objectively anti-capitalist”. This is an excuse for refusing to confront petit bourgeois pacifism with proletarian anti-militarism. The two cannot and must not be elided.

22 **Defend Lenin’s theory of imperialism and Leninist-Trotskyist tactics faced with imperialist war.**

The essential features of imperialism, as characterised by Lenin, the revolutionary Comintern and Trotsky’s FI, still exist, despite the dissolution of the formal empires of Britain and France and changes in the pattern of investment and the relative development of certain imperialised countries.

A small number of imperialist powers, dominated by finance capital and huge industrial, raw material extractive, agricultural or trading monopolies dominate the economies of the imperialised countries. They repeatedly intervene around the world to set up political regimes favourable to the extraction of imperialist super-profit.

In wars or conflicts between imperialist powers and semi-colonial countries it is the duty of revolutionaries to be defeatist in relation to the former and defencist in regard to the latter. The proletariat of the colonial or semi-colonial country should give no political support to their bourgeoisie. Indeed, in order to transform the war into a consistent anti-imperialist war, it will be necessary to overthrow the bourgeois rulers.

In the conflicts between Iran and the USA revolutionaries should have supported the former despite the reactionary clerical domestic regime. In the Malvinas War it was obligatory to be for the defeat of Britain and for the victory of Argentina despite the Galtieri dictatorship.

In the Gulf War of the US-led coalition against Iraq it was obligatory for revolutionaries to stand for an Iraqi victory against these forces. Despite a formal defeatist position the CWI, the ISO and the USFI, all refused to make defence of Iraq an agitational slogan during the war, preferring a “popular front” with pacifist forces. The LIT and the ITC unconditionally supported Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait, lending legitimacy to his diversionary expansionism. Socialist Action (USA) managed to combine both errors. After the war it was necessary to defend the uprising of the Kurds and the rest of the people of Iraq against the Ba’athist dictatorship.

In wars between semi-colonial countries waged for the economic, political or strategic aggrandisement of the

national bourgeoisie the proletariat must take a defeatist position. Defencism is permissible only if one country in particular is acting as an agent for imperialism or is attempting to violate the national self-determination and independence of another. But in this case the task of the proletariat is international solidarity with its class brothers and sisters in the “enemy” country not the spreading of nationalist slogans and demagoguery.

We condemn Lora’s support for the Bolivian bourgeoisie’s impotent revanchist claims for the territory of neighbouring states on the grounds that losses of the historic national territory must be made good and that the country has a right to a port on the Pacific.

The same method must apply to conflicts between degenerate workers’ states. We reject siding with one Stalinist clique against another because one appears “better”. This impressionist method led the USFI to side with Vietnam against Kampuchea instead of charting an independent course of political revolution for the masses of Indo-China. Only if imperialism is clearly backing one workers’ state will we take sides, opposing that supported by finance capital. In wars by imperialism against the degenerate workers’ states we defend unconditionally the workers’ states.

23 **Lenin’s distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations is valid for our epoch. It is obligatory to defend the right of oppressed nations to self-determination and to support to their struggles. The proletariat must not yield to nationalism.**

The collapse of the colonial empires saw the creation of new independent states in a process ultimately controlled by imperialism. Balkanisation has divided peoples, created hundreds of national minorities and left systematic racial oppression intact. Marxists oppose national oppression.

We therefore support the right to self-determination and the struggles being waged around the world (e.g. the Irish in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland, the Tamils in Sri Lanka and the Kurds in the various states which partition Kurdistan), without giving any political support to the nationalism of the parties carrying out these struggles, to their guerrillaist strategy or to their tactics of bombings and assassinations.

These methods will not achieve liberation and will not prepare the way for working class internationalism and unity. Unconditional support for the struggle for legitimate national rights must be combined with fearless criticism of petit bourgeois nationalist politics.

It is a measure of the degeneration of the USFI and IC “traditions” that they never managed to combine the two, either collapsing into nationalist and guerrillaist illusions or denouncing nationalists as common criminals when “terrorist actions” made life too hot for “Trotskyists” in the imperialist heartlands.

Likewise we reject the notion that the “interpenetration” or scattering of a people, for example the Palestinians, removes the obligation to defend their self-determination, as the iSt claim. This is a brazen excuse for abandoning a cause which is unpopular in the USA.

The iSt, bending to the pressure of US imperialism, support the right of Israel to exist within its 1948 bor-

ders. They have declared their retrospective support for the Zionist state in the war which established those borders and robbed the Palestinians of their homeland. In the 1967 and 1972 wars they refused to give military support to the Arab bourgeois states fighting the Zionist gendarme of imperialism.

The Jewish people and the Arab population in the Israeli state are not in an equal position. The Arabs are oppressed—millions are denied re-entry to their homeland. The Israeli state is a racial-confessional state that restricts democratic rights to Jews. The Palestinian struggle for a secular democratic state must be critically supported even though Trotskyists argue that only a workers' state—an Arab and Jewish workers' state as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East—can resolve the national question and exclude imperialism from the Middle East.

We condemn the sectarian and opportunist attitudes to the Palestinian national struggle. The LIT combines both, uncritically espousing the PLO popular front's goal of a bourgeois state and calling for the driving of the Israeli-Jewish workers into the sea, a position which would clearly prevent working class unity.

24 **The right of nations to self-determination is a bourgeois right. The proletariat must continue to support this right even in those states where it has seized power in order to win the proletariat of the oppressed nationalities to support for the creation and the extension of the workers state. Recognition of this right is applicable throughout the entire transition period. The victorious proletariat can as Engels said "force no blessings on another nation". However the military necessities of revolutionary uprising, civil war or imperialist intervention may necessitate the temporary violation of this right**

The proletariat should therefore recognise unconditionally the right to self-determination of an oppressed nation or ethnic group, even if this nation should then proceed to restore capitalism. This was the position of Lenin with regard to Finland and the Baltic States after 1917.

Where independence movements in a workers' state are led by bourgeois forces, revolutionaries must try to win the proletariat of an oppressed nation to the defence of planned property relations. The best way to achieve this is to remove the roots of the bourgeois nationalists' influence—the forcible retention of the nation within the state borders of the workers' state. This will aid the proletariat of the seceding nation to retain or to recover state power.

The military-strategic necessities of a workers' state faced with attack by imperialism or civil war, or the general interests of the international revolution, may make it necessary to violate the right to self-determination in specific instances but they do not constitute a permanent negation of this right.

In the degenerate workers' states we do not advocate the creation of independent or autonomous workers' council republics as a general or universal rule. We fight for a democratic centralised planned economy and a federation of workers' states.

However, when the workers of a particular nationality are convinced that they need a separate state and desire for secession is deeply rooted in the masses, we are obliged to support an independent workers' council republic. With this slogan we should try to convince the population to oppose the capitalist nationalists, preparing the conditions for a new, genuine and democratic federation of workers' states. We have to oppose any oppression or expulsion of minorities by the nationalist governments of these new states.

Stalinophilic tendencies—notably the iSt (ICL)—shamelessly abandoned the position of the Bolsheviks and Trotsky during the post 1989 crisis of the USSR. They supported repression by the Stalinists in three Baltic states and in the Caucasus. They converted Trotsky's support for an "independent Soviet Ukraine" into a conditional right. The sectarians will only recognise the right to self-determination if the oppressed nations give a prior commitment to maintain the workers' state and if they already have a proletarian leadership."

They reinforce nationalist illusions, increase the influence of the reactionary nationalists and create resentment and divisions within the working class. They put self-determination within a purely bourgeois democratic framework. They abhor the slogan of an independent workers' republic. They refuse the possibility of making limited united fronts with Stalinist armed forces to defend national minorities or against pogroms as in Azerbaijan.

Against such sectarianism revolutionaries stand by the Bolsheviks' own interpretation, as explained in the ABC of Communism, of the right of self-determination of the peoples and republics of a federal or "multi-national" workers' state: this right included the right to secession. The denial of this right is itself a form of national oppression, even where revolutionaries themselves do not advocate secession.

25 **The struggles of women, youth, the racially oppressed and lesbian and gay minorities must be supported.**

Where the oppressed campaign against elements of their oppression Trotskyists must seek to involve the organised labour movement. Politically "autonomous" movements based on all class/no class ideologies (feminism etc) are a blind alley for the oppressed. The reformist leaderships of the unions and the workers' parties systematically neglect and exclude the oppressed.

Communists oppose these prejudices and seek to put the mass organisations of the working class in the forefront of the struggle against oppression. Special methods of agitation, propaganda and forms of work need to be used to win the socially oppressed to the communist programme.

Special forms of organisation may be necessary both to mobilise them to fight their own oppression and to enable them to enter the ranks of the organised workers' movement on an equal basis with all other workers. Specific united fronts, caucuses and even mass movements of the oppressed may need to be built, composed primarily of proletarians and based within, or oriented

centrally to, the existing mass working class organisations. They must be proletarian movements. They must be committed to the defence of the interests of the oppressed and mortally hostile to non-proletarian strategies proposed by bourgeois and petit bourgeois elements amongst the oppressed.

Trotskyists fight openly for leadership of such movements: without such leadership reformism or centrism will dissipate the fighting capacity of the oppressed. The struggle to abolish racism, women's oppression, the oppression of youth and of lesbians and gays can only be victorious when the proletariat takes up these struggles as its own. Only then will it be possible to overcome separatist petit bourgeois ideologies (feminism, black nationalism, indigenism etc).

26

Capitalism destroys the environment and the health and welfare of the working masses. Limited safety measures can be imposed by the class struggle but only working class power can abolish the perpetual menace to the environment posed by the existence of capitalism.

The ecological movements have raised and sought to combat dangers to the environment from the nuclear power industry, the chemical industry and many others. Nevertheless, these movements fail to root the cause of these problems in capitalist industrial production.

While some immediate measures, such as safety improvements or pollution controls, may be taken up by the working class, these movements raise all of these demands in the context of a utopian programme which stresses zero economic growth, retrogressive sources of power, the relinquishing of scientific agriculture, a "return to nature" and other petit bourgeois fantasies. At best they ignore or fail to recognise the centrality of the organisations of the working class. At worst they attack these organisations, seeking instead to create all-class/no-class popular frontist type campaigns or even parties. These remain bourgeois and cannot be supported in elections.

We reject the USFI's policy of fighting for coalitions between workers' and green parties. In certain circumstances it is possible to have unity in action with the petit bourgeois movements in pursuit of limited objectives (for example the demand for a workers' enquiry, the fight to introduce safety measures, the abolition of certain reactionary laws) to be fought for by direct action including demonstrations and strikes.

We also reject a maximalist attitude towards safety and the environment. These are issues for the proletariat's immediate and transitional programmes. They must be a part of the objectives of the fight for workers' control and inspection not simply an "issue to be dealt with under socialism".

27

A Leninist vanguard party is indispensable. Such a party must be based on an international transitional programme which links historic goal and principles to fundamental tactics in an overall strategy for working class power. Only the proletariat can cre-

ate a healthy workers' state. The revolutionary party has to be rooted in this class and express its historical aims.

We reject all attempts to replace the Leninist party with the organisation of worker and peasant, peasant or poor people's parties. In Peru during the 1960s the peasant rebellion was misled by Moreno and the USFI with the theory which sought to substitute a party based on the peasant unions for a Bolshevik workers' party. Today in Bolivia the LIT promote the creation of an indigenist party based on multi-class peasant unions.

The centrist fragments of the Fourth International have repeatedly sought short cuts to party building via opportunist fusions with non-Trotskyist forces. All these experiences have ended in fiasco or catastrophe. The USFI created the Chilean MIR and the Argentinian PRT as part of their 1960s strategy of building "united Castroite parties".

The result was that these parties developed in a Stalinist direction, expelling their "Trotskyist" founders. The LIT dissolved its Colombian section into the guerrillaist A Luchar. In the 1980s the USFI dissolved many of its sections into reformist parties or involved them in fusions with right centrist/left reformist sects or parties (VSP in Germany, PUM in Peru, A Luchar in Colombia etc).

The LIT, with their strategic conception of a mass legal centrist party in Argentina, has repeatedly sought fusions with different forces emerging from social democracy (the PST in the 1970s the PST, the MAS in the 1980s). This policy is even more dangerous in the degenerate workers' states where failure to be clear on the defence of planned property relations has led the FI-ICR to create social democratic groupings and "democratic" circles.

Likewise the USFI participate in openly restorationist organisations (e.g. Czechoslovakia). The LIT asserted that the Polish PPSRD, which has a social democratic programme for self-managed capitalism, was a revolutionary, semi-Trotskyist party that could lead a proletarian revolution.

The FI-ICR have recently set up a series of fake "workers' parties" with purely bourgeois democratic slogans. Sometimes these parties involve only their own forces, sometimes they are the result of fusion with handfuls of left bureaucrats and reformists.

The workers' party tactic is applicable where there are no existing mass workers' parties and where the working class is trying to break with the bourgeoisie, often through mass trade union action (USA 1930s, South Africa and Brazil in the 1980s). In fighting for the creation of a workers' party, we propose that it be based on the revolutionary programme: the nature of the party will be determined by the struggle between revolutionaries and reformist and centrist tendencies.

28

Democratic centralism in the tradition of Lenin remains the only possible basis for revolutionary parties and for the revolutionary international.

Federalism within an international or an national party grants effective autonomy to sections or regional organisations. It negates democratic centralism and cre-

ates potentially antagonistic blocs which will inevitably clash and split, as shown by both the IC and the USFI. Permanent factionalism also negates democratic centralism. If factionalism persists then it implies that an organisation is in fact split along programmatic, or even clique, grounds and as such needs to put its house in order if it is to be able to function as a democratic centralist organisation instead of being permanently divided against itself.

Factions, as Trotsky said, are a "necessary evil" of party life not, as the USFI seeks to portray them, a permanent and desirable feature of it. Healthy democratic centralism rests on a revolutionary programme and the ability to defend its strategy against revision whilst adapting it tactically to intervention in the class struggle.

Unity in action and strict discipline assures the verification or falsification of the party's perspectives and tactic through the living practice of the membership. Freedom of discussion and collective democratic decision-making allow errors to be corrected with the minimum of disruption.

Regime and politics are integrally linked. In the mass proletarian organisations the omnipotence of Stalinist bureaucrats, of social democratic parliamentarians or of trade union functionaries represents the pressure of alien class forces within the workers' movement. Centrism wastes and squanders its cadre through dead-end factionalism and clique squabbles, destructive splits and unprincipled combinations.

The post 1948 FI and the IS and IC traditions show these characteristic violations of democratic centralist norms. The histories of the USFI, the FI-ICR and the LIT abound with examples of organisational bankruptcy. The USFI tradition has a tendency to mimic a social democratic internal regime, the IC a Stalinist one, but both are violently intolerant of revolutionary criticism and both happily violate democratic centralism to silence it.

29 **A revolutionary party is a serious combat organisation, organising in its ranks a significant proportion of the vanguard fighters of the proletariat. Calling sectarian propaganda societies "parties" discredits the real thing in the eyes of the vanguard.**

So great was the crisis of revolutionary leadership from the beginning of the 1930s that in most countries revolutionary communism was thrown back to the stage of small propaganda groups.

Whilst Trotsky lived the FI gave them a firm programmatic basis. With the FI's degeneration and disintegration this disappeared. The key task over the past decades has been to recover and develop that programmatic basis, not only by theoretical and polemical work and struggle but by active intervention in the class struggle. This remains the key task for revolutionaries today. It is the task of a fighting propaganda group.

The centrist epigones of the FI either dissolved themselves into the "left-wing" of social democracy (and sometimes Stalinism) in the 1950s and again in the 1970s and 80s, or they proclaimed propaganda groups of a few hundred (perhaps a few thousand) to be mass parties.

These "mini-mass parties" vainly tried to counterpose themselves to reformism at all levels—daily papers, electoral slates, presidential candidates, youth organisations etc. in a manner redolent of Stalinism in its "Third Period" (e.g. WRP, LCR). The result was a rapid throughput of uneducated members, the exhaustion and squandering of cadres and the creation of a bureaucratic or federalist regime.

Revolutionary realism must reject this heritage as it must reject the featureless "secret entrism". Both have discredited Trotskyism. Nor is the answer a sectarian abstentionism in the name of propagandism in the manner of the iSt, who have turned themselves into a quasi-Bordigist sect whose only "fighting" is hyper-factional attempts to destroy their "rivals".

A fighting propaganda group is obliged by its size and its programmatic tasks to prioritise the task of producing material primarily for the most politically conscious vanguard elements, educating and training a cadre and participating as a revolutionary opposition in the mass struggles of the working class. In doing so it may have to use various organisational tactics: total entry as open revolutionaries into reformist parties or an independent organisation performing fraction work in all the mass workers' organisations. Its objective is to win to its ranks ever more vanguard fighters.

This method of individual recruitment can and must be combined with a positive orientation to leftward moving splits from reformist and centrist organisations. The whole history of Bolshevik and Trotskyist party building indicates that through splits, fusions and, if necessary further splits, the genuine communists can take important steps towards building a party rooted inside the working class.

30 **All the major "Trotskyist" currents are centrist. An intransigent struggle against them is necessary. The task is not to re-unify, or reconstruct the Fourth International with these misleaders but to found a new Leninist-Trotskyist International, on a newly elaborated programme. Whether this organisation is called the Fourth or the Fifth International is not a principled question. The key question is that of programme.**

Centrism oscillates between reform and revolution. The degeneration of revolutionary organisations produces a rightward moving descent into centrism. Revolutionary crises and struggles engender leftward movements from reformism which, if they do not immediately come over to the communist movement can constitute left centrist organisations. We must combine a merciless struggle against right centrism—which is moving away from Marxism—with a serious attempt to win leftward moving centrist organisations towards consistent communism, towards a reborn Trotskyist organisation.

The centrism of degeneration—e.g. Kautskyism, Stalinism (pre-1934), the POUM—exists in many forms. Each specific centrism bears the marks of its origin. To centrism of a social democratic and Stalinist origin has been added centrism of a Trotskyist origin. This form of centrism has generally taken the form of an ossified centrism, isolated from the mass struggles of the work-

ing class, unable or unwilling to test its politics in struggle, and relatively impervious to change.

Centrism of a "Trotskyist" origin is not inherently more progressive than any other form. In the massive upheavals which are following the collapse of Stalinism, all forms of centrism will be put to the test and will be found wanting.

We reject any notion of the automatic, spontaneous evolution of centrism into revolutionary communism. The fight against centrism must be conscious and result in a break from it and a recognition of it as a past condition of an organisation or current: a self-critical balance sheet must be drawn.

