



## **Bankrupt Stalinism Opens Floodgates to Capitalist Restoration**

# **Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!**

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

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

Soviet Stalinism has breathed its pathetic last gasp. Even up to the coup, many of the most advanced workers, who opposed Yeltsin's plans for wholesale privatization and Gorbachev's market reforms, looked to the so-called hardline "patriotic" wing of the bureaucracy. *There is no room anymore for such illusions*.

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

From the time of Stalin's bureaucratic usurpation of power in 1924, Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition waged an unrelenting fight for the internationalist program of the

Bolshevik Revolution. Under the deadly blows of Stalinist terror and slander, the Trotskyists persevered as the best and only consistent defenders of the remaining revolutionary gains. Today the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) continues this struggle.

Stalinism was the political rule of a bureaucratic caste parasitically sitting atop the proletarian property forms created by the October Revolution of 1917. Whether during the bloody purges of the 1930s or the myriad "reforms" from Khrushchev and others, this system based on lies and repression of the working class not only blocked further progress toward socialism but clogged every pore of Soviet society. After decades of self-sacrifice extracted from the proletariat in the name of building "socialism in one country," Gorbachev's perestroika was the last desperate attempt of the Stalinist bureaucracy to preserve its position by adopting capitalist measures. But like Nikolai Bukharin's appeals to the rich peasants (kulaks) in the late 1920s to "enrich yourselves," perestroika fueled the forces of capitalist restoration which have now reached their fruition with Yeltsin's countercoup.

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

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

### **Perestroika Coup Fiasco**

As the crowd of yuppies, students and assorted Russian nationalists, including fascists and priests, gathered at the start of the coup outside the Russian parliament, Yeltsin's "White House," a call on Moscow workers to clean out this

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

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

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

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

—London *Independent* (18 April)

Not exactly a program to inspire Soviet workers to support the plotters' bid for power! The coup leaders conspicuously avoided any mention of the October Revolution, or for that matter even the "Great Patriotic War." Instead they looked to the traditions of the tsarist empire—which Lenin called a "prison house of peoples"—declaring: "Our multinational people have lived for centuries, proud of their Motherland." But in appealing to Russian nationalism, Yeltsin held the stronger hand.

Nor did the coup organizers manage to assuage Washington and Wall Street. As soon as Bush took a hard line backing Yeltsin (and incidentally demanding Gorbachev's return), the coup began unraveling. In the aftermath, there has been a lot of hoopla about the outpouring of popular support for

"democracy." While up to 150,000 (out of a city of ten million), undoubtedly including many workers, turned out at one point to hear Yeltsin, the fabled barricades outside the "White House" were purely symbolic, generally having only a few thousand hanging around them. "They were mainly young ones, like myself, students, intellectuals, professionals," said one participant. In addition to a couple dozen Russian republic police, Yeltsin's bodyguards were rent-a-cops from a private security company (like the strikebreaking Pinkertons in the U.S.). At most there were a dozen tanks, dispatched by pro-Yeltsin commanders, in front of the building. Speaking of a possible assault, a Yeltsin "commander" said: "Of course, we could not hold them off for more than five minutes." But there was no serious assault.

Emboldened by the paralysis of the coup leaders, the reactionary mob heaved Molotov cocktails at young tank drivers. And then, barely two and a half days after the action began, the army withdrew. At this point frenzied Yeltsinites began rampaging through the city. A lieutenant colonel who attended the demonstrations was shocked: "I am surprised by how many of the young are thirsting for blood." Their first target was the statue outside KGB headquarters of Feliks Dzerzhinsky, a Polish Communist and founder of the Cheka, the Bolsheviks' fighting arm against White Guard subversion. The next day they toppled the statue of Yakov Sverdlov, a Jewish Communist and first president of the Soviet republic. There, the pro-Hitler NTS distributed a leaflet that called for the very measures that Yeltsin decreed the next day. The Russian Orthodox Patriarch presided over the burial of three who died assaulting the tanks. British TV reported, "The images today were of old Russia, pre-revolutionary, a country throwing itself back 75 years."

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

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

The imperialist media are exultant, hailing "The Second Russian Revolution." The *New York Times* sneeringly refers to V.I. Lenin as "little more than a demagogue with a lisp." (The *Times* is so intent on portraying a counterrevolution victorious that its copious coverage never once mentions the Soviet workers.) But in the Soviet Union, even some of the more liberal Yeltsinites are beginning to get nervous about reaping the whirlwind they have sown. *Ogonyok* editor Vitaly Korotich is now warning of a "third force, which may be represented by certain young people of the fascist persuasion." The leaders of the "democratic revolution" are already promoting the tsarist watchword of "Russia, one and indivisible." Leningrad mayor Anatoly Sobchak lambastes centrifugal forces pulling apart the USSR: "This is insanity. We are a nuclear country." Yeltsin aides talk of destabilization of the economy and warn Ukrainian secessionists that "these lands were settled by Russians."

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

### Fight Capitalist Enslavement!

For decades, the Stalinists and imperialists have joined together in identifying the system of bureaucratic rule installed by Stalin and his henchmen in 1924 with Leninism. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky carried out the October Revolution as the first step of the world socialist revolution. Backward Russia, the "weak link" of imperialist rule, was the scene of the first workers revolution, but it had to be completed by the proletariat in the advanced imperialist countries if it was to sustain itself and lead to socialism, a society of equality based on abundance. It was on the basis of the defeat of the European revolutions, centrally in Germany, in the 1918-23 postwar period, that the usurpers Stalin/Bukharin "discovered" the profoundly anti-Marxist notion that it was possible to construct "socialism in one country." Trotsky denounced this nationalist dogma as writing off the world revolution, and predicted it would be the undoing of the Soviet Union if the bureaucracy was not swept away by the resurgent working class.

In his decisive analysis of Stalinism, *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), Trotsky asked prophetically, "Will the bureaucrat devour the workers' state, or will the working class clean up the bureaucrat?" In developing this, he elaborated the program of proletarian political revolution led by a Bolshevik party to re-establish Soviet democracy. The planned economy would be subordinated to the will of the workers, freeing it from the arbitrary zigzags of the faceless, grey bureaucrats. And instead of the conservative anti-revolutionary policies of Stalin's Kremlin, the Soviet Union would again become the headquarters of international socialist revolution. He also spelled out the bleak alternative:

"If—to adopt a second hypothesis—a bourgeois party were to overthrow the ruling Soviet caste, it would find no small number of ready servants among the present bureaucrats, administrators, technicians, directors, party secretaries and privileged upper circles in general. A purgation of the state apparatus would, of course, be necessary in this case too. But a bourgeois restoration would probably have to clean out fewer people than a revolutionary party. The chief task of the new power would be to restore private property in the means of production. First of all, it would be necessary to create conditions for the development of strong farmers from the weak collective farms, and for converting the strong collectives into producers' cooperatives of the bourgeois type—into agricultural stock companies. In the sphere of industry, denationalization would begin with the light industries and those producing food. The planning principle would be converted for the transitional period into a series of

compromises between state power and individual 'corporations'—potential proprietors, that is, among the Soviet captains of industry, the emigre former proprietors and foreign capitalists. Notwithstanding that the Soviet bureaucracy has gone far toward preparing a bourgeois restoration, the new regime would have to introduce in the matter of forms of property and methods of industry not a reform, but a social revolution."

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

"Although there is likely to be a surge in optimism among the Soviet people as a new political order emerges, expectations about the new order's ability to turn around the economy are likely to exceed what is realistically possible. If the experience of eastern Europe is any indication, the next several years will be painful for the Soviet economy as workers lose lifetime jobs and state-owned enterprises are restructured."

—*Wednesday's Global Report*, 21 August

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- The anti-Communist mobs are the shock troops of a budding fascist movement, the future strikebreakers, jailers and torturers of militant workers and leftists. Already the NTS, former WW II quislings of the Hitlerite invaders, have raised their heads at the Yeltsinite mobilizations. The blackshirted Pamyat fascists are burning red flags. Next they will be staging deadly anti-Semitic pogroms. *Workers militias* must be formed, aided by Red Army officers and soldiers loyal to socialism, to defend against and crush the lynch mobs and pogromists.