As Trotsky said, "centrism hates to hear itself named". It is a feature of the centrist international currents (children of the "London Bureau" rather than Trotsky's FI) that to so characterise them is to guarantee a cessation of discussion, exclusion from a conference or expulsion from their ranks.

The LRCI puts forward the slogan "Forward to the refounding of a Leninist-Trotskyist International". Like Trotsky in relation to the Third International and Lenin before him in relation to the Second, we do not fetishise the Fourth International.

The banner of the Fourth has been dragged through the mud by centrism. The vast majority of those who cling to the old banner of the Fourth do so because they believe in a "continuity". They are unwilling to recognise the centrist politics of all the fragments of the FI after 1951. They fail to combat centrism and are therefore doomed to repeat its mistakes. We do not rule out the

possibility that, under the hammer blows of the class struggle and the active intervention in the Fourthist currents by an international Trotskyist tendency, the major centrist formations that claim to be Fourth Internationalist will be broken up and sections of their militants won to revolutionary communism.

Such circumstances might allow for a principled regroupment under the banner of a programmatically and organisationally rebuilt Fourth International. Neither do we rule out the possibility of a refounded International that proclaims itself the Fifth, standing in the revolutionary traditions of the first four internationals. This question will be decided in future struggles.

We seek to win all those who recognise the necessity of this task. We appeal to all those who share this view within the centrist, pseudo-Trotskyist organisations to join us in this fight inside or outside their parties and "internationals". We seek to unite our forces with all organisations which have waged and are waging a principled fight against the centrism of Pablo, Mandel, Healy, Lambert, Moreno, Lora, Cliff, Grant etc.

We must discuss not for the sake of discussion but to establish a basis for programmatic unity. The LRCI has its own programme The Trotskyist Manifesto and it practices democratic centralism internationally, but it presents neither as an ultimatum.

We are willing to participate in discussions aimed at revolutionary unity on the basis of a commitment to work toward a re-elaborated transitional programme of world revolution and the refoundation of a Leninist-Trotskyist International.

Revolution: the only way out of the crisis

An action programme for the workers of the CIS

February 1992

Workers of the Commonwealth! Prepare for the decisive fight!

Twice during this century the workers of these lands have faced a life or death struggle. In the Civil War years after 1918 and in the darkest months of the Second World War economic disintegration, famine and armed intervention by western imperialism brought the Soviet Union to the brink of collapse. Now in 1992 an even more deadly enemy is closing in. Already this enemy has scored successes that Hitler's tanks were unable to achieve. Divided into feuding fragments by ex-Stalinist bureaucrats like Yeltsin, Kravchuk and Nazabaev and reactionary nationalists like Gamsakhurdia, the once integrated economy of the USSR is being hawked around the western bankers and politicians to see who will offer the highest price for the factories, mines and oilfields of the Ukraine, Belorussia, Russia and Kazakhstan.

Workers of the Commonwealth of Independent States! We have only a short time to avert terrible catastrophe for ourselves and a historic defeat for the proletariat of the whole world. Huge price rises, the abolition of subsidies, the slashing of real wages—all these attacks are only the beginning of the new exploiters' plans. Mass unemployment will follow hard on their heel. Thousands of enterprises will close and no alternative workplaces will replace them.

The speculators and the mafia who are just emerging from the shadowy world of the black economy, joining with the ex-bureaucrats who are busily expropriating the property of the Soviet state, are forming a new exploiting class. These parasites will arrogantly trample on the rights and past gains of the workers and collective farmers on the road to a secure position as the rulers of the new republics.

But these creatures are still merely the agents of the real enemy. Behind them loom the bankers and industrialists of Europe, Japan and the USA who are thirsting to destroy what is left of the institutions which made a planned economy possible, to complete the abolition of the monopoly of foreign trade and to denationalise the large scale industry and agriculture.

Despite the fact that these were all used as instruments of privilege and domination by the dictatorial bureaucracy they also acted as barricades that stood between the workers of the USSR and the unrestricted exploitation of the international bourgeoisie.

That is why the governments of the USA, the EC and Japan, the World Bank and the IMF demand their utter destruction as the price of even beginning any serious aid and investment.

Yeltsin's promise that the pain of his shock therapy will last only eight months is a cynical lie. He and the other Commonwealth leaders know that at the end of the year they will have nothing to offer the angry and disillusioned masses.

They are all resorting to demagogic tricks to divide and weaken the masses. They stoke the flames of national chauvinism to prevent the development of working class unity against the rule of the new class of exploiters. They seek to distract the workers from their hunger pains with "historic claims" on other nations' land. They try to turn fellow workers of different ethnic origins who lived together for generations into reviled and persecuted refugees.

These so-called democrats are already trampling on the democratic rights of those who elected them. Even the weak control of the parliaments of the republics and the city soviets is becoming intolerable to them. They demand ever greater emergency powers for the presidents. They are searching out every means to put their governments well out of the reach of the electorate. The end of this road is nothing less than a new dictatorship.

Six months—or even six years—of pain will not lead to sixty years of prosperity. No state of the former Soviet Union will leap in years or even decades into the ranks of the so-called advanced economies. The imperialist powers, Japan, the USA and the European Community states struggle for declining markets with ever greater bitterness now they no longer fear the "Soviet threat".

The lands of the ex-USSR are not a nursery for vigorous saplings of future advanced (imperialist) countries. They will become the battlefields of the next round of inter-imperialist conflicts, battles that will leave them economically scarred and ravaged, worse than anything that the self-serving and corrupt bureaucrats managed in their more than six decades of misrule.

The passivity and resignation bred by the bureaucratic system now works solely to the benefit of the new would-be exploiters. We, the workers of the former USSR, do not need to go through this hell on earth. It is not a punishment imposed by fate for daring to alter some natural, historical or god-given order.

Our grandfathers and grandmothers were right to overthrow capitalism. They were not dupes of a "Bolshevik conspiracy". They themselves made a revolution and created a democracy for the workers and the peasants. It was Stalin and his murderous henchmen that drowned this democracy in blood. It is their heirs who steered the economy into the sands of stagnation.

Now the present generation of bureaucrats, the

Yeltsins and the Kravchuks, seek to transform the state industries we built into their own private property, into the means to wring profit from our labour.

But the prospects for the restorers of capitalism are far from unclouded. For two decades world capitalism has oscillated between feverish booms that brought no qualitative expansion of production, followed by stagnation and serious recession.

Imperialism has no vast supplies of capital to cushion the restoration process let alone to bring long-lasting development to Eastern Europe and the USSR. The economic fate which awaits us is not that of North America, Northern Europe or Japan. It is that of the peoples of the remaining three quarters of the planet: to be a source of raw materials and cheap labour for the masters of the imperialist "new world order".

But if the plans of Yeltsin and Co meet shipwreck then another danger still exists, the come-back of the hard-line bureaucratic faction. This is no alternative for the working class to strive for or even tolerate. The bulk of this faction was left broken-backed by the fiasco of the failed August coup. But even now the army high command—seeing its all-Union role evaporating in the heat of the inter-state rivalries of Russia and the Ukraine—is restless and may yet strike back, propelling some old and discredited forces to power. However disillusioned the workers of the Commonwealth become with Yeltsin and Co such replacements would bring about no less of a catastrophe than the present one.

Whilst they might take some immediate measures against the speculators and the stock-brokers they have no intention of restoring and qualitatively improving the planned economy. As soon as they had a grip on power they would stifle and then snuff out all democracy in the workers movements and in society. They would try to reimpose a tyrannical domination over the non-Russian nationalities. This could lead to war of unparalleled destructiveness. Using their military-police dictatorship they would impose their own model for the restoration of capitalism; one of huge state-capitalist trusts, which would leave the old bureaucracy as a sort of collective shareholder able to exploit the labour of the proletariat.

But there is a third way between the free market, fast track capitalist restoration and the return of the bureaucratic, all-Union road to the market. It is the restoration of the political power of the working class exercised through councils of workers', farmers' and soldiers' deputies: the restoration of the power we founded in the year 1917!

Comrades, workers of the Commonwealth! We still have time. It is not yet too late. Rally to the banner of Trotskyism, the first victim and most hated enemy of Stalinism and imperialism alike. Under this banner, with this programme we can defeat the enemy once more. Our triumph will be not only our own but that of the workers of the entire world.

Yeltsin and Gaidar's plan for the Russian workers and collective farmers

Yeltsin and Gaidar, and to some degree the other CIS governments, have three main objectives: to identify the plants and enterprises that are capable of making profits

for them; to create a huge army of unemployed workers whose existence will force the employed workers to accept the lowest possible wages; and to stimulate the growth and social consolidation of the embryonic capitalist class. In the course of achieving these three objectives they hope to prove themselves worthy recipients of investment from the western imperialists.

The collapse of Gosplan, the USSR's central economic planning institution, has taken the Yeltsin camp a considerable way towards their goals. But the dual power in economic relations, which has characterised the last year, is not yet over.

Gosbank, with its allegiance to the Russian parliament rather than to the government, evaded the full control of the fast track restorationists. Gosbank's credit policies towards the state enterprises are in contradiction to the restoration of capitalism, disrupt the monetary stabilisation plans and deter imperialism from giving substantial aid.

For this reason the states of the CIS are still in a transitional stage in which the collapsing economy is still functioning according to the proportions and dispositions set by the former plans. The restorationists need to do more than place the distribution system on a commercial basis by effectively legalising the black market.

To achieve their goal they will have to tear each and every enterprise out of the matrix of the planned economy and be made to produce for the market not for social need. The banks will have to be made to act as commercial banks giving credit only to those that can make a profit now or in the foreseeable future. Those that can survive on this basis will be a minority. Thousands upon thousands will close and their workers will be thrown onto the street. Only thus can profit become the ruling force of the economies of the former USSR.

It is the working masses who will pay the price of this. Western experts expect a contraction in the economy by about one third this year alone and an accompanying loss of 5 million jobs. This is exactly what happened in Poland, where in three months Leszek Balcerowicz's "shock therapy" led to a 30% drop in production, to 2 million unemployed and a 50% cut in real wages!

Yeltsin's promise that only six or eight months' suffering is needed and that a real improvement in living conditions will be felt in the autumn of 1992 is designed to break the resistance of the population whilst it is still able to resist in a united fashion, before unemployment and national strife have weakened and divided the proletariat. Workers are strongest whilst they are still organised as workforces.

If unemployment and closures are allowed to go ahead then all sorts of divisions will be fomented in the working class: those between profitable and unprofitable factories and industries, between older and younger workers, between women and men will split our ranks. The poisonous national antagonisms already growing will become even more vicious.

The slashing of the state budgets will mean not only the closing of factories but also the closing of nurseries, clinics and hospitals, public laundries, and many other facilities that make the hard life of the working class family just barely endurable.

Bad as the conditions of these institutions were, due to their being starved of resources by the prestige military

and civilian projects of the bureaucrats, their closure will be a disaster—especially for pensioners, women and children. The individual family, hit by collapsing real wages and unemployment, will have to take on all the domestic burdens dropped by the state and the municipalities.

But the boldness of the restorationists should not be mistaken for invincible strength. There is as much desperation as determination behind it. The decisive time scale is the next six or eight months. Yeltsin hopes not that things will start to improve for the masses in this period but that their powers of successful resistance will be wasted and broken. That is why we must fight back now!

The disintegration of the USSR into rival national states is the road to catastrophe

For a state that has developed as an economic whole for centuries, the attempt to hack it into dozens of small ones is second only to the restoration of capitalism itself as a reactionary project. The pressure for this solution comes from half a century and more of national oppression by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Despite the Kremlin's hypocritical talk of "proletarian internationalism", they practiced what Lenin called the typical behaviour of the Great Russian bureaucrat: chauvinist bullying. This was a feature of the earliest days of Stalinist rule.

Later, during the 1930s and the Second World War, it reached nearly genocidal dimensions. The deportation of the Crimean Tartars and the Volga Germans, the purges and collectivisation of Ukraine—accompanied by an attack on the separate identity of the Ukrainian people and its language—the forcible annexation of the Baltic states; all of these made a mockery of the Soviet Constitution's promise to grant the nationalities the right to self-determination, including the right to secede. As a result, Stalinism alienated the non-Russian peoples of the USSR and made them feel that they had been thrown back into the Tsarist prison-house of peoples.

Socialists in the former USSR must start off from the position of Lenin and Trotsky, that this right to self-determination and secession must be inviolable and unconditional wherever a people has democratically expressed its will to secede. Now we must recognise the decision of the Baltic states, the Ukraine, Belorussia and the Caucasian republics to create independent states.

This freedom is necessary not because the separation of these peoples of the former USSR is a progressive step in itself. It is not. But freely exercising this right is a way of removing the obstacle which resentment at national oppression presents to a future voluntary socialist federation of our peoples. But we have to go further and demand the same democratic rights also be applicable to the sizeable and compact minorities within the larger states, even up to *their* secession if they so wish it.

In the states set up by the formerly oppressed nationalities once the question of national oppression is out of the way it will be much easier to win workers to a staunch struggle for the defence of jobs, social gains and even of the planned and state owned means of production which alone can guarantee them. Once the inflamed passions that stem from national oppression have been

calmed then these workers will recognise in the nationalist fronts and parties their "own" would-be exploiters.

But the forming of many small, weak states, which then enter into territorial disputes with one another—such as that between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh—spells war and economic disaster. We must learn from the experience of Georgia's independent government.

From the moment it came to power it set about the coercion and oppression of the Ossetians and the Abkhazians. Then it trampled on the newly won democratic rights of the Georgian people. The opposition ousted Gamsakhurdia with a bloody coup, and massacred demonstrators. Bloody civil war faces the Georgian people. The Lithuanian government has tried to disfranchise its Russian and Polish citizens. In Moldova it is the same.

Of course, Yeltsin and Rutskoi have not been found wanting when it comes to Great Russian chauvinism. Yeltsin has tried to coerce the Chechen people and Tartarstan has been refused independence point-blank. Because these regions contain vital economic resources he has not the slightest intention of giving these up. Kravchuk's insistence on the "inviolability" of the borders of the Ukraine and control of the entire Baltic fleet has given Sobchak, Rutskoi and Yeltsin the opportunity to engage in anti-Ukrainian rhetoric as a diversion from the first weeks of the "shock therapy".

Inflaming national feelings in eastern Ukraine and the Crimea could lead to bitter and bloody conflicts with the hitherto pro-independence Russian speaking population. Similar conflict is possible in Kazakhstan and in the Central Asian republics. Amongst the many other nationalities it opens the way to military adventurers and local war-lords like General Dudaev to take over, exploit and terrorise their own people.

This conflict is not at all the result of any natural animosity between peoples as such, but the work of the ex-Stalinist bureaucrats, pseudo-democrats, fascists, Christian and Muslim clergy, who are all willing to use chauvinist demagogy to deflect the wrath of the masses from themselves onto their national "enemies". There is only one destination at the end of this road: it is the site of pogroms, fascism, civil war and economic collapse.

Why the Soviet Union and its centrally planned economy collapsed

Socialism is a system where class inequality has disappeared and where all other inequalities are disappearing. For this reason the Trotskyists always insisted that the USSR, contrary to Stalinist lies, had never reached the socialist stage. Indeed it is not possible to achieve this except on an international scale.

That is why an isolated workers' state must bend every effort to spread the revolution to other countries. This was the perspective and the practice of the leaders of the October Revolution—that of Lenin, Trotsky and the revolutionary Bolshevik party. This was the strategic perspective from which they developed their specific economic policies for the USSR.

Within the economy of a single workers' state, it is only possible to begin the construction of socialism. The first measures to create an industry, dominated by the planned large-scale means of production can be and were

undertaken. The decisive sectors of large-scale industry had to be nationalised. A state monopoly of foreign trade was erected as a protective barrier against the destructive pressure of world capitalism on newly born socialist economic institutions.

But such a monopoly was not intended to seal the workers' state off from world commerce. On the contrary, the healthy workers' state actively attempted to acquire all the technology necessary to stimulate production, reduce labour time, and increase the quality of goods. Its overriding priority was to raise the cultural level of the masses.

The early institutions of economic planning also had to decide what the workers' state could best produce for itself and what items of consumption it would be more efficient to acquire by trading with the capitalist world. Last but not least the peasantry had to be convinced that there were tangible economic advantages to be gained from the industries of a planned economy. The peasants needed to be encouraged first into co-operative, and then into fully socialised, agriculture.

This revolutionary programme and practice of Lenin, Trotsky and the Left Opposition was abandoned by the Stalinists in favour of the utopian attempt at "building socialism in one country". This amounted to isolated, self-sufficient (autarkic) industrialisation, permanently favouring heavy industry over those industries that produced for consumption and forcing collectivisation on the peasantry.

Despite its spectacular successes in building a heavy industrial base in the 1930s and the 1940s, the Stalinist bureaucracy was digging its own grave and that of the workers' state.

From the outset it alienated the rural population and burdened the workers' state with a terribly wasteful and inefficient agricultural sector. But even industry was doomed to planning breakdowns and severe disproportions between the different sectors. From the late 1950s technological advances increasingly failed to penetrate and revolutionise production.

Moreover, in a capitalist dominated world market no autarkic economy can duplicate all the technological advances and economies of scale produced by the world division of labour. The dominant strata of the bureaucracy, those of the heavy industrial and military sectors, took a vastly disproportionate slice of investment and research spending.

All those sectors of industry and agriculture dealing with the material and cultural well-being of the masses remained systematically subordinated and neglected. The result was stagnation, and from the mid 1970s, decline. Stalin's project of economically catching up with and overtaking the imperialist powers "peacefully" (i.e. without revolution) proved in practice a reactionary dream.

The Stalinist dictatorship's actions frustrated the potential dynamism of a planned economy. The bureaucratic caste's privileged lifestyle, together with the enormous military-police apparatus which concealed this and protected it from any criticism, were in themselves a huge drain on the development of the productive forces. Because the consumption needs of the workers and collective farmers were ignored and because they were deprived of any initiative and any democratic voice in

setting the objectives of the planned economy their alienation increased.

Treated like so many tonnes of steel to be computed by bureaucrats as just another input, the living force of production—the working class—whose conscious effort alone can give a superior long term dynamism to a planned economy, was totally excluded from doing so. The democratic control of the workers themselves over the plan at all levels down to the workplace was the one "reform" the bureaucrats could not and did not consider.

In the 1950s and 1960s under Khrushchev and Brezhnev the bureaucracy was able to release itself from the terror that the Stalin clique had exercised over it. This is what the famed "de-Stalinisation" amounted to. In doing so it replaced what it criticised as "Stalinist egalitarianism" with the increased promotion of social inequalities.

Its own privileges soared immediately whilst the masses were promised that the mass consumerism of the imperialist countries would be theirs sometime in the future. But, despite real successes in space and military technology, the bureaucracy was unable to catch up with and pass the major imperialist powers. The growth of the productive forces slowed and dipped below the average for the imperialist world. After 1975 chronic stagnation set in. In the 1980s the bureaucracy, confronted with deepening stagnation, step by step abandoned all hopes of reforming the centralised planning system. Its ideologists, picking up the propaganda of the imperialist "think tanks", announced the utopian nature of planning as such. At the same time the practical failings of the command system were felt by millions in the form of the persistent shortages and poor quality of consumer goods.

After abortive attempts under Andropov to restore discipline both to the bureaucrats and the workers, the Gorbachev leadership embarked on a series of systematic concessions to market forces. Glasnost and democratisation were designed to mobilise the intelligentsia and even the skilled workers against the old, corrupt layer of the bureaucrats and thereby open the road to marketising reform.

But the reforms of glasnost and perestroika did not dynamise the economy or raise productivity. They only produced chaos, nationalist agitation, strikes, and a challenge to the privileges and power of large sections of the bureaucracy. The caste split into open factions.

Bureaucratic conservatives, who had no alternative to Gorbachev except to go slower and save their own jobs, sabotaged the reforms. In the Republics of the oppressed nationalities the bureaucracy either split from Moscow and took on a nationalist character or was rapidly ousted. Sharp polarisation took place as the economy moved from stagnation to slump.

Finally, the failed August coup in 1991 shifted the balance of forces decisively in favour of a Yeltsin faction that urged the fast track to capitalism. Now virtually all ideologists in the former USSR and in the West claim that what failed was "Socialism" or "Communism". The media never stops proclaiming the new gospel: that the very idea of a workers' state and a planned economy has been disproved by the harsh test of practice. This is a monstrous lie. It is Stalinism that failed.

But suppressed by the Stalinists for decades, another political programme awaits rediscovery and use by the proletariat—that of the two most trusted leaders of the

October Revolution, V. I. Lenin and L. D. Trotsky. Their heritage is inextricably bound up with the conquests of the working class in that revolution.

Defend the heritage of the October Revolution

The same ideologists who proclaim the failure of socialism and planning also denounce the October Revolution as a Bolshevik putsch and identify it with the long Stalinist dictatorship. Most of them were, until recently, slavish apologists for the omnipotent bureaucrats. What they once praised they now vilify. But neither now nor then did they understand what the October Revolution was. The working class of the former Soviet Union must rediscover the real mass workers uprising of October and the heritage of the original Workers' Council state to which it gave birth. This is no piece of historical archive work. It is essential because we must learn from 1917 what to do in 1992.

For the very first time the working class held power in a major country and defeated all attempts of the imperialist bourgeoisie to overthrow it. The Bolsheviks never sought to disguise the fact that this was a dictatorship. It was a dictatorship of the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry. It had nothing in common with the dictatorship of Stalin over the Bolsheviks and the working class. It was a class dictatorship aimed at the bourgeoisie, the land owners and their agents who rose in revolt against the workers state; a dictatorship against those who called in the German or the Anglo-French imperialists.

The soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers deputies, elected in the factories, the barracks and the villages, were executive as well as legislative bodies whose members led the masses in fulfilling their decrees.

If soviet delegates betrayed the interests of their electors they could be replaced quickly. In them the parties that the workers and peasants recognised as theirs argued and contended for the majority. These councils were a superior form of democracy to any bourgeois parliamentary talking shop. They were the very basis of the state. Workers' councils similar to them have risen in revolutionary crises time after time around the world.

Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks set out to make the Soviet Union the basis for the extension of the world revolution. This imperishable legacy and all its lessons will remain the bedrock of the programme of the world's workers' movement, whatever fate the monstrous betrayals of Stalinism bring to the Soviet Union.

Bolshevism, however, did not die even if it was driven from power. It was represented by the Left Oppositionists grouped around Leon Trotsky. They defended workers' democracy in the party and the soviets; they defended a revolutionary line against the centrist zigzags of the Comintern. They defended it in the isolators of the Gulag in the 1920s and the 1930s.

Between 1938 and 1941 they defended it when they died in their thousands before Stalin's firing squads in the frozen tundra, the "Internationale" on their lips. A more honest and more honourable tradition could not be taken up today by the Russian workers. It is not a dead tradition of pompous mausoleums and monuments but one which lights the road ahead to workers' council power, to the international revolution and to a world free of economic crisis, famine, exploitation and war.

Leon Trotsky characterised the USSR as a degenerated workers' state. By this he meant a society in which capitalist exploitation had been abolished yet political power had been seized by a dictatorial bureaucratic caste. They lived off the plunder of the planned property relations and exercised a savage dictatorship over the working class such that it remained atomised and unable to re-create a revolutionary vanguard.

This massive social stratum blocked the road to socialism and actively sabotaged the international revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. Thus it acted as an agent of the world bourgeoisie within the workers' state. It was not a revolutionary but a counter-revolutionary force.

First, in the 1920s and 1930s, it terrorised and destroyed the Bolshevik revolutionary vanguard. Then it blocked the road to socialism and undermined the planned property relations, leading them inexorably towards their final collapse. Lastly, in its death agony as a ruling caste, a decisive faction of it offered itself to world capitalism as the direct agent of restoration.

Nearly 60 years ago Trotsky predicted exactly this course of development for Stalinism though not its timescale. To avoid catastrophe, he proclaimed, it was necessary to forcibly remove this caste from power. But he emphasised that this would remain a political and not a social revolution. That is to say, it would involve the expulsion of the bureaucracy from political power by the armed force of the working class, organised once again in its own soviets and militia. After this the soviets would once more become the revolutionary organs of state power but they would preserve, rather than overthrow, the nationalised and planned property relations.

For a fighting strategy against restoration

A decisive battle faces the workers of Russia in 1992. Despite Yeltsin's lingering popularity he is the man who is taking the working class by the throat and intends to throttle it. Workers must break his grip. All illusions in him and those who emulate him in the other republics must be cast aside. The trade unions of all varieties have to be mobilised. In the cities committees of working class housewives and shopworkers must be formed to organise the protests and actions.

Learn from the Polish workers. For two long years they have suffered from the shock therapy; now they are awakening from the stunning blow. As Commonwealth workers were hit by the new year measures Polish workers organised their biggest strike protest action for three years, proclaiming—enough!

Let the lessons of the last two years in Poland not be lost on us. We need to launch a fightback now whilst we still have the strength of our presence in the factories, mines, shops and offices. United militant action around the following demands can halt the attack and bring down the restorationist governments.

* For a sliding scale of wages—an automatic, equivalent rise in wages for every rise in prices determined by elected committees of workers, particularly women and pensioners—to fully compensate for every increase in prices.

- Stop all price rises. Prices of food, clothing, transportation, rents and fuel should be prevented from rising until a workers' government can reform the currency in the interests of the toilers rather than the speculators.

- Put all private and state warehouses and food storage under the control of armed workers' detachments, under workers' inspection and distribution. Confiscate all goods hoarded by the bureaucrats, the mafia, the "co-operatives" or private businesses. Workers must control and distribute all western aid received.

- Elected committees of workers must inspect the accounts of the enterprises and the planning ministries, the special shops and the new speculators. Only then will the scale of corruption, siphoning off and theft of the produce of the workers be known, and a new plan of production and distribution be possible.

- Resist the establishment of a new private monopoly of the mass media in place of the old state domination. For workers' control of the TV, radio and press at a local and national level to ensure free speech for the workers in their struggle against the economic and political attacks.

- Elect workers' tribunals to try all those who have committed crimes against the working people either under the Stalinist dictatorship or under the restorationist regimes.

- Organise direct exchange between the cities and the countryside. The rural and urban workers should together work out fair exchange ratios and even prices between the products of industry and agriculture.

- Restore the right and opportunity to work. Divide the available work amongst the workers. The existing unemployed must be offered work or paid at the average industrial wage. No to all redundancies without equivalent work at equivalent pay. Occupy all factories, mines, shops or offices declaring redundancies or attempting closure. Demand that the idle members of the bureaucracy, the enterprise managers and the speculators perform useful work in the factories and on the land at the average wage of a worker.

- For workers' management in every enterprise. No to privatisation even in the form of alienable shares distributed in whole or in part to the workers themselves. In a workers' state the factories already belong to the workers! No expropriation of workers' property.

- No cuts in the social services. For a massive programme of housing repairs and construction of new dwellings, creches, schools and clinics. No one should be unemployed and no one should be idle whilst people lack these elementary necessities. All internal residence restrictions must be lifted and the position of the *limitshi* fully legalised.

- For a minimum living wage for all and for all pensions to be no lower than this and to be protected by a sliding scale.

- For emergency action to alleviate the housing shortage. Seize the dachas and the big apartments of the former nomenklatura and the new rich. Occupy all state buildings that are not serving the collective good of the working class and convert them to accommodation for young families, the unemployed, and returning rank and file soldiers.

- Workers' committees must draw up an inventory of all state property as it stood before August 1991. The misappropriation and hoarding of the former CPSU and the nomenklatura must be brought to light and all the resources of the workers' state restored to collective ownership. At the same time all the "expropriation" of state property by Popov and his imitators must be reversed.

- Down with Great Russian chauvinism. Respect the decisions of the non-Russian nationalities to be independent. Protect the civil, democratic and working class rights of minorities in all the states of the former USSR. Down with the pogromists and fascists. Down with anti-Semitism. No platform, no "democratic rights" for these vermin. For a workers' militia to protect the workers and smash the fascists and pogrom organisers.

- For a general strike against the restoration plans. Down with Yeltsin, Kravchuk, Nazabaev and Co.

- Down with the Commonwealth of Independent States, co-ordinator of the imperialists' plans! No to disarmament of nuclear weapons in the face of imperialist pressure. Retain all weapons of defence against imperialism so long as the class enemy retains theirs intact!

Rebuild and re-arm the workers' movement

The workers' movement of the former Soviet Union is far from ready to meet the challenge of the restorationists. The Confederatsia Truda, founded in May 1990, was still-born as a real Union-wide federation of independent unions. The dollars of the AFL-CIO created a corrupt bureaucracy on the US model before it had created a real membership.

In their eagerness to create a post-1989 Solidarnosc, they forgot the little fact that Solidarnosc owed its origins to a real 10 million strong union and factory committee movement steered in mass struggle against a Stalinist dictatorship (1980-1981). Only the Independent Mine-workers Union—with its bases in the Kuzbas, in the Donbas, in Karaganda—and with the experience of three important national strikes, can be said to be a real fighting force across the republics.

But it is also the union most influenced by the Yeltsinites, most permeated by marketising ideas. The richest coalfield, Kuzbas is also the most consistently militant one, but at the same time its leadership has been the most infatuated by projects such as becoming a "special economic zone", selling concessions to Japanese and US corporations, turning the mines into joint-stock companies with the miners as shareholders.

The result is that the former Stalinist unions, renamed the Federation of Independent Trade Unions

(FITU), retain the passive allegiance of a claimed 60 million workers. Since the downfall of the coup plotters and then of Gorbachev, FITU has started to mobilise demonstrations and support protest strikes.

City-wide trade union councils have started to take initiatives in demanding protection for workers and pensioners. They are now protesting at the lack of social protection during the present inflationary phase, rather than against the programme of restoration itself. It is essential that workers fight to transform the unions into organs of revolutionary struggle. For an immediate delegate congress of unions and workplace organisations to discuss a plan of resistance to the Yeltsin—Gaidar plan!

Within the unions all decisions should be taken at mass meetings. In every struggle inter-factory strike committees should be elected and defence squads formed to protect the right to meet, strike and occupy. All trade union officials must be elected and recallable by mass meetings. No official should receive more than the average wage of a skilled worker.

The work collectives, which are to some degree distinct from the trade union leaderships, developed under Gorbachev aspirations to promote workers' "self-management". The strength of this idea was to involve the workers in control over working conditions at the point of production, as a means of rank and file workers learning the skills of management.

Its weakness, which in the end has proved or will prove decisive, is that it either ignores the need for "workers' management" at an inter-enterprise, national level or actually promotes the idea of market relations between independent self-managed production units. This latter idea is a total utopia.

The market's profit imperative will drive half the enterprises into bankruptcy after a demoralising phase of self-exploitation, dividing workers who keep their jobs against those who are surplus to the requirements of each enterprise's survival plan. Thus the utopian dream will turn into a reactionary nightmare.

The self-management movement can retain a progressive character only if the works' collectives resist privatisation in all its forms and join the fight for a workers' democratic plan, centrally co-ordinated by elected and recallable workers' delegates. All technical, administrative and financial assistance from experts must be placed under workers' control. Such a plan would have to be centralised at local, regional, republican and if possible at a federal level.

Workers and their leaders remain dogged by the phobias produced by the experience of bureaucratic centralised plans and by illusions of prosperity under a market system. The dislocation and disintegration of the economy and the collapse of production means they have to shed these phobias and illusions in order to escape disaster.

For a workers' government and an emergency plan to restore the economy in the interests of the working class

Since 1989, the USSR and its successor states have passed through a period in which the crisis and downfall of the bureaucratic regime has presented the workers with the opportunity to make a political revolution. On

several occasions, pre-revolutionary situations matured into revolutionary ones. But these crises were resolved on each occasion by the the strengthening of the forces of the democratic social counter-revolution.

Despite these victories, culminating in the installation of restorationist governments, we still remain within the revolutionary period in which the contradictions opened up by the death agony of Stalinism await their final resolution.

This will not be achieved without further massive social explosions. This revolutionary period cannot last much longer; the decisive hour is approaching. Either the working class will assert itself as a class and bring order to the present turmoil or the forces of reaction will impose a new counter-revolutionary stability across the lands of the former USSR.

Owing to the absence of a revolutionary leadership putting forward the alternative of workers' council democracy the masses have fallen under the leadership of those who want to restore capitalism. The workers have been deceived by phrases about a classless parliamentary democracy and democratic rights.

Most potently, these leaders promised that independence from the "centre" would solve all social and economic problems. They used these illusions and the alienation from the existing system to oust the old nomenklatura from power. Now in every ex-republic, governments pledged to immediate capitalist restoration are in power.

But capitalism has not yet been restored. Workers thus face a combined task: a fight against a *bourgeois* executive power and a struggle to save the remains of the *proletarian property forms*—the state-owned means of production and distribution.

In the course of this struggle to defend our livelihoods and democratic rights a network of strike committees, factory committees, workers and rank and file soldiers councils must be created and arm itself. If this happens a situation of open dual power between the classes will exist.

The question will then be posed: who rules society? Will it be Yeltsin and his allies or the workers, soldiers and their families—the victims of Yeltsin's economic shock? Then all the energies of the working class, its councils and militias will be focused on the task of removing Yeltsin, Kravchuk and Co from power. Any armed forces who remain loyal to them must be disorganised by agitation within their ranks and won over. In every regiment committees of rank and file soldiers giving their allegiance to the workers' councils must take control.

Only when the working class has installed its own government can it move from defending itself against chaos and misery to imposing a new democratic and efficient order on society.

Unlike bourgeois democracy, whose parliaments are not accountable to their electors until long after the damage has been done, the democracy in workers' councils can be active and permanent, with regular mass meetings to debate regular reports from the delegates they elected and thus able to hold them to account and remove them if necessary. The workers' council draws in all workers in its decisions and in collective action.

A first concrete organisational step to speedily mobilise the working class for the coming struggle is to trans-

form the work collectives and all other workplace bodies into such councils.

No strike, no occupation, no demonstration or political action can be so strong as ones which have as their base the organisation of factory committees or councils. But unity in one workplace, if it is isolated, is not enough when we face a general attack as a class. In every locality, in every city and region, general councils of delegates, drawn from all the enterprises and from the working class districts, must be elected and assembled.

These "soviets", true successors to those of 1905 and 1917, are essential organs of resistance in 1992. They alone can organise an effective and victorious political general-strike. They can spread to the countryside and to the kholkhozes, and oust the layers of bureaucrats who dominate them, still drawing fat salaries from the labour of the farm workers.

The workers must shed their illusions in the "democrats" and the parliamentary system. The democracy of the bourgeois parliaments is a sham. It deceives the workers into thinking they have control of their rulers. Meanwhile Yeltsin, and the other elected presidents and mayors concentrate enormous powers in their own hands and through appointed "advisers" do the bidding of the IMF not that of the electorate.

Already the republican parliaments and the city soviets are dispelling workers illusions by the manifest vanity and corruption of the deputies and their inability to carry words into deeds. But in breaking with parliamentary illusions we must not fall victim to bonapartist demagogy. Giving dictatorial powers to a "strong man" to restore order and impose solutions would be a cure far worse than the disease. It will mean the shackling and even crushing of the workers' movement.

The vanguard of organised workers must defend their existing democratic rights and those of all the non-exploiting classes and strata, by demonstrating in practice that workers' council power alone gives strong and decisive government and the truest democracy the masses have ever experienced.

The restorationist forces cannot be removed by peaceful means alone though the more decisively and the more strongly the workers mobilise the less costly will such a victory be. We can and must build a workers' militia which will be able to win over the rank and file soldiers, the dismissed servicemen, the Afghan veterans.

There is no shortage of arms or the opportunity to acquire them. They must cease to fall into the hands of the mafia, the national chauvinists, pogromists, the anti-semites and fascists. The workers who made them and paid for them must seize control of them and indeed use them to put these scum in their place.

Arms in hand, the workers must defend the rights of national minorities, protect their own picket lines, occupations and the headquarters of the workers' organisations. Only with an armed workers' militia will it be possible to put a stop to the outrages of organised crime and crush the resurgent fascist squads.

The central tasks of a workers' council government will be the scrapping of the restorationists' plans and the rallying of the world working class movement to our defence against the inevitable imperialist pressure and blockade.

In the economy the workers' government will have to

develop and implement an emergency plan to save the economy from total disintegration. This must be drawn up by a congress of the workers' representatives and put into action by all the organisations of the working class itself. The most urgent measures of such a plan should be:

- Stop all de-nationalisation of the large-scale means of production and re-nationalise all sectors already sold-off. Close down the stock exchanges and the commodity exchanges. Inspect all previous dealings and punish those guilty of anti-working class profiteering.

- Restore a state monopoly of banking. Nationalise all private banks installing workers' control and inspection. The dollar hoards of the mafia, the Joint Ventures, the pseudo-cooperatives and the private accounts of the bureaucrats and the old CPSU must be confiscated for the workers' state.

- Restore the state monopoly of foreign trade with control of all international commerce by elected organs of workers' inspection. The seaport, airport, communications and banking workers can rapidly decide on what trade is in the interests of the workers' state and what is speculation or harmful profiteering. Urge the workers' movements of the west to force their governments into undertaking trade agreements that will benefit the workers' government's emergency plan.

- Suspend all payments of the foreign debt and break all the chains to the IMF, the World Bank and the European Bank of Restoration! Kick out all the fifth columnists of economic advisers of imperialism.

- Carry out a monetary reform in the interests of the toilers. Money as a measure of value must as accurately as possible gauge the labour time embedded in the products of industry and agriculture. The inflation of the last years of bureaucratic mismanagement must be brought to an end so that workers can undertake rational accounting without which planning is impossible. Establish a hard currency for trading backed by gold.

- Transform the Kholkhozes into genuine democratic cooperatives on a one worker one vote basis. Give to the Kholkhoz the sovereign right to allocate private plots on a life-lease basis. Land should not be sold except back to the state.

- Small-sized private businesses industrial production, distribution, retail trade and services should be left to operate and even to expand in number as long as the state and the cooperatives cannot meet demand. This sector of private small capitalists and petty bourgeois can be useful to the workers' state providing their workers are all unionised and have their working conditions and hours regulated by the local soviets, providing their accounts are subject to inspection and taxation for the benefit of the workers' state.

- Re-organise a Central Commission for the Co-ordination of the Plan and create similar commissions at local regional and city levels. The skilled statisticians, econo-

mists and administrators must be assembled and put to work under the control of elected workers' representatives. There must be no re-emergence of bureaucratic privilege. No expert should earn more than the wage of a skilled worker and all planning organs must carry out the decisions of the appropriate organs of workers' democracy.

- The Emergency Plan must provide for a massive construction programme to improve the social infrastructure; house building and repairs, clinic and hospital building, and expansion of the nurseries, schools and further and higher education. Investment in the high-tech industries of the military-industrial complex, which swallowed up over one-third of the old state budget, must be in large part diverted to equipping these institutions.

- The Emergency Plan must rapidly improve the communication, distribution and transport system. Military vehicles and aircraft must be drafted into an improved freight system so that 40% of food does not rot before it can reach the consumers. A longer term programme of road and railway construction, upgrading the telecommunication system, creating a nationwide network of warehousing, cold storage, and freezer plants can ensure that the labour of the kolkhozniks is not shamefully wasted.

- The Emergency Plan must set as one of its central goals investment in agriculture and in the welfare of the rural population. Industry must be turned to producing modern agricultural machinery to improve labour productivity and output.

- No federation of workers' states can hold together unless the Emergency Plan sets about correcting the development of backward regions of the old USSR where the planning agencies condemned certain republics to producing a narrow range of primary products.

- There is an urgent need for a new plan to address the destruction of the environment caused by the Stalinist dictatorship. Nuclear installations in particular must be carefully scrutinised by workers' committees of inspection drawn from the workplace and effected communities together with sympathetic technical advisers. If found unsafe all such installations should be shut down if no immediate action is possible to render them safe.

- The Emergency Plan must set as one of its central goals a series of measures that improve the condition of women. Improvements in the quality of goods, distribution and retailing must remove from women the crushing burden of the search for food and the endless queueing. Improvements in housing, in creche and childcare facilities, in care for the sick and the elderly will help to socialise domestic toil and liberate women so they can at last play a fully equal role in social and public life.

- For a woman's right to work, with equal pay for work of equal value; defend maternity leave and pay and the protection of women from harmful work. Resist moves to force women to work part time with lower pay and poor working conditions—reduce the working week for all

workers. Defend the rights of women to abortion, and extend access to contraception.

- Liberate gay men and lesbians from all legal punishment, discrimination and harassment. The churches and the mosques must have no control over the schools, the hospitals or the media. For scientific and rational education on sexuality free from clerical superstition and taboos.

- For rank and file soldiers committees to purge the high command. For the abolition of the barracks system. Concentrate the bulk of the armed forces into a territorial militia linked to the workplaces and communities they defend.

The Workers' Government must offer international solidarity

The workers' government must break resolutely from the counter-revolutionary policies of Yeltsin, Gorbachev and their predecessors. The allies of a workers' state cannot be the imperialist world devourers and the exploiters of the proletariat of the capitalist countries.

We must appeal for direct aid and support to the workers' movements of the entire world and particularly to the rank and file.

The victorious Russian Revolution in 1917 rallied massive support in Europe, Asia and the Americas such that the heroic resistance of the Russian workers could beat off the imperialist intervention.

Hampered by a severe and prolonged economic crisis, the imperialist nations are hypocritically committed to a "new world order" of peace and democracy. But when the imperialists turn ever more to threats of war and intervention the masses will be like dry tinder for the sparks of the revolutionary appeals of the Russian workers. In return the Russian workers' must offer economic and military support to the struggles of the world's workers and oppressed peoples.

- Rescind the agreement which created the CIS and attempt to build a new voluntary federation of workers' republics in the former USSR.

- Imperialist hands off Cuba, Vietnam and the other bureaucratically ruled workers' states. Military and economic assistance against the US blockade or intervention. Political aid to the workers of these states to make a political revolution. Only revolutionary workers' and peasants' council governments will be able to save these states. For a world-wide alliance and, as soon as possible, a federation of workers' states. For economic co-ordination of the plans of all the workers' states.

- Support for all national liberation struggles against imperialism. Support for all workers and oppressed peoples who are fighting austerity and privatisation plans dictated by the IMF. Opposition to the sell-outs deals and betrayals in the Middle East, Southern Africa, South-East Asia, Afghanistan and Central America.

- Support for the struggles of the workers of Eastern Europe against capitalist restoration. Support for the

both the immediate and the revolutionary class struggles of the workers of the entire capitalist world.

For a new Bolshevik party and a Leninist-Trotskyist International

Only the spreading and joining of these struggles into a world revolutionary struggle can save the workers' state from a fate of disintegration. If successful we can turn the tables on capitalism and hurl it into the abyss. But to accomplish all these tasks a new political leadership is the most burning necessity.

The deep revolutionary crisis which the states of the former Soviet Union are passing through poses in the most direct manner possible the need for a new revolutionary leadership dedicated to the immediate and strategic interests of the working class. Such a leadership does not exist today and this is the most dangerous situation imaginable.

Events in Eastern Europe in 1989 and 1990 show that when a revolutionary situation develops and the proletariat has no revolutionary leadership, the possibilities of a progressive outcome to the struggle diminish as time passes. The outcome will be the triumph of counter-revolutionary forces. Today the forces of counter-revolution are far stronger, even within the ranks of the labour movement, than are the forces of revolutionary communism.

But this is no cause for despair. Objective conditions, economic and political are acting to undermine and expose these forces. There is a whole spectrum of confused reformist and centrist forces many of whose militants can be won to the programme of workers' council power.

The condition is that the revolutionary forces are assembled as the nucleus of a revolutionary party on a clear programme and that they use the most daring and flexible tactics to gain a hearing and win leadership in the mass workers' organisations. This latter task should extend not only to the struggle for soviets and workers' militia but also for a revolutionary party embracing the vanguard of the working class.

After the failed August 1991 coup attempt the CPSU—a party claiming 15 million members—disappeared, leaving a series of groupings which consist at best of some tens of thousands of workers and intellectuals. A number of these parties claim the heritage of the CPSU in its worst Stalinist phase.

The avowedly neo-Stalinist All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Nina Andreyeva is one. This has played a role in mobilisations against the recent price rises. Others include parties such as the Democratic Movement of Communists, Russian Communist Workers' Party and the League of Communists. But to follow behind these banners would mean to cripple workers' democracy and spell further national oppression for the non-Russian peoples. These people even form blocs with the fascist Pamyat and espouse anti-semitic slogans.

Other fragments of the disintegrating CPSU regrouped to form social-democratic outfits modelled on the West European parties such as the Socialist Workers' Party of Roy Medvedev, all of whom accept the restoration of capitalism.

Still other reformist and centrist forces such as the Socialist Party (Boris Kagarlitsky) and the left wing of

the former Marxist Platform of the CPSU (Buzgalin) are trying to win the trade unions to the project of a "Labour" or "Workers" Party. Some see it as a British or Scandinavian Social Democratic parliamentary party, others as nearer to the Brazilian Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT).

Faced with these developments revolutionaries should welcome and encourage every serious step by the trade unions and the factory organisations towards class independence and towards a definitive break with the influence of the restorationists and the old Stalinists bureaucrats.

The workers' organisations can and should play a role as midwife to the birth of an anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic revolutionary workers party.

We will fight to convince fellow workers that the only viable basis for an independent workers party is our revolutionary action programme, real democratic centralism, a party of workers' action not parliamentary waffle and deals behind the scenes. To this end the unions, factory committees and workers' councils must make an immediate political break from the restorationist leaders. We fight for an all republic congress of elected delegates from the workers' organisations to form a new workers' party.

Given the balance of political forces within the former USSR it is unlikely that this can be done in one leap. It will need a strong internal ideological struggle against the forces trying to ensure that such a party is a reformist party. The programme or the leadership of a Buzgalin or a Kagarlitsky would be fatal. They would take the party into the dead-end of social-democratic reformism. They are unwilling and unable to fight restoration in principle or to defend the workers' historic gains. Both accept some form of market economy as inevitable.

With all of the reconstituted political forces vying for the leadership of the working class it may be possible, and sometimes necessary, to make united fronts around limited issues of resistance to the current attacks. But far more important is to prevent these parties winning the struggle for leadership. Such an outcome would spell catastrophe for the workers of CIS. Against all these tendencies, revolutionary communists (Leninist-Trotskyists) have to form an organised faction struggling for their ideas.

The new party in its organisational structure must not be modelled on a Social Democratic, Labour or Stalinist basis. The former two, despite looking more democratic than the old Stalinist parties, are also machines for suppressing the real influence of the working class. The union leaders and the parliamentary representatives allow as much talking as you like in the base units and the conferences just so long as they are not bound by all this and can take all the decisions on practical policy themselves.

This is more deceitful than the bureaucratic (not democratic) centralism of the Stalinists but it is no less fatal for a workers' party that wants to fight for the interests of the rank and file workers.

Lenin's democratic centralism as embodied in the healthy Bolshevik party of the years 1912 to 1923, combined revolutionary discipline in action with an unprecedented internal democracy. Both were possible only on the basis of a membership who knew and understood

the party programme as a strategy for gaining and holding working class power. Thus every party member was capable of playing the role of a leader in the broader mass organisations. The working class which created such a party once can and must do so again.

But building a revolutionary party in one country is neither sufficient nor indeed is it possible. Now in the different states of the former USSR separate parties may be necessary wherever separate enemies and their state forces are faced. But these parties must all be detachments of a common international army. Nor can this be restricted to the CIS or to Eastern Europe.

We face the urgent need not only to build a new revolutionary party but a new revolutionary international. This must be a true political successor to Lenin's

Communist International and to Trotsky's Fourth International. Its task will be to co-ordinate the struggles of workers oppressed and exploited by capitalism and imperialism with those in the degenerated workers' states faced with restoration or continued Stalinist oppression.

Small in numbers, but with a decade of experience behind it, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) organises a nucleus of Trotskyists in a number of countries working towards this goal. We are confident in our ideas and our programme. We are likewise confident that the workers of the Commonwealth will rise to the challenge that imperialism now presents.

The LRCI and the workers of the Commonwealth meet at the crossroads of history. We must not fail.

Letter to the Socialist Workers Union (Russia)

International Secretariat of the LRCI

10 February 1992

Dear Comrades

The aim of this letter is twofold. Firstly, to spell out our criticisms of the politics of the SWU and the international organisation of which it is a part. Secondly, to explain our proposals to the SWU for discussion, joint work and regroupment of the left in the former USSR.

A revolutionary policy for the ex-USSR

Our most pressing area of disagreement with the WRP/Workers International concerns the Marxist analysis of the nature of the disintegrating Soviet state, the character of the bureaucracy and the policy of revolutionaries in relation to it.

The WI statement issued after the August coup, whilst containing many formulations we could agree with, contains one dangerous formulation which could lead to disorientation:

"The state apparatus is no longer an instrument for the defence of the nationalised property. In this sense today's state in the USSR is not a workers' state, degenerated or otherwise. But at the same time, this state has not been replaced by a capitalist state and the nationalised property relations have not been replaced by capitalist social relations. Here is a living contradictory process which has reached different stages in different countries of Eastern Europe. But which in no case has been completed."

"In the SU the bureaucracy remains in power 'the sole commanding stratum' (Trotsky). In some of the countries of Eastern Europe the Stalinist bureaucracy has been forced to share power with elements of the capitalist class."

"East Germany is now part of the German capitalist state. But even here the German state has yet to succeed in establishing capitalist property relations in eastern Germany. It is therefore impossible to paste on fixed labels to any of these states: 'workers' state' or 'capitalist state'. The method of 'normative sociology' which tries to determine the nature of things by reference to a set of fixed criteria is worthless." (*The International* No 7 Nov 1991)

This is both a departure from Marxism and a bad guide to understanding reality. In asserting that the USSR, and presumably still the CIS, is neither a workers' nor a bourgeois state, the WI can only mean that it is a transitional form of state, embodying a developing contradiction.

But are the relative strengths of the contradictory elements unknown or unknowable? What events would

constitute the decisive resolution of this contradiction?

To state that a form is in transition does not absolve us from the need to answer these questions since it is from this concrete analysis that our tasks as revolutionaries flow. As with all such transitional forms it is necessary to discover which elements of the contradiction predominate. We would say that since the rise to power of Yeltsin, the USSR/CIS was a workers' state in transition back to capitalism.

The *governments* in the vast majority of the CIS states certainly no longer defend the post-capitalist property relations. But they have not yet succeeded in introducing capitalist property relations.

However, when deciding the class character of a state Marxists proceed from an understanding of the property relations, not the nature of the government in power. So in as much as nationalised property exists, in as much as the relations between the main means of production and distribution and banking remain (however fractured and in disarray) co-ordinated *a priori* rather than *post-festum*, i.e. they operate according to the principles of a bureaucratic plan, then the countries of the ex-USSR remain workers' states.

Despite the edicts abolishing the key agencies of centralised planning the mechanisms which suppressed the operation of the law of value continue to dominate the economy, albeit in a disabled form. Gosstab (the material supplies agency), for example, continues to dominate the wholesale distribution of raw materials to state enterprises in the absence of a capitalist market wholesale system.

The central bank in Russia continues to operate the old policy of systematically subsidising loss-making plants (maybe a third or more of the 44,000 enterprises) and thereby preventing the domination of profit criteria in the operation of the factories and in the supply of credit and investment funds.

In short, the law of value, the circulation of capital, does not yet dominate economic life and capitalism has therefore not been restored. But the collapse of production, the descent of exchange into barter, indicates that the planned economy is in the midst of a process of disintegration which is being prolonged by the weakness of capital as a social force within the former USSR.

A government is in power determined to make the attempt at constructing the institutions of a (state) capitalist market economy. But between the intention and the deed lie months if not years of struggle: struggle against the working class; struggle between fractions of the old nomenklatura, the mafia/co-operatives and the

aspiring "legitimate" bourgeoisie; struggle with the monopolies and international financial agencies of the imperialist powers

To achieve the goals of this restoration process, the industrial and financial (fiscal and monetary) system needs to be completely reconstructed, and the labour process and social security/welfare system needs uprooting.

The bourgeois government is fighting to replace the old dying system with a new capitalist one, but because they cannot do it overnight or all at once, for that reason they cannot simply abolish the system they hate so much. The triumph of the capitalist system has been brought very much nearer as a result of the political victory of the Yeltsinites after the August coup, but it is not yet assured.

We do not believe that this is a situation which can continue indefinitely. However, whilst the republics of the CIS have predominantly bourgeois governments, sitting on top of an alien set of social relations which they are seeking to destroy, we continue to describe these republics as degenerate workers' states. Is this a "fixed category" or a piece of "normative sociology"? Trotsky did not think so when he coined the definition in the 1930s as a way of (inadequately, as he himself admitted) capturing the contradiction that was the USSR.

Today, of course, we can extend the definition to make it more concrete, to capture more of the complexity of the process that is underway in the CIS. We can say that the CIS is a collection of degenerate workers' states in which there is an uneven process of capitalist restoration and (even now) an uneven triumph of the forces of capitalist restoration embodied in the governments of these republics. (Tadjikistan, for example, still has an old conservative caste in power).

We would have to add that the level of *dual power* within the political/military state apparatus and between this and the economic apparatus is also uneven within and between the various republics.

Perhaps one could conclude that at their present stage the CIS republics are best called "moribund workers' states", that is, degenerate to the stage of being on the point of death.

Normative thinking by its very nature counterposes an abstract norm to the living and complex reality. We do not believe that we can be accused of normative thinking because we continue to characterise the CIS as a collection of degenerate workers' states.

When we turn to the programme of the WI it is obvious, for all its worrying about fixing labels to the ex-USSR, that the WI acts as though these states were still some form of workers' states, whatever it may think.

The WI admits as much when it calls for "political revolutions" in these states: "We say political revolution because the restoration of capitalism has not yet been accomplished. The basic conquest of October, the nationalised property, although gravely menaced, still remains."

It is precisely, and only, this existence of the "basic conquest of October" that has served to characterise the USSR as any form of workers' state for Trotskyists.

Refusal to give the former workers' states a class characterisation would at best leave the comrades of the WI blind to crucial moments. At worst, it can become an excuse for unprincipled political alliances with those who believe the USSR was *never* a workers' state.

It is clear from our discussions that there are comrades in the SWU who disagree with Trotsky's whole analysis of the USSR and prefer some form of "state capitalist" or "bureaucratic collectivist" analysis. Perhaps this form of words is designed to cover over the differences. We hope not. Because the class characterisation, despite the fact that post-capitalist property relations are on their deathbed in the former USSR, still holds the key to action.

Here we must reiterate the criticism we made of the SWU's leaflets produced in response to the August coup. As you know, we believe you were correct to oppose the coup, correct to offer unity in action to defend the White House, something other so-called "Trotskyists" were incapable of.

Our major criticism of your leaflets produced during and after the coup is that nowhere did they contain the clear call for the defence of the post-capitalist property relations. In the demands focused around the defeat of the coup, and the prevention of Yeltsin's counter coup, you were largely correct.

But we feel it was necessary to make clear the working class alternative to the Yeltsinites' policy, which you correctly describe as: "widespread privatisation, anti-union laws . . . massive unemployment, hyperinflation and in the end a new dictatorship."

In the first place, this is vital because we stood with those defending the gains of the previous period in the sphere of political rights against the coup-makers, we fought amongst the masses who responded to Yeltsin's calls for strikes and demonstrations.

Secondly, in order to make clear our differences with both wings of the bureaucracy, who merely differed in their chosen method and tempo of capitalist restoration, we have to spell out to the masses our strategic goal. This should have been, and can still be, the defence of social gains, the re-imposition of planning by the workers etc.

If we can spell out our opposition to the conscript army and our alternative to it (as you did in your leaflet) we should also be able to stand before the masses and say: "No to the bureaucratic plan, no to the market. Defend the gains and renew them through an emergency plan under workers' control."

If there are comrades who disagree that the USSR was a workers' state, that the CIS remains, for the moment a workers' state with a bourgeois government, it is still no reason to refuse to clearly raise defence of the existing gains.

On the contrary. It is possible that, given the urgency and centrality of revolutionary action at this moment, Trotskyists could unite in the same party with those who have always disagreed with our analysis of the USSR, as long as there was a common action programme to defend the gains and re-impose planning.

Such a programme would not necessarily be inconsistent with the proclaimed goals of some "state capitalist". In general, however, most groups holding this analysis have rejected the call for the defence of the gains and the imposition of a workers' plan precisely because they continue to see the Stalinist "ruling class" as the main enemy and the main actor in the transition to a market economy.

This is a position which the WRP's whole analysis of the bureaucracy leaves them weak to combat. We fear

that if the SWU takes on board this method it will find itself disarmed in the face of events, as the omission of the defence of the social gains partially disarmed you in August.

We think that the WI allows its programme to be determined by what demands are already spontaneously popular. Further more advanced demands that the WI privately think are necessary, are left to be raised "automatically" by the workers in the course of the struggle. Both these positions flow from a false understanding of the nature of the crisis of proletarian leadership and how to resolve it.

The experience of a bureaucratic administrative command economy has undoubtedly caused untold damage to the idea of a consciously planned economy as a goal to be striven for. The job of convincing the workers in the CIS that there is a rational, democratic alternative to Stalinist dictat and adventurism in the realm of the economy is an uphill struggle *at present*; it involves swimming against the stream, something that Trotskyists should be used to by now.

In the coming period, during the months and years of disintegration and economic decline, the manifest failure of "market forces" to provide the promised goods, services and social security that even the old system provided this consciousness will begin to change. There will develop—as is already happening in Poland—a revival of workers' readiness to fight for a collectivist, state-owned but democratically planned economy.

The real question is, will the Polish workers and the workers of the CIS states encounter a leadership able to meet and develop these aspirations with a scientific and concrete programme? Not if the "vanguard" has abandoned its principles or kept quiet about them.

The fact that Trotskyists openly championed the unpopular cause of the planned economy will then strengthen them against the old Stalinist forces who are seeking to regain mass influence on the backs of growing discontent with the daily experience of the onset of "really existing capitalism".

The character of the bureaucracy

The WRP has consistently stuck to the old International Committee doctrine that the Stalinist bureaucracy was "counter-revolutionary through and through". In examining our disagreements with this formula it is necessary to pin down exactly what it means.

Is the bureaucracy an agent of the bourgeoisie in the workers' state? Undoubtedly it is. Those Trotskyists who believed that the bureaucracy had a dual *nature*, capable of acting at times in the interests of the workers (the "blunt instrument" of Mandel) and at times in the interests of the bourgeoisie, were wrong.

However, there are other agents of the bourgeoisie, other privileged castes which serve the bosses but claim to represent the workers: the reformist trade union bureaucracy, the Labourite and social democratic leaders. So close is the parallel between the phenomena of the Soviet bureaucracy and the trade union leaders of the west that Trotsky continually used the latter to explain the former.

The point is that, whilst serving the bourgeoisie, each of these castes is a living contradiction. Thoroughly bour-

geois in politics, they rest on working class social forms—the workers' state, the workers' party, the workers' unions.

Thus if the term "thoroughly counter-revolutionary" signifies that the bureaucracy's politics are counter-revolutionary we have no problem. However, "counter-revolutionary through and through" has always signified for the WRP/International Committee tradition the absence of a contradiction between the politics and the social base of the Soviet bureaucracy. The bureaucracy was simply destined to be the agent of social counter-revolution.

It seems to us that the WRP tradition has drawn from Trotsky's analysis of the cancerous and syphilitic character of Stalinism in the labour movement or the USSR, the false conclusion that Stalinism is simply an alien growth, a grafting on of a foreign body by the imperialist bourgeoisie.

But this was not Trotsky's analysis. It is closer to that of Max Schachtman and James Burnham who consistently at least realised that if Stalinism was completely alien then it must constitute a different class.

The Stalinist bureaucratic caste is a cancer, a monstrous cancer produced out of the backwardness and isolation of the world's first workers' state. Trotsky was well aware that it was a growth that would weaken and ultimately destroy the organism of the workers' state. It is indeed alien to the historic interests and goal of the Labour movement.

It is no better and no worse in this respect than its elder brother the social-democratic and trade union bureaucracy. Like them it is rooted in the living world wide movement of the toilers' struggle for their own emancipation. We have faced and will face many of its cadres as workers' leaders, treacherous ones to be sure, but leaders that we have to discredit and replace in struggle.

It is a small step from the WRP's view to the proposition that Stalinist parties are not an organic part of the international labour movement. This error usually leads to a prettifying of social democracy and systematic political adaptation to it in the imperialist countries, even siding with it in its clashes with Stalinism in the labour movement.

Gerry Healy laid the foundations for this tradition in Britain with his gross opportunism to the Labour Party Left in the late 1940s and 1950s, an adaptation he only pragmatically broke with in the second half of the 1950s with the proscription of his forces in the Labour Party after 1954 and the emergence of a layer of dissident Communist party members appalled by the crushing of the Hungarian revolution by Stalin in 1956. But the political method at the heart of this analysis of Stalinism remained to guide the overall politics of the WRP groupings.

This one-sided view of the bureaucracy was certainly a departure from Trotsky. Trotsky said that the bureaucracy played a "dual role". Defending the property relations of October only in so far as its privileges were based upon those property relations, but threatening constantly to undermine those property relations by its inability to use them to build socialism.

Today, the WI acknowledges the dual role of the bureaucracy in Trotsky's analysis. But only when it no longer has any consequences for action:

"Today that dual role exists no more. No longer does

the bureaucracy defend its power and privileges on the basis of nationalised property. It now sets out to use the state power to break up this property and transform itself into a component of the world bourgeoisie and the Soviet state into a capitalist one."

We do not dispute that this is the project of the current rulers of the CIS. But this does not solve the problem of how to characterise the historical phenomenon of the Soviet bureaucracy. If the bureaucracy used to play a dual role but at the decisive moment ceased to play such a role, then clearly Trotsky's "dual role" characterisation was wrong because it encompassed only one side of the phenomenon of the bureaucracy. That is the implication of the WI statement.

We on the contrary stand by Trotsky's characterisation. Trotsky always insisted that the contradiction-racked bureaucracy would *fragment* faced with the possibility of restoration. If it is counter-revolutionary "through and through", if its social mission is simply to open the door for capitalism, then why does it need to fragment at this moment?

The possibility of its fragmentation under the impact of the pressure of more substantial class forces (i.e. imperialism and the working class) itself implies that the bureaucracy is made up of factions that correspond to different layers of the bureaucracy. This layering is complex and layers cross each other.

The military industrial complex in opposition to the consumer goods enterprises or ministries, the armed forces versus civilian politicians, the all-Union as opposed to Republican-level bureaucracy, the diplomats and bureaucrats with the closest connections to imperialist politicians and bankers in opposition to the autarkists: all these and many more fractions under the regime of bureaucratically acquired privileges induce dissent and even open conflict which only ever finds its real suppression faced with the challenge of the working class to its power as a caste.

Trotsky also recognised that under the impact of overwhelming capitalist pressure the majority of the bureaucracy would go with the restorationists. But even then not all bureaucrats can become new capitalists.

The WI assertion that the bureaucracy once had a dual role, but in carrying through the restoration process it has negated that role, makes nonsense of Trotsky's dialectical understanding of the contradiction within the bureaucracy.

The ability of Yeltsin *et al.* to become the pioneers of restoration is lodged within the dual role Trotsky ascribed to the bureaucracy. So was Stalin's ability to extend post-capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe between 1947 and 1951.

But in carrying through the restoration process the bureaucracy does not simply transform itself into a capitalist class and transform the state into a capitalist state. It carries through a purgation of the state and the bureaucracy itself, destroying the whole system of nomenklatura by a combination of administrative measures and repression.

If we look at the example of Poland, far more advanced along the road to restoration than the CIS, it is not the case that the bureaucracy has simply transformed itself into a capitalist class. A leading section of the bureaucracy indeed colluded with the destruction and purgation

of the whole system of bureaucratic rule.

But having performed this invaluable role it has itself been purged or pensioned off as a coherent social stratum. In the ex-DDR the former bureaucracy has manifestly failed to become part of the German imperialist ruling class.

The concept of the bureaucracy as a whole simply transforming itself into a capitalist class has far more in common with the state capitalist understanding of the restoration process. It implies what the state capitalists make explicit: that Trotsky's understanding of the bureaucracy was nonsense.

Worse still, it leaves the SWU disarmed in the face of potential developments. After the victory of Yeltsin in August the dual power which existed between the "conservative" and the "radical" factions of the bureaucracy was progressively resolved in Yeltsin's and the fast-track restorationists' favour.

The final moment in this resolution of the intra-bureaucratic conflict might have appeared to be the declaration of the CIS and the destruction of the grip of the centralist, slow pace restorationist' grip on central power. However, now it is clear that one critical element of the centralised bureaucracy—the military and its related industries—remains in conflict with the rulers of the CIS republics. The Georgian conflict was a reflection of this.

In the immediate future it is not ruled out that the central military bureaucracy will intervene once more if mass discontent with the restorationists "shock therapy" hits the streets and the factories.

They will act not to save the gains of October, nor with much chance of a stable victory, but with the aim of preserving what they can of their old parasitic role.

They are driven to such actions by the certainty that the destruction of the old centralised Soviet Union and its armed forces and their replacement with the new republics' armies marks the end of their caste's existence.

We are not accusing the comrades of the SWU of being blind to the reality of this threat. It is a threat apparent to every serious analyst of the CIS. But how is the threat to be explained theoretically, if the bureaucracy is analysed as having simply "abandoned" its dual role?

Even now the military-industrial segment of the former Soviet bureaucracy is attempting to defend its privileges which rested on the USSR's former character as a degenerate workers' state, first class military power and Stalinist prison house of nations.

Dual power still finds an echo in the conflict between the Russian parliament and the institutions formally subordinated to it such as the Central Bank and the executive team under Yeltsin's Presidency. This conflict over the direction and pace of restorationist measures after 2 January is another indicator that the bureaucracy inherited from the USSR is not united.

Important political consequences flow from this. Would we give political support to a new coup if, this time, the masses or substantial segments of them saw the army as saviours from the hell of the shock therapy?

No. We cannot be in favour of the restoration of a military-Stalinist dictatorship even if this slows or halts many of the restoration measures. This might well be the case since to preserve their disintegrating privileges they might have to do just this and patch together what

elements of the bureaucratic command economy they can. But as events in China after Tiananmen Square showed, this would at best be a temporary measure.

The accompanying price would be terrible indeed for the working class and its historic objectives. First the prime objectives of the generals and marshals would be the restoration of order in the republics i.e. the overthrow of the non-Russian nationalist governments. This would almost certainly lead to war.

The military regime would undoubtedly crush the independent workers organisations, ban strikes and demonstrations, muzzle the press and arrest all their political opponents including their Trotskyist ones. There can be no question of supporting the seizure of power by the army.

But does it flow from this that we should defend the governments of Yeltsin, Kravchuk *et al.*?

No! They are not a "lesser evil" to the generals. They are carrying out the restoration of capitalism and we wish to see their downfall but at the hands of mass workers action and their replacement by a workers government based on 1917-style soviets.

Is this then a neutral abstentionist policy? Not for one minute. We should defend the democratic rights of the workers and the nationalities. In the case of those states that have seceded from the old Union we should support their resistance to any re-imposed central domination by the SAF. We should support the defence of the right to organise of the independent workers organisations and oppose the closure by the Stalinists of all mass political parties and movements apart from those of the fascists and pogromists.

On the other hand we would critically support any measures which reverse or halt the privatisation, the inflation the destruction of the planning apparatus, or which defend national minorities against attack. But we have no political confidence in, and will give no political support to, the military and the hard-line Stalinists (Andreyevna etc).

They are nearer by far to the "faction of Butenko" than the "faction of Reiss" whatever the misnamed Spartacists claim. Their long term collusion, sponsoring and present bloc with Pamyat prove this.

The Trotskyists, whilst being willing to form a united front of struggle for any objective which aids the workers in their overall strategy of carrying out a political revolution, must preserve organisational independence and must seek to win the workers away from both the "democratic" restorationists and the Stalinist opponents of restoration.

Only real class independence from both the Stalinists and the neo-liberal bourgeois forces, represented by an anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic programme, is a basis for the resolution of the crisis.

Has capitalism been restored in Germany?

There is an even more potentially disorientating error contained within the WI resolution. Namely the assertion that capitalism has not been restored in the former GDR. If the criteria adopted to assert this are maintained by the comrades of the SWU they will be literally blind to the moment when capitalism is restored in the CIS.

It is not the simple "incorporation" of the former GDR

into the borders of an enlarged German imperialism which dictates that the post-capitalist property relations have been destroyed. Nor was it the election of a pro-bourgeois government in the elections of March 1990.

The LRCI dates the overthrow of the degenerate workers' state from the moment of the currency union, July 2 1990, which preceded political union by several months. The State Treaty which came into force on 2 July 1990 abolished every aspect of planned regulation of the economy. It repealed every law which contradicted laws guaranteeing the law of value in the FRG. It introduced a common currency under the control of the central bank of German imperialism.

Even though it did not immediately denationalise the commanding heights of the economy, the 2 July Treaty decisively consolidated the law of value as the fundamental regulator of economic activity.

This was accomplished in Germany because of the extraordinary conditions of the pre-existence of a German imperialist bourgeoisie, allowing the former GDR to be incorporated into a functioning capitalist system, and the willingness of German imperialism to pour billions of D-Marks into the restoration process.

The absence of these conditions in the former USSR, indeed throughout Eastern Europe, has so far prevented any former Stalinist state from making a qualitative transformation back to capitalism. But such a transformation is not impossible. The struggle against it is the key task for the proletariat of the former Stalinist states. That is why we have made the defence of the remaining gains, and the re-introduction of centralised planning, under workers' control, the key to our action programme for the workers of the CIS.

Where Next?

We do not hold our action programme up as the last word in Marxism's contribution to a workers solution to the current crisis. We are eager to correct it and develop it in discussion with the SWU and any other groups or individuals who are prepared to accept its basic approach: a working class resistance to restoration, strategically independent of the remnants of the bureaucracy, through transitional demands aimed at the seizure of power.

We are convinced that, as with all Marxist programmes, reality and the workers own experience will immeasurably sharpen our programme. We present it to the SWU as the basis for a discussion about the most urgent task: building a revolutionary workers party as part of a Leninist-Trotskyist International. We genuinely seek principled unity on the basis of a common programme with the widest possible forces.

We urge all genuine working class revolutionaries not to let manoeuvre, or the conservatism of the apparatuses of various competing centrist Trotskyist currents, prevent the revolutionary vanguard from clarifying its goals and unifying itself for action.

A Soviet section of the FI?

The very slogan your organisation is founded on indicates that your aim is to build a "Soviet section of the Fourth International". Clearly, as we have already stated, we are in favour of the struggle for a Trotskyist party in

the former USSR. We reject the method of Ernest Mandel's USFI which remains content to follow existing fragments of the bureaucracy or tail consciously social democratic restorationists. But we think the slogan "for a Soviet section of the FI" is pure metaphysics, for one simple reason: the FI does not exist.

In our view the Fourth International's political capitulation to Titoism in 1951, followed by the unprincipled organisational split in 1953 led to its destruction. In its place exist various fragments; international tendencies and national-centred grouplets. Every one of them is politically centrist—wavering between revolutionary phrases and opportunist practice.

Before we can talk of a "Soviet section" of the Trotskyist International there must first of all be such an International, founded on a common programme and analysis which overcomes the decades of disorientation and political capitulation to alien class forces which has characterised the history of the FI's fragments.

We think the whole rationale behind the WRP/WI call to "build the FI" demonstrates that they have not broken from this centrist legacy, and are incapable of providing a solution to it.

Revolutionary continuity?

The WRP comrades speak of the FI as if it still existed, not because they recognise any of the existing claimants to the title as revolutionary, but because they believe a political continuity has existed in certain specific organisations which emerged from the disintegration of the FI.

The WRP believes that the disease which undermined the health of the FI was something called "Pabloite revisionism". The comrades correctly criticise the essential error of the Pablo/Mandel leadership of the FI in the late 40s/early 50s: strategic capitulation to Stalinism. For Pablo, Stalinism was the "blunt instrument" the working class was obliged to use to overthrow capitalism, because of the weakness of the revolutionary vanguard.

Pablo and Mandel resigned themselves to every revolution inevitably passing through a period of bureaucratic rule—humanity might even have to look forward to "centuries of deformed workers' states".

They came to regard revolution as mainly an objective process which swept up such "unconscious" Trotskyists as Tito, Mao, Castro, Ho Chi Minh and obliged them to carry out revolutionary tasks. Consequently they refused to fight for Trotskyist parties in countries where such leaders emerged.

The WRP identifies the International Committee and its various offshoots as representing the "revolutionary continuity" of the FI. For us the problem is that the IC and its offshoots committed errors of equal magnitude to the "Pabloites".

No section of the IC ever repudiated the 1948 IS and IEC declarations of the FI which labelled Tito's split with Stalin an anti-bureaucratic split.

None of them made an honest accounting of the 1951 Third World Congress which systematised and generalised these capitulations into a whole method. This method was absorbed and accepted by all the leaders of the subsequent splits *not only by Pablo and Mandel*.

Bleibtreu, one of the leaders of the IC, berated the FI's Chinese section for its refusal to bend the knee to Mao

and enter his Stalinist party. The 1953 split in the FI occurred for the essential reason that Pablo attempted to force the US, British and French sections into a organisational capitulation to Stalinism, whilst they themselves were engaged in an organisational capitulation to non-Stalinist reformist parties.

There was no break from the false method of "*entrism sui generis*" only with the idea that this applied to the countries where Stalinism was a weak or secondary force or where the FI section was deeply enmeshed with the Stalinophobic wing of left social-democracy.

The best example of this is Gerry Healy's group, which the WRP emerged from. Long before its denunciation of Pabloism' capitulation to Stalinism Healy's group was engaged in its own capitulation to British Labourism. It carried out deep entry work in the Labour Party, posing as merely loyal left wingers. In the 1950s Healy's group produced a joint paper with the Labour left, which remained a pro-imperialist left.

Even the WRP comrades belatedly recognise the depth of the IC leaders' capitulation to social democracy and petit bourgeois nationalism. They wrote in 1988: "It was to these same alien class forces that the main leaders and organisations of the International Committee (Healy and Lambert) themselves also succumbed".

The WRP comrades are even prepared to call Healy and Lambert's mistakes "Pabloite revisionism". Yet they still insist that the IC in some way represented a continuity with Trotskyism. How is this to be explained?

Is it because within Healy and Lambert's groups there were comrades waging a principled struggle against the "Pabloite errors"? No. For years, the current leaders of the WRP were the slavish supporters of Gerry Healy and his defenders in the Labour movement.

Is it because the capitulations to alien forces occurred only much later? As we have shown they occurred even before the 1953 split. The attempt by the current leaders of the WRP (Workers Press) to pass off the history of the degeneration of the WRP as the work of the "Healy clique" during the 1970s and 1980s just will not work.

If by "clique" we are meant to understand the leading bodies or even the full-time apparatus who ran the WRP from its centre day by day, then many of those who now lead the work of the WRP were integral to that earlier phase of its degeneration, contributed to it and have never made a conscious political break with it beyond distancing themselves from the appalling personal abuses of Healyism *in extremis*.

In short, there is no rational, materialist explanation for the statement that "the 1952-53 break with Pabloism, the founding of and then the struggle conducted by the International Committee were decisive, because they maintained the continuity of the FI against revisionism, despite the weakness, the inconsistencies and also their own Pabloite errors, of the forces who constituted the IC." (*Expanded Ten Points*, 1989)

The idea of a Fourth International existing somewhere hidden behind the unlovely reality of Gerry Healy's political practice is irrational and metaphysical. We believe it is designed to console those who cannot face the fact that revolutionary continuity was broken by the generation of Trotskyist leaders after World War Two.

It flows from the WRP's assertion that the FI has in some way continued to exist that they regard Trotsky's 1938 Transitional Programme as the adequate basis to "build" the FI, and presumably its Soviet section: "The unification of all Trotskyist forces on this programme is our objective." (*Expanded Ten Points*)

Hopefully events themselves will convince the comrades of the SWU of the inadequacy of this basis.

First of all, the WRP's rigid adherence to the letter and not the method of the Transitional Programme has blinded them to the reality of one of the fundamental facts of human history. After 1945 capitalism recovered, on the basis of huge defeats of the working class, the temporary supremacy of US imperialists, the loyalty of the Soviet bureaucracy and its agents.

It was able to unleash a tremendous development of the productive forces. This development was so great that, despite capitalism's collapse into a prolonged period of slow growth and recession after 1973, it was still able to economically outstrip and undermine the economies of the former Stalinist states.

We have dealt in detail with this argument elsewhere (*Workers Power* No. 150 January 1992). The main point is to recognise that it leads to profound mistakes of an analytical nature—the assertion that humanity's productive forces have "stagnated" since 1938. These in turn lead to political errors, namely the WRP's differential hostility to Stalinism and its understanding of Stalinism's role in the restoration of capitalism.

For if capitalism has remained moribund, its prodigious growth irrelevant or illusory, what is to blame for the relative absence of revolutionary struggles in the west? What is to blame for capitalism's victory in the cold war? It can only be Stalinism. We have traced the origin of this position above.

First, however it is necessary to point out another error the WRP comrades have made in their struggle to reorientate themselves and build an international tendency: unprincipled manoeuvrism.

The danger of manoeuvrism

When the WRP emerged from the split with Healy Workers Power and the LRCI welcomed and encouraged the process of reconsideration which was taking place. We constantly sought to engage in fraternal discussion the members and leaders of the WRP. When the WRP announced it was setting up a "Preparatory Committee" for an international Trotskyist conference we asked to participate.

However, the WRP, in alliance with Morenoite LIT, introduced as a precondition for participation "Ten Points", which included the acceptance that the IC, along with Moreno and his organisation, had represented a "continuity" with Bolshevism and the FI. After succeeding in excluding many organisations, including the LRCI, who genuinely wished to participate in the Open Conference, the WRP then predictably split with the LIT, whose praises it had been singing. Since then we have heard nothing about Moreno representing the "continuity" of Trotskyism. The whole episode is revealed as an unprincipled manoeuvre designed to prevent a critical reappraisal of post-war Trotskyism.

The Preparatory Committee transformed itself into the Workers International for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International. This too was founded at a conference billed as "open" by the WRP. In fact it was an exclusionist conference.

The Workers International was founded with forces who clearly rejected Trotskyism. As the WRP themselves admitted:

"On one point Workers Power is correct: we did not restrict participation in the conference to those who considered themselves Trotskyists. There were groups and individuals present in Budapest who did not necessarily agree with us that the fight for the continuity of the struggle for the FI is the central task facing the working class" (*The International* July 1990)

However, the LRCI, along with other groups who had expressed a willingness to join the Preparatory Committee at an earlier stage, was excluded. The WRP's rationale for this was that . . . we claimed that the continuity of the FI has been destroyed. So non-Trotskyists are welcome in the WI, but Trotskyists who disagree with the WRP's own ever-changing, version of history are excluded!

The reason for this is that the WRP fears a genuine political confrontation between different ideas and tendencies. In Britain it plays virtually no active role in the class struggle. Its militants develop activity according to their own enthusiasms, are free to become minor trade union bureaucrats, even editors of bureaucrats' union newspapers, without being obliged to fight for their programme. The WRP shows no interest in the struggle to convince the thousands of youth being misled by centrism and anarchism, but concentrates its polemical arguments virtually exclusively on the ageing Stalinist milieu and the ex Healyite groups, who count for nothing.

This is particularly counterproductive given the task facing anyone who claims to stand for the revolutionary Marxism of Leon Trotsky. Faced with world-shattering events we all have a duty to find out in practice whether organisation unity around a common programme is possible. We offer the comrades of the SWU the fraternal warning that the WRP's whole method since the split with Healy militates against this goal. It replaces honest debate with diplomacy and unprincipled manoeuvre.

What kind of regroupment?

Concretely, we ask that the SWU joins us in the call for a Trotskyist conference in the CIS, open to all who claim to be Trotskyists, aimed at the creation of a common organisation based on a common programme and democratic centralism. It remains possible, but not likely that even the forces who have been attracted to the stagnant, ossified Trotskyist "internationals" can be won. We expect that such groups as the Spartacists, with their strategic alliance with the Stalinist bureaucrats, will not join such a project. Likewise the USFI's supporters, still attached to a variant of the same alliance, will not be interested in the fight for a Trotskyist party.

However, many of the subjectively revolutionary and socialist militants in the CIS are unschooled in the cynical methods of their international mentors. In addition there are forces to be won from revolutionary anarcho-syndicalism and, most crucial from the vast mass of presently

passive and unorganised workers, soldiers and young people.

The LRCI is prepared to put its resources into that fight. We ask members of the SWU to join in common

action with us, and to take no part in excluding us from the process of regroupment needed in the CIS and internationally.

Dave Hughes memorial fund

After the tragic death of our comrade Dave Hughes in August 1991 the LRCI launched a Memorial Fund for work in the USSR/CIS. Since then we have received donations totalling £1,722.

With this cash we have been able to provide much needed resources for our work in the former USSR. The money has been used to finance regular extended visits by LRCI comrades to strengthen the work in the CIS. We have produced two issues of a Russian paper, *Rabochaya Vlast*, and have sold hundreds of copies each issue.

The *Trotskyist Manifesto*, programme of the LRCI, has been translated into Russian and published as a pamphlet. We are selling these as quickly as we have printed them and have plans for further print runs.

The money has enabled us to plan an ambitious programme of translation of our theoretical material into Russian, essential if we are to help overcome the ideological confusion that pervades the Russian working class and radical left. With this material we hope to produce a regular journal as a complement to a series of leaflets and news-sheets with which to intervene in the political ferment within the CIS.

In February the LRCI held its first public meeting in Moscow – a debate with the Federation of Revolutionary Anarchists.

With our small forces we have been able to play a part in initiating united front demonstrations, holding joint meetings and giving out leaflets to raise a voice of protest against Yeltsin which is not tainted with Stalinism, nationalism and chauvinism.

All of this means we continue to need money. We believe it is proof of our seriousness as a revolutionary organisation that, unlike many, we have not simply sat back analysing the collapse of Stalinism in the USSR. We are determined to intervene. We have trained comrades in languages, organised a permanent presence, and demanded self-sacrifice from our militants in order to carry out this work.

In this task we continue to be inspired by the exam-



ple of Dave Hughes, who devoted much of his time as a revolutionary militant to analysing Stalinism and the political situation in the USSR. He learned to speak and read Russian and used these skills to exploit every chink in the armour of Brezhnevite Stalinism in order to make contact with the Russian left wing opposition, and to disseminate Trotskyist literature.

Despite the current ascendancy of the capitalist restorationists and the growth of nationalism in the CIS, there are great opportunities for genuine Trotskyism. The LRCI is determined to make the most of these opportunities, but that will take considerable material, as well as political, resources. Our intervention is the most fitting tribute possible to Dave Hughes, and we urge you to support us in this work through further donations to the Dave Hughes Memorial Fund.

Send donations to:

DAVE HUGHES MEMORIAL FUND

c/o LRCI, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

(cheques payable to Trotskyist International)

Down with the imperialist "peace" in the Middle East! Smash the Zionist state!

International Secretariat of the LRCI

12 November 1991

The US-sponsored Middle East Peace Conference is intended to lead to a comprehensive treaty for the entire region. This grandiose plan by the imperialist powers is a measure of the confidence they feel after the collapse of the Soviet Union as a world power, the humiliating defeat of the strongest third world army in the Gulf War and the Soviet bureaucracy's complete acceptance of US domination in all spheres.

The Madrid Conference is the first instalment of a new agreement like that at Versailles which followed the First World War. Whatever the immediate outcome, in the long term the Conference will be as unable to resolve the fundamental problems faced by the "great powers" as its ill-fated predecessor.

The USA has not invested so much work in the conference merely as a vainglorious celebration of the "new world order": it is seizing the opportunity to achieve a regional peace settlement in its own interests. US imperialism has no intention of removing the root cause of the instability, violence and poverty in the Middle East: imperialist domination and its systematic balkanisation of the area.

Two major features of imperialism's rule in the region are the oppression of the Palestinian people, deprived of their land by the establishment of the Israeli state, and the exploitation of the oil wealth of the entire Middle East for the benefit of the imperialists' oil companies and industrial corporations.

The USA wants to find a better and more stable way of exercising economic and political control. It wants to stitch up a deal that will quell Palestinian unrest and reduce Arab hostility to the racist Zionist state, without granting real or lasting self-determination to the Palestinian people.

The USA has also won new allies in the region whom it wishes to consolidate. The most important of these is Syria, for many years an opponent of the USA's plans for the region and designated a "terrorist regime" by the White House before the Gulf War. Assad's apparent change of course has been brought about by the inability of the Soviet bureaucracy to maintain its intervention in the region. He shrewdly recognised that the war provided a window of opportunity to sell his services to US imperialism instead.

The US desperately needed to isolate Saddam Hussein from all Arab nationalist regimes and it was willing to pay a good price for this. Despite French protests, Maronite dominance in Lebanon was finally liquidated. With tacit US approval Syria received real hegemony there, disarming or marginalising the Palestinians and

the Shia militias. In return the Syrians agreed to go along with the US peace plans. They do not seek the liberation of Palestine but the recovery of the Golan Heights. If this were to be achieved Syria has made it clear she would come to terms with Israel.

Israeli intransigence is the real obstacle to US plans for the region. The Zionist state is beginning a massive new wave of settlement. The dominant forces in Israeli political life wish to maintain colonisation and, were the opportunity to arise, would favour further territorial expansion. They see even a disarmed Palestinian Bantustan as a potential security threat as well as a delegitimisation of Zionism's claim to the land of Israel. 300,000 new settlers arrived in the 18 months up to the end of June 1991; over 1,000,000 will have arrived by the end of 1994. Together with the 14,500 Ethiopian Jews who arrived over a three day period earlier this year, this would represent a 20% growth in Israel's population.

To pay for all this Israel is seeking a \$10 billion loan guarantee to ensure access to world capital markets, and a potential \$20-30 billion in loans over the next five years. This is in addition to the annual \$3 billion routine aid from the USA. This has given the USA an extra degree of leverage over its protégé. Indeed, the compliance of the Arab ruling class alone would never have been enough to bring the Zionist state to the negotiating table. Bush made it clear in June that US imperialism did not envisage funding any substantial increase in West Bank colonisation.

Israel's expansionism is not just a question of bloody minded intransigence. The internal stability of the country depends on it offering a first world lifestyle to Jewish immigrants from the collapsing Stalinist states and the imperialised countries who have been denied access to their preferred destination in the USA or Western Europe.

The Zionist state simply will not be able to cope with this influx if there is not a massive boost in US funds and an expansion of the territory open to settlement. Even with the anticipated loans, the cost of education and social provision for the new immigrants has required an increase in VAT, a surcharge on income tax and additional funds from the diaspora.

If Israel's economy were to drop to the level of the average semi-colonial country then it would rapidly cease to be a magnet to economic migrants. The declining income of the state would mean severe austerity, social and political instability and strife between Jews of different national origin. Already there have been reported clashes between Russian and Ethiopian Jews over exist-

ing housing. Soviet immigrants recently demonstrated in indignation at their lack of jobs and inadequate accommodation. The "land of milk and honey" already boasts 10% unemployment (160,000), which includes 40% of the Soviet influx since January 1990. The Bank of Israel estimates there will be 225,000 unemployed by the end of the year rising eventually to 400,000.

Israel simply could not hold itself together without transatlantic dollars, and the USA knows it. It would mean the progressive dissolution of the privileges that divide Jewish workers from their Arab brothers and sisters, and bind them to their Zionist class enemies. This hard cash dependence is what brought Shamir and Co to Madrid, but not before they demanded and gained further humiliating concessions from the Palestinians.

The Palestinian representatives cannot be PLO members, nor citizens of Jerusalem nor from communities beyond Israel and the occupied territories, and they must remain a subordinate component of the Jordanian delegation. Yet there remains a terrific gulf between what the Zionists are willing to concede and what the Arab and Palestinian regimes could accept or sell to their people.

The Zionists have clearly shown that they will not recognise any independent entity called the Palestinian people. For the Zionists Israel can have only one people: the Israeli Jews. This grossly racist and imperialist ideology is built into the whole *raison d'être* of the state itself. The Palestinians' right to self-determination is incompatible with the very existence of a confessional Jewish state in Palestine.

The Zionist bourgeoisie can accept no genuine expression of the will of the people of Palestine. But despite the views of Shamir and the present Likud coalition Zionist ruling class interests do not ultimately preclude a limited, reactionary settlement of the Palestinian national question. This might require a change in the governing Israeli coalition or even have to await the 1992 general election. Current US proposals are for a five year transition period with interim "self-government" on the West Bank and Gaza.

Even if actually carried out, this would be a cruel parody of independence and a sell-out of the Palestinians' historic demand for the re-establishment of a democratic secular state of Palestine, including the land stolen from them to establish the state of Israel in 1948.

Such a Palestinian "autonomous zone" or "authority" would have no ability to defend itself, no economic independence and would be unable to adopt any policy unacceptable to the Israeli capitalists and their state. With or without PLO participation, it would be a powerless puppet regime. Essentially it would remain a colony of Israel.

Such a settlement would ensure the regional superiority of the Zionists' vast and well primed army. It would preserve the racist principle of the Zionist state whilst developing an Arab bantustan in the West Bank, a source of cheap labour for the farms, building sites and factories for the Israeli capitalists.

After the choice sites have been allocated to new settlers, an "autonomous" West bank administration would encourage the development of a pliant administrative apparatus staffed by the Palestinian bourgeoisie and municipal bureaucracy, possibly even incorporating

a section of PLO officialdom.

This is the US vision of the Middle East under the new world order. World imperialism would sponsor such a project with the aim of guaranteeing regional stability by ending the Arab states' hostility to Zionism and their present half-hearted support for the Palestinian national struggle.

The Palestinians can expect little or no assistance from the parties of the Israeli liberals. An underlying continuum unites the religious bigots of Moledet to the "Zionist Left" of Mapam, Shinui and the Citizens' Rights Movement. They are all unable to consistently oppose discrimination in immigration and citizenship rights because they all refuse to accept an end to the constitutionally-established Jewish character of the state.

The most "left" Zionist formations can only go so far as to recognise Palestinian rights to a state alongside Israel. This would preserve the Israeli-Jewish privileges which have accumulated from the seizure of the best land, water supplies, developed towns and cities etc. as a result of the establishment of Israel within its 1948 borders. If the Israeli Jewish left is to take its place in the fight for lasting peace this must involve a radical rupture with Zionism in all its forms and a turn to a revolutionary proletarian and internationalist strategy.

Only the ending of private ownership of land and all the large-scale means of production can enable Arab and Israeli, Jewish, Moslem and Christian workers and peasants to share their common homeland without discrimination. Only a planned economy can allow all to work and to benefit equally from that work. In short only a workers state of Palestine can resolve the national question to the satisfaction of both communities. Such a state must be completely secular in character so that no one suffers discrimination or oppression.

The root cause of imperialism's current success is the acute crisis of leadership which afflicts the Arab masses in general, and the Palestinians in particular. The Palestinian movement is in confusion. The PLO, self-proclaimed "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people", is still suffering from US and Arab bourgeois disapproval of its support for Iraq during the Gulf War.

The PLO's remaining advance military bases have been neutralised by the Lebanese army. The hard won respectability with US, European and even Israeli liberal circles went up in the clouds of smoke from Scud missiles. Now the PLO has had to swallow formal exclusion from the negotiations. Arafat is under attack not only from the nationalist left and Islamic radicals but also from the Palestinian bourgeoisie in exile and on the West Bank, whose role in the negotiating process has been greatly enhanced.

The current disarray of the Palestinian masses is in part due to the mistaken political strategy advanced by the PLO. Its reliance on the guerilla struggle of a minority rather than the organised strength of the working class and poor peasantry, has atomised and weakened the national struggle.

Its diplomatic manoeuvres with imperialism and Arab bourgeois nationalist regimes have led to confusion and disorganisation. Its cross-class strategy has paved the way to defeat. In these circumstances other political forces sought to fill the vacuum, initially in the shape of the courageous intifada. But its leadership too has proved

unable to mobilise the mass of the Palestinian working class or appeal to progressive Jewish workers and mobilise them all in a class struggle to achieve both Palestinian liberation and the destruction of Israeli capitalism.

Today despite the weakening of the intifada a number of Palestinian groupings have opposed imperialism's plans: the Unified Command of the Palestinian Intifada, whose youthful leaders co-ordinate the revolt in the occupied territories; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine led by George Habash and the Islamic fundamentalists.

The Islamic movement Hamas and the PFLP have issued a joint statement condemning the talks and stating that Palestinian negotiator Faisal Husseini has no right to speak for the Palestinians, whilst the petit-bourgeois terrorists of Islamic Jihad have threatened to kill him. Unlike the other strands of Palestinian nationalism, the fundamentalists' religious ideology sees Zionist colonisation as primarily the usurpation of Islamic land.

In the context of Fatah's betrayal, and the disintegration of Stalinism, Islamic fundamentalism militancy may extend its roots among the petit bourgeoisie, youth and lumpenproletariat of the occupied territories and the camps.

The victims of this reactionary ideology if it triumphs will be women, the minority religious communities and above all the workers movement and the left.

Whether or not imperialism forces the Likud government into signing a settlement, the writing is on the wall for PLO-Fatah bourgeois nationalism.

History is proving what revolutionaries have always argued: the Palestinian bourgeoisie is too weak and cowardly to forge a capitalist nation state for the Palestinian people. But despite their present opposition to a sell-out Fatah's petty-bourgeois rivals have no long term alternative. That is why they oscillate between spectacular but futile military attacks and compromise.

To avert an enormous setback to the struggle for the liberation of Palestine, and to prevent the loss of a whole generation of heroic and determined young Palestinian

fighters to the dead end of reactionary Islamic fundamentalism, an internationalist workers' party must be built.

This party must have a perspective of permanent revolution uniting the national struggle for Palestinian freedom to the goal of working class power: It must fight to unite Palestinian and Jewish workers to the head of the struggle against Zionism and imperialism.

Down with the Imperialist Peace Conference!

No to a Palestinian bantustan! No collaboration with the Zionists or imperialism!

For all the right to return of all Palestinians to their homeland!

No to Soviet Jewish mass immigration to Israel! Stop the Zionist settlement of the West Bank.

Against all imperialist aid to Israel No loans! No aid! No arms!

Legalise the PLO and all political parties!

Release all Israeli state hostages and political prisoners!

Victory to the national liberation struggle of the Palestinian people!

For a constituent assembly for the whole of Palestine with the right to vote for all over the age of 16—whether Arab or Jew!

Smash the Zionist state!

No to any form of confessional state! For a workers' republic in Palestine!

For a Socialist United States of the Middle East!

Resolution on the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina

No to nationalist war!

International Secretariat of the LRCI

25 April 1992

During the last year the states and semi-states which emerged out of the multi-national state of Yugoslavia have become a synonym for nationalist war, massacres and forced population transfers. The "Yugoslav scenario" has formed a bloody counterpoint to the "peaceful revolutions" in Eastern Europe and shows the reactionary potential contained in the conflicting interests of the nationalist regimes of the states of the CIS.

The blame for this development lies not, as the racist imperialist media suggests, in some supposed "Balkan madness" but in the essential role that national-chauvinist demagogy plays in legitimating the parties and leaders who wish to restore capitalism and in the rôle of their backers the (rival) imperialist powers. The latter under US hegemony first tried to use the Slovene and Croatian demands for greater autonomy and independence to speed up the restoration process within the framework of a new (capitalist) Yugoslav Federation. But they were not really united in their objectives.

The newly strengthened German imperialism rapidly turned to promoting a partition of Yugoslavia with the aim of drawing into association with the EC the economically "profitable" parts of the Federation, Slovenia and Croatia. In short it sought to make these new states into its own semi-colonies.

Germany eventually won the tug of war with France and the UK within the EC and has seen its policy implemented. The "Lisbon solution" of turning Bosnia-Herzegovina into a buffer state against Serbia, with cantonisation along ethnic lines, as well as the United Nations (UN) military presence aimed at disarming the Serb enclaves in Croatia, is designed to safeguard the imperialist solution. But its results are to foment national chauvinist division on all sides and nowhere more tragically for the working people than in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

That events have reached the present terrible conditions demonstrates the depth of the crisis of proletarian leadership, which has enabled the imperialists and their agents the rival national chauvinists to throw the workers and peasants of Serbia and Croatia into a conflict which is a reactionary, nationalist war on both sides. This war has now been extended into Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the prospect of even more bloody and brutal consequences for this republic in which three major nationalities are intermingled to such a degree that no separation could be achieved into compact national states without massive population transfers.

Under the Yugoslav Stalinist national policy, Bosnia-Herzegovina was a buffer republic between the three

major nationalities, the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and their respective Stalinist bureaucracies. No one seriously claimed that a distinct Bosnian nation existed.

The country is a multi-national republic, mainly composed of Muslim South-Slavs (43,7%), Serbs (31,3%) and Croats (17,3%). In addition 326,000 inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina declared themselves Yugoslav by nationality at the last census. Apart from certain districts in the north and west of the republic it is a patchwork quilt of these nationalities with towns and cities so intermixed that only some form of multi- or international authority could protect all of these communities.

With the break up of the Yugoslav federation Bosnia became more and more the battleground of the rival nationalist-chauvinist leaderships in Croatia and Serbia, both more or less openly claiming parts of the republic as future parts of a Greater Serbia or a Historic Croatia. In Bosnia itself, the Stalinist bureaucracy split along nationalist lines, forming "nationally" defined parties: The Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ).

It is these Stalinist and openly restorationist leaderships in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, who are responsible for the threat of a reactionary nationalist war. This also applies to Alija Izetbegovic and the SDA. They were the first to set up a political party, defined by national-community in Bosnia and themselves played the "nationalist" card on several occasions.

The relative modesty of their claims as compared with those of the commanders of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA), the Serbian and Croatian governments, not to speak of the leaders of Chetnik- and Ustasha-militias simply reflects their military weakness and the justified fear that the Muslim areas could be the main target of a war for the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia.

However, Bosnia was also one of the centres of the anti-war movement and of large scale desertions from the JNA. On 6 April a massive anti-war demonstration in Sarajevo, composed of large layers of all nationalities, demanded the resignation of all nationalist leaders in Bosnia. The provocative shooting into this demonstration clearly had the purpose of further poisoning the relations between the different communities and preventing the development of a movement against the nationalist attacks from the rank and file.

Over the last year, each of the rival Bosnian leaders started a campaign of nationalist demagoguery to strengthen their relative positions. The Bosnian Serbs conducted a

referendum which showed an overwhelming majority for the establishment of an independent Serbian Republic within the current borders of Bosnia. This was declared illegal by the Muslim and Croat members of the Bosnian government. Both, Serbs and Croats, established so-called "autonomous regions" or "communities". Secret meetings which discussed the division of Bosnia between Croatia and Serbia took place between SDS- and HZD-leaders and Tudjman.

The imperialist powers, especially the EC and the USA, after the recognition of Croatia had abandoned all hope of preserving some sort of Yugoslav federation and sought to limit Serbia as much as possible. Not only did they use economic and diplomatic pressure for the entry of UN troops but they encouraged the Bosnian government to go for independence from the Serb-dominated rump of the Yugoslav Federation.

The EC promised to immediately recognise Bosnian independence if a referendum showed a majority for it and this led Itzegebovic to actually organise it in February 1992. The Serbian population boycotted the referendum. Nevertheless, more than 60% of the Bosnian population voted for independence. Their motives were undoubtedly the hope of thereby avoiding Greater Serbian domination and at the same time getting imperialist political and economic support.

However, the coalition of Croats and Muslims, which made up this majority, is far from united in its objectives. For the Croat leaders to call on their people to vote in favour of independence was merely a tactical compromise, in order to gain time to establish the military and economic resources necessary to compete with the Serbs in the division of Bosnia.

The EC/US recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina in early April was the trigger for an intra-nationalist war. The Serbian Chetnik militias, armed and protected by the Federal Army, began to attack strategic villages and towns in order to get control over wide parts of the country. Although the Serbian population is only a third of the total Bosnian population, their leaders claim 62 % of the total territory.

Revolutionaries unreservedly condemn this annexationist attack, which is an attempt of the Serbian military bureaucracy to defend its apparatus and privileges and has nothing to do with the right of self-determination of the Serbian people or their protection against any real threat of national oppression. Therefore revolutionaries demand the immediate withdrawal of the JNA as well as the Chetnik black hundreds.

On the other hand, Croatian military units, especially those of the HOS (Paraga) entered Western Bosnia-Herzegovina. Their aims are equally reactionary. They are trying to create a Greater Croatian State, which would most certainly oppress the Serbian and Muslim "minorities".

Marxists support the right to self-determination up to and including secession of nations or nationalities from states in which they have either been oppressed or where it is likely that they will be oppressed. Our objective is the ending or the prevention of this oppression not the creation of new nation states for their own sake. Thereby we seek to remove national oppression as an obstacle to class consciousness and international proletarian solidarity. But we cannot interpret the actions of any of the

national-chauvinist parties of Bosnia-Herzegovina or their backers in Croatia and Serbia as expressing a legitimate democratic right for separate statehood, i.e. a demand for freedom from oppression rather than for privileges and the "right to oppress" others. Their actions reveal this.

Just as the referendum held by the Serbs of Bosnia was a tactical manoeuvre designed to inflame nationalist sentiments, so also the February referendum organised by Croat and Muslim nationalist leaders, has to be understood within the larger context. Although formally it registered a majority of the population in favour of independence, this was not an expression of the self-determination of a nation but rather temporary defensive alliance of two minorities, urged on by the EC's promise of recognition and aid.

Far from resolving the national antagonisms between the peoples, any vote in favour of independence was bound to inflame national tensions even more and provide a pretext for Serbian, Croatian or even imperialist (UN) intervention. Revolutionaries should have campaigned against the holding of the referendum and for abstention should it, nonetheless, have taken place.

Bosnia-Herzegovina has no absolute national majority desiring its own independent state. The Serbs fear minoritisation and oppression in a totally independent Bosnia. The Muslims fear integration into a "new Yugoslavia" that would be in effect a Greater Serbia. The Croats fear a Serbian seizure of Bosnia-Herzegovina, desire integration into Croatia and only tactically support Bosnia-Herzegovina independence. The three communities do not inhabit clear contiguous areas which could be separated to join their respective states or form an independent "Muslim" state.

Therefore, whilst it might be possible for parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina to secede and join Croatia or Serbia respectively, this would still leave the majority of Bosnia-Herzegovina's territory and people who could not solve their problems by secession or separation. Therefore, Marxists should not support secession and should not recognise "self-determination" where this is aimed at, or inevitably leads to the violation of, the national rights of others. Under the present bourgeois and Stalinist leaders it will lead to pogroms, forced population transfers, economic dislocation and misery.

We support the rank and file of the anti-war movement who are seeking an end to this suicidal policy of the nationalists. Actions such as the 6 April demonstration prove beyond doubt that there is a mass basis for a determined opposition to the nationalists. To be effective, however, this sentiment must be translated into practical defence against the war-mongers. This too is possible as the actual formation of joint militias of Serbians, Muslims and Croats in Sarajevo demonstrates. These are attempting to defend all of the communities against pogrom and attempts to drive them out of their homes.

The liberal-democratic leadership of the anti-war movement however has enormous illusions in UN intervention and the "good offices" of the USA in particular. They have also repeatedly called on the Yugoslav Armed Forces to intervene. But neither the "blue helmets" nor the JNA can resolve the national conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Only a class, international in its objective

interests, can bring an immediate and a lasting solution to these problems.

To defend themselves from nationalist attacks from either side, the workers and peasants have to form multinational defence militias and try to win the rank and file of the army to join them, turning their guns against the fomentors of national divisions including their own officers.

However, any success along this road would necessarily pose the question of what political power can assure peace and unity among Yugoslavia peoples, what government can set about solving the economic chaos and collapse brought on by the attempts to restore capitalism and the war fare of the restorationist governments. This might be posed initially only locally.

The only organisational forms that could accommodate the complexities of local communities and ensure the victory of the interests of the toiling majority are workers' and peasants' councils. Within Bosnia-Herzegovina, we are for the formation of such councils in all regions and districts and their centralisation through a congress of workers' and peasants' councils as a basis for a genuine workers' state in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Only unity in such a struggle can provide a basis to overcome the national tensions between the nationalities and for a common struggle to overthrow the restorationist government in Sarajevo. Only under the power of the workers and peasants of Bosnia-Herzegovina could the fears of national oppression be dispelled and economic life restored. It is in large measure the economic disintegration and decline caused by the Stalinists and their anti-communist successors that has driven sections of the population into the tragic blind alley of trying to solve their problems by national chauvinist solutions.

Such a state, however, would find itself immediately threatened not only by the nationalists of Serbia and Croatia but also by the imperialists. Its survival would depend on a successful appeal to the workers and peasants of the neighbouring states to turn against their nationalist and restorationist leaders, who have brought them nothing but fratricide and war, and to form their own councils and militia which will form the basis for a federation of workers' states throughout the Balkans. In the present epoch, the justifiable democratic demands of

the masses can only be achieved by going far beyond the limits of bourgeois democratic politics, by the adoption of the strategy of permanent revolution.

The future of the Bosnian population does not lie in an independent capitalist Bosnia-Herzegovina, which could only be achieved by nationalist war and imperialist military intervention or a settlement enforced by imperialist threats. Neither does it lie in a cantonisation of the Republic. Both these bourgeois solutions will only provide the basis for further nationalist onslaughts from either side.

We demand the immediate withdrawal of the so-called peace keeping forces of the UN and oppose any imperialist sanctions imposed on any of the successor states to the Yugoslav Federation which still remain degenerated workers states despite their restorationist regimes.

In the case of a military imperialist intervention, under EC or UNO auspices revolutionaries would fight this and block with any forces who opposed this on a consistently democratic and anti-imperialist basis.

The only possible solution lies in joint direct mass action of the workers of all former Yugoslav republics against the nationalist warmongers and progromists. The acute crisis of leadership of the Yugoslav workers' movement can only be resolved by the creation of a new revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) party.

- For a general strike against the war-mongers, pogromists and restorationists!
- The JNA and all Chetniks and HOS-Ustasha fascists out of Bosnia-Herzegovina!
- UN troops out of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia!
- For joint workers' and peasants' councils and militias in every city, town and village!
- For workers' and peasants' governments in every state of the former Yugoslav Federation!
- For a socialist federation of the Balkans!

The rise of the FLS and the situation after the military coup

International Secretariat of the LRCI
25 April 1992

1. The mass demonstrations and barricade fighting in October 1988 marked the opening of a revolutionary period in Algeria. An earlier period of social crisis, strike waves and mass protest in 1979/80 had been suppressed by a combination of military repression, regional divide-and-rule and the granting of some concessions to the masses.

2. By the late 1980s the growing crisis of the Algerian economy had greatly reduced the Bonapartist FLN regimes's room for manoeuvre. The collapse of oil prices in 1986 combined with an enormous burden of foreign debt meant few economic concessions could be made to the masses. The plight of the masses had been made worse by the opening up policy (*infitah*), which had been pursued, not without opposition, by important sections of the FLN and army led by President Chadli Benjedid. The *infitah* involves moves to privatise sections of the economy, encourage foreign investment and reduce state subsidies to industry, transport and food.

3. Declining living standards for the masses, rising prices and growing unemployment (especially amongst the youth—75% of the Algerian population is under 25 years), all contributed to an explosive situation. Widespread corruption in the single party state enabled FLN functionaries to get rich whilst the poor had no future. A whole generation of Algerian youth has been reduced to the Arab equivalent of the South American *ambulante*—the *trabandos*—or street sellers of illicit imports from Italy and France. The year 1987 witnessed a mass student strike involving 150,000 students around demands for independent organisation and democracy. Important strikes took place in the autumn of 1988. At the vehicles manufacturing complex of SNVI-Rouiba 10,000 struck; in Algiers early October saw Postal workers on strike. Clashes with riot police led to a massive uprising by the youth. Barricades went up and clashes followed in all the major towns in Algeria starting on 4 October. Islamic fundamentalists organised youth in the suburbs and ghettos of Algiers, and participated in some of the fiercest fighting against the army.

4. The FLN regime responded with massive repression. Five hundred were killed by troops and police, mostly young people. Thousands were arrested, many tortured. Four thousand were given summary trials. Much of the repression after October 1988 was directed at the illegal PAGS—the Stalinist party. The regime was deeply

shaken. Not just by the mass uprising but by the growing protests against the repression and killings amongst whole sectors of Algerian society.

5. The FLN's response to the October events was to put forward a series of democratic reforms whilst continuing with the economic policy which had produced the uprising. Having first ensured Chadli a third mandate in December 1988 under a one-candidate system, a new constitution was approved by referendum in February 1989. This sanctioned a multi-party system. The following month the army withdrew from the Central Committee of the FLN and in July 1989 political parties were legalised. Restrictions on the press were also largely lifted, giving rise to an unprecedented wave of political debate. Although TV and radio remained in the grip of the government, French TV and radio is diffused throughout the country, making FLN control of information difficult to achieve. All left parties applying for legalisation were accorded it: from the PAGS (Stalinist) through to the PST (United Secretariat of Fourth International) and the PT (Fourth International-International Centre for Reconstruction). Ben Bella and Hocine Ait Ahmed, founders of the FLN who had been defeated in the 1965 army coup and the 1963 Berber uprising, respectively, returned from exile to legalise their parties, the MDA (Algerian Democratic Movement) and the FFS (Socialist Forces Front).

6. The FFS was based amongst the Berbers of Kabylia. The Berbers, a people who pre-date the Arab invasions of the Maghreb and who were converted to Islam, were episodically subject to "arabisation" campaigns by the FLN. In the 1970s there were sustained attempts to undermine the Berber language and culture. During 1979/80 the Kabylia Berbers were in the fore of the struggle against the FLN. The FFS despite its name is a bourgeois democratic formation, fighting for bourgeois democratic rights for the Berber people within an Algerian state, and fully behind Chadli's privatising economic reforms. Ait Ahmed had declared that Chadli was the "President of all the Algerians" on his return (an unelected one!), but went on to demand a constituent assembly and rights for women within a democratic state.

7. Following their role in the October events, leading fundamentalists were invited to discuss with Chadli in November 1988. Increasingly recognised by the govern-

ment as a force in the land, and with growing support upon the semi-lumpen youth, the fundamentalists set up the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) at the beginning of 1989. The discussions between the various wings of Algerian fundamentalism were difficult, and a number of other organisations (HAMAS, En-Nadha) were also created. The fundamentalists have been able to build upon the FLN's encouragement of Islam after the revolution and by the FLN's attempt to use it as a weapon against the left. During the 1980s the FLN made a further series of accommodations to the pressure of the Islamic fundamentalist movements sweeping the Arab world. First, it campaigned for the "arabisation", of both the non-Arab speaking Berbers and the "modern" French speakers who were seen by the fundamentalists as the root of all evil.

8. Secondly, and most strikingly, in 1984 the FLN had promulgated a "Family Law" which acceded to many of the fundamentalists' demands with regard to women. Based on Islamic Sharia law, the law allows polygamy, repudiation of women by their husbands and places women in the status of perpetual minors. Rather than launching a policy of integrating women into the workplace, the FLN have presided over a situation in which Algeria has one of the lowest proportions of women workers in the whole world (4.4%). Out of a 25 million population, only 35,000 women are employed in manufacturing industry. Instead of systematically campaigning against the reactionary influence of Islam, the FLN deliberately encouraged it. The FLN has thus systematically created the conditions for its own ultimate downfall, and in so doing has set back the cause of the working class in general, and women workers in particular. The Algerian masses will have to settle accounts not only with the petit bourgeois nationalists of the ANP/FLN state machine, but also their reactionary ideological legacy.

9. The FIS, the major fundamentalist party, is a profoundly reactionary organisation. It has the support of a layer of the bazaar bourgeoisie, sections of the university intelligentsia and, most notably, amongst hundreds of thousands of de-classed unemployed. It especially appeals to the ill-educated youth, who, in the absence of a revolutionary socialist alternative, are open to its populist reactionary ideas. The basic programme of the FIS argues for sending women back to the home and purging the state of "western corruption", including democracy, which they describe as "a Jewish-masonic plot". Since the beginning of the 1980s there have been a series of attacks on women for not wearing the veil or for going to clubs and cinemas. Kabylia is a major target for the FIS: FIS preachers have declared the Berbers to be "infidels" because they allow women to go unveiled and do not observe the *hadj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). FIS spokesmen have declared their willingness to "destroy two-thirds of Kabylia to Islamicise its people".

The FIS have set up their own trade union, the SIT. Although recently winning some support in union elections the SIT remains weak. The SIT opposed the successful March general strike called by the FLN union, the UGTA, and also tried to break a number of strikes

including the Algiers refuse collectors' strike in 1991. The FIS as a whole is not a fascist organisation, but were the working class to take decisive action, it is clear that it could become fascist.

There are clear divisions within the FIS. There is a clerical-fascist wing with a mass base, led by Ali Belhadj and Abdelkader Moghni, known as "the fundamentalists". This wing has been the most vociferous in opposing participation in the elections and calling for all-out attacks on the FLN regime. Two more moderate tendencies—the "Algerianists" and the Bannabi group—also exist. Agreements between these two blocs, led by Abassi Madani, have thus far generally carried the day in deciding the FIS's tactics.

10. The municipal elections of June 1990 were a disaster for the FLN. Called in place of national elections by the FLN, the municipal elections were boycotted by the FFS, PST and others. The PAGES stood. Despite the FLN's advantages—control of TV and radio, and the very recent legalisation of other parties—they went down to a crushing defeat. In a 65% turnout, the FIS won 55% of all the municipalities, including virtually all the large and medium sized towns. The FIS took 70-80% of the votes. It also won 32 of the 46 districts (i.e. rural areas). The FLN won only 30% of the municipalities. From this point on the opposition to the FLN increasingly felt that the fundamentalists were the major threat and were thereafter more than willing to do deals with the FLN/Chadli to try and stop the FIS' road to power.

11. The outbreak of the Gulf War created serious problems for the FIS. Being heavily financed by Saudi Arabia the FIS originally took the Saudi's side in the conflict. With the start of the fighting it changed tack and mobilised against "Bush the infidel". In March 1991 the heavily bureaucratised and FLN dominated trade union federation, the UGTA, was forced to head off pressure from the rank and file by calling a general strike against rising prices. The two day strike won wide support. It was actively opposed by the FIS. Chadli saw his chance to move to national elections while the FIS was apparently in trouble. The government had made sure that the FIS could not fulfil any of its promises in the municipalities by reducing the funds available to the councils.

12. The electoral law proposed was a travesty of democracy. Not only did the Presidency retain enormous powers and the military ensure that the defence minister remained outside parliamentary control but the voting system was also gerrymandered. The two round system was designed to favour the two big parties, the FLN and the FIS. The FLN hoped to gather all the anti-FIS votes in the second round wiping out the small parties. Not content with this, the constituencies were rigged to favour the areas where the FLN had done well in the municipal elections. Constituencies varied in size between 2,000, where the FLN was strong, and 100,000 in the towns! Algiers ended up with 21 seats while the same number of people in FLN-voting areas elected 84 seats. Originally a man could vote also for four members of his family! This was later changed to allow women to vote in separate polling booths.

13. The opposition agreed to this farce, fearing the triumph of the FIS. The FFS went "on record" as opposing it. The PAGS at some point changed its position and called both for the banning of the FIS and a boycott of the elections. The FIS threatened a general strike unless the electoral laws were changed. The strike, which began on 25 May, was a failure. Few workers were involved and the FIS showed no signs of being able to stop the elections. After a week their tactics changed and they began to launch a series of nightly bloody battles with the Algiers police with the aim of provoking a repeat of October 1988. This led to open splits within the ruling bodies of the FIS, with one faction issuing a statement calling off the strike. The movement attracted some support from youth in the poorest parts of Algiers but the mobilisations were not on the scale of October 1988. Seeing its chance to inflict a further blow on the FIS, the government declared a State of Emergency, postponed the elections and imprisoned a number of leading FIS members—including Ali Belhadj and Abassi Madani.

14. Once again, Chadli tried to play the "democratic" card. A new "non-party" Prime Minister, Ghozali, was appointed (he was a Central Committee member of the FLN), and a series of "independent" ministers were appointed. Elections were promised "as soon as possible". A split began to develop within the FLN/Army state machine which was to culminate in Chadli's "resignation". On the one hand, Chadli and elements of the FLN considered that a period of "cohabitation" with the FIS was possible (Presidential elections were due in 1994). On the other hand, Ghozali, Defence Minister General Khaled Nazzar and the bulk of the army high command were determined to do all they could to stop the FIS from coming to power. The FIS threatened both a purge in the high ranks of the army and cuts in defence spending. Furthermore, the FIS claimed the mantle of the nationalist revolt against French imperialism and continually associated the army with corrupt and inefficient FLN rule. The ANP's withdrawal from the leading bodies of the FLN in 1989 did nothing to change the correct popular perception that the army was ultimately responsible for Algeria's crisis. The ANP had installed Boumedienne in 1965. Chadli was a leading officer in the ANP. At every step the FLN's policies were supported and accepted by the ANP. The anti-FIS card was the army's last hope of retaining some popular support.

15. By refusing to take the lead in the struggle against the FLN's fraudulent electoral proposals the opposition had ceded the leadership to the FIS which again appeared to the masses as the only consistent opposition to the FLN and the military. The PAGS on the other hand discredited itself by appealing to the army to crush the FIS. By the autumn of last year the FIS felt confident enough to participate in the elections even under the adverse conditions imposed by the FLN and Chadli.

16. The democratic rights that the army and the FLN had granted since 1988 did not take a qualitative step outside the Bonapartist structures set up in 1965. Their aim was to ensure that the rights granted were as restricted as possible. For revolutionaries the key task was to take part in the struggle for democracy and at every

point block the regime's attempts to head it off. This meant that the struggle for the constituent assembly, fought for by revolutionary methods, was central to destroying the old regime and for cutting against the anti-democratic FIS. A boycott of both municipal and parliamentary elections would have been a correct tactic had there existed an extra-parliamentary movement able to respond to the boycott call and be a focus for agitation for the creation of independent organs of struggle and a constituent assembly. Until 26 December there was no such wide-spread movement. In these circumstances, an LRCI section in Algeria would have fought to participate in the elections, denouncing the undemocratic nature of the procedure and counterposing to the ineffective parliament a genuine constituent assembly to decide both a constitution and the burning needs of the masses. In the absence of such a revolutionary intervention, the only question posed to the masses was: FLN or FIS? Neither organisation posed an alternative for the masses, and had they not been able to put up candidates, revolutionaries would have called for a blank vote.

17. The choice of FIS or FLN did not produce massive enthusiasm amongst the masses to go out and vote; 6.8 million voted out of 13 million on the register (52%). Of these there were 924,000 invalid votes either incorrectly filled in or blank. The FIS gained 3.26 million votes (27% of those entitled to vote or 48% of votes cast. The FLN got 1.65 million, the FFS 510,000, Hamas 368,000, RCD 200,000, Ennaada 150,000, Ben Bella's ADN 135,000 and 30 odd other bourgeois parties received 300,000 between them.

18. The results of the first round qualitatively changed the situation. A second round would undoubtedly have produced a parliamentary majority for the FIS. The urgent task of revolutionaries at this point was to mobilise the workers to stop the FIS coming to power. The mass movement of workers, Berbers of Kabylia and women—all aroused by the menace of the FIS—created the opportunity for revolutionaries to intervene with the call for an active boycott in the second round if the election had taken place. The "upward movement" of the revolution which Lenin spoke of as being a prerequisite for the boycott tactic was manifest on the streets. A party committed to destroying democratic rights and repressing minorities and women was on the verge of being taken into government with only a minority of the votes cast. The FFS sponsored mobilisation of 300,000 people in Algiers showed that the masses could be mobilised to stop this. A policy of mass demonstrations, strikes and general strikes against the regime and its elections was the crucial route to block the rise of the FIS. To defend these actions against clerical-fascist attacks, workers' militias should have been constructed based in every factory, workers' district and in Kabylia. The mass base of the FIS will only be cowed and broken from its populist and clerical-fascist leaders when the working class shows that it is determined to act decisively.

19. Faced with the threat of a FIS/Chadli cohabitation, the army took control. Behind the smokescreen of the High State Committee (HCE) General Nazzar and Prime Minister Ghozali orchestrated a military coup. In a tac-

tical manoeuvre which left the country stunned Chadli was obliged to resign and the ANP took power. This was greeted with relief by sections of the middle class and intellectuals who feared the triumph of the FIS. In the days that followed the FLN split and will probably not recover its base. The FIS continued to play a waiting game, gradually increasing pressure on the state machine through a series of bloody conflicts. In the first week of February this tension reached breaking point as the "Afghans" (an armed group of fundamentalists outside the control of the FIS), responding to police provocation, launched attacks on the police. The army imposed a state of emergency and reversed the democratic reforms. Freedom of press, assembly and demonstration were abolished and internment was introduced. The HCE took steps to ban the FIS. The repression has fallen largely on the heads of the FIS. Non-government newspapers still circulate freely. The FIS's calls to mass action have met with no response. As in July 1991, the FIS has measured itself against the ANP and lost. The current situation cannot continue. Imperialism looked upon the coup with disfavour; vital loans have been held back or refused.

20. What should have been the tactics of revolutionaries during these events? Demands for mobilisations against the second round of the elections needed to be clearly distinguished from those forces calling for army intervention to block the FIS and to popular front projects like the National Committee to Save Algeria formed by the UGTA. Revolutionaries should have demanded from the UGTA that it break with the bourgeois parties, with the FLN and the FFS and mobilise a general strike of the workers and all the popular forces opposed to the fundamentalists taking power but also opposed to a military-Bonapartist dictatorship. Revolutionaries should have opposed any call for military intervention counterposing to it demands aimed at winning over the rank and file soldiers to support the struggle against either an FIS or a military regime. During the army coup the same demands for workers' mobilisations would have been used against it. However, these mobilisations would have had to maintain the strictest class independence of the clerical-fascist mobilisations.

Workers cannot man the barricades with those who threaten to impose a dictatorship far worse in its effect on their own organisations than a preventative military coup. We are intransigently opposed to the state of emergency and we do not call for the legal banning of any parties by the bourgeois state including the FIS. Likewise we do not support or call for the mass arrest of the FIS leaders or militants. Yet we will not combine with the FIS in calling for the release of the clerical-fascists whose aim is to smash the workers' movement, to oppress women and the Berber minority. The fascist menace cannot be countered by relying on state intervention. Only a militant intervention by working class defence squads can defend working class parties and trade unions and the popular democratic organisations of the oppressed. Only an armed militia of the working class can rout the clerical-fascist gangs.

21. But negative action against the FIS was not and is not sufficient. It has to be combined with agitation for a

revolutionary action programme aimed at offering the oppressed and exploited youth a concrete alternative to Islamic fundamentalism. This programme must consist of immediate and transitional demands which meet the immediate needs of the urban and rural poor, the unemployed youth as well as the working class. To the question who shall pay? we reply: expropriate the state and private bourgeoisie, the large landowners the holdings of the imperialist multinationals. Put the entire economy under the control of councils of workers and peasants, and of mass popular consumers' organisations—especially of women. Renounce the foreign debt and break all links with the IMF and its privatisation and austerity programmes. Only such a programme of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist action can draw the youth away from the religious demagogues or the capitalist parliamentarians, and win them to the goal of working class power.

22. The fight for a sovereign constituent assembly, elected by everyone over the age of sixteen, remains a central demand whilst the military regime lasts. This revolutionary democratic demand can expose *all* the would-be dictators and the fake democrats. Such a fight could only be organised by a united front of the working class unions and parties. But it would also seek to include the popular mass organisations of the Berbers. Indeed, it is necessary to draw in all forces willing to take action to bring about the convocation of a genuine democratic constituent assembly, to establish full democratic rights for political parties, freedom of the press, democratic control of the media, the right to strike, the right to demonstrate and the freedom of women to participate in all these struggles free from harassment. In addition, it would be vital to fight to pledge all the participants to reject calls for new austerity programmes (i.e. the privatisation of state industries and the mass unemployment this will bring) and thus resist the IMF's economic blackmail and any EC/US/UNO military intervention.

The call for practical united actions in defence of democratic rights could also be extended to the mass base and the leaders of the FFS, despite the fact that it is not only a bourgeois party but also, in essence, one with a pro-imperialist programme. It is also the mass party of the oppressed Berber population and attracts large sections of the urban population by its democratising rhetoric. Therefore, its leaders could be exposed by calling on them to mobilise their forces jointly with independent working class action for a constituent assembly. This could also apply to mass action against any future attempt by the fundamentalists to seize power and install an Islamic dictatorship.

Such necessary united actions, however, must in no circumstances be extended into a Popular Front which subordinates the proletariat's anti-imperialist and class goals to the defence of bourgeois parliamentarianism, let alone to defending the rule of the army, the FLN or an FFS-led coalition. There is a place for specific and limited united fronts with all working class and popular-democratic forces who fall victim to military repression (e.g. raids and arrests), provided again complete freedom of participation and propaganda was allowed.

23. The deep economic crisis of the country, the pressure

from imperialism and its agencies to adopt the full shock therapy of economic liberalism, the bankruptcy of Arab nationalism (FLN) and of pro-IMF bourgeois democracy (FFS) have all opened the road to the FIS. The powerful Algerian working class meanwhile is wracked by an acute crisis of leadership. The unions remain tied to the bourgeois state and the bourgeois parties. As such they have turned their backs on the urban and rural poor. The mass base of the FIS is the punishment for this class-collaborationist strategy.

The workers must strike out for class independence, not only in tactics—in the defence of their class and democratic rights—but at the level of organisation. The Algerian workers with their traditions of revolutionary struggle against colonialism can and must form a revolutionary party that sets as its goal the conquest of power

and the creation of a republic of workers, peasants and the urban poor based on councils of elected and revocable delegates.

Down with the State of Emergency! No to military rule!

For a sovereign secular constituent assembly!

Down with fundamentalism! No to an Islamic republic!

Smash the clerical-fascist gangs by workers' action!

For a general strike should the FIS attempt to seize power!

For workers' and peasants' power in Algeria!

Down with the new autocracy!

Moscow leaflet, February 1992

Workers! Citizens!

The bureaucrats and the new bourgeois are robbing and deceiving us. Prices rise ten times, society's property is plundered by the *nomenklatura* and by thieves—that's what we have already received. Mass closures of factories, mass unemployment, poverty and hunger—that's what is awaiting us tomorrow. Trying to distract people from economic difficulties, the Russian leadership gravitates towards Great Power chauvinism. This is echoed by all kinds of "patriots".

Once again, we have nothing to lose but our chains!

Seventy five years ago working people overthrew the dictatorial regime, which violated their rights, threatened and oppressed them.

Enough suffering! We are human beings, not animals! Let us follow the example of our predecessors. Forward to the general strike:

- Down with the government of speculators and bureaucrats
- Stop price rises and privatisations
- Put enterprises into the hands of the workers
- Expropriate the bureaucrats and capitalists
- No to the professional and conscript army. For people's militias and the arming of the people. Soldiers! Defend yourselves in independent organisations
- Down with the political police
- Freedom to political prisoners
- No to economic, social and domestic discrimination against women
- No to capitalism. No to chauvinism. No to Stalinism
- For revolutionary socialism

War on hovels! Palaces for all

We call on all who hold to these principles to gather at the Soviet Square on 7 March, 12.00

Signed:

Federation of Revolutionary Anarchists—IREAN

Socialist Workers Union

Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists

League For A Green Party

Group "Rabochaya Vlast" (Workers Power)

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Handwritten text at the bottom of the page, possibly a signature or a closing remark.