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

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

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

The youth, many shocked into political awareness for the first time in recent days, must find their way to the program of revolutionary internationalism. Reversion to the Slavophilic backwardness of Yeltsin & Co. precludes the genuinely open intellectual and artistic climate that so many young people yearn for. Make no mistake: life for youth in the West does not resemble a music video! The reality for working-class youth under capitalism is a nightmare of uncertainty, unemployment, hopelessness with the very real prospect of being cannon fodder in the next imperialist war. The young Soviet republic in the days of Lenin and Trotsky fought for women's

emancipation, for every kind of social emancipation, against censorship, for freedom from state intervention in one's personal affairs.

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

## For Revolutionary Regroupment!

With the evident and total collapse of Stalinism, there is a crying need for regroupment among the numerous would-be communist groupings on the left fringe of the CPSU. Many of the most communist-minded workers have had illusions in the "patriotic" elements of the Stalinist bureaucracy, who frequently appealed to Great Russian chauvinism and conciliated or embraced outright anti-Semites, fascists and tsarists. But for example Soyuz leader Colonel Viktor Alksnis denounces Gorbachev not for introducing the market, but for introducing "democracy": "My model is the market first and democracy later." This is known as the "Chilean option," modeled on the bloody Pinochet coup, whose vaunted fake "economic miracle" was built on the corpses of tens of thousands of leftist workers and peasants.

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

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

—*Workers Vanguard* No. 532, 2 August

During the coup, the Moscow workers council which came out of this July conference issued a call to: "Form workers militias for the preservation of socialized property, for the preservation of social order on the streets of our cities, for the control of the carrying out of the orders and instructions of the State Committee on the Emergency Situation." There was not one word of criticism of the GKChP. A call for workers militias to smash the counterrevolutionary Yeltsinite demonstrations was certainly in order. But if the Emergency Committee had consolidated power, it would have attempted to disband any such workers militias, which would otherwise have inevitably and rapidly escaped its political control. The last thing these degenerate Stalinists wanted to see was the independent mobilization of the working class.

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

of free expression and creativity, the political demobilizing of the working class.

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

Despite the anti-Communist hysteria now raging in the Soviet Union, there are large numbers of workers and even a few intellectuals who want to defend socialism and communism. They must understand that Trotskyism is the genuine expression of Bolshevism today, that a Trotskyist party must be built to lead the struggle against the counterrevolution. Stalin's first step in consolidating his regime, aided by Bukharin, was to purge and persecute the Left Opposition, and eventually to murder the entire surviving Old Bolshevik cadre, the leaders of October.

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

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

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

## **We Trotskyists Have Defended the Soviet Union**

Today the Soviet Union faces being dismembered and its constituent republics turned into neocolonies of Washington, Berlin and Tokyo. The present collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy has its immediate origins in the renewed Cold War offensive launched by American imperialism after its

ignominious defeat in Vietnam. In every key battleground of Cold War II—Afghanistan, Poland, the German Democratic Republic (DDR)—the International Communist League (ICL, formerly the international Spartacist tendency) has stood resolutely in defense of the Soviet Union against the capitulation of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

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

When in late 1989 the Honecker regime in East Germany fell and the Berlin Wall was opened, the ICL threw its forces into the fight for the perspective of a red Germany of workers councils. We initiated the call for the giant Treptow anti-fascist demonstration of 3 January 1990, which drew 250,000 people to honor the Soviet soldiers who died liberating Germany from the Nazis. Then, as Gorbachev gave the green light to a reunified Fourth Reich of German imperialism, our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany were the *only* party which clearly and unambiguously opposed capitalist reunification.

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

We urgently seek to bring the program of Trotskyism to the Soviet proletariat and socialist-minded intelligentsia with our Russian-language *Spartacist Bulletin*, containing in addition to key documents of the ICL the section on the USSR from Trotsky's Transitional Program. In recent months, we analyzed the mounting crisis in our article "Where Is the Soviet Union Going?" (*Workers Vanguard* Nos. 520, 521 and 522, 15 February, 1 March and 15 March), including a program of struggle for genuine soviet power.

## **It's Desperately Necessary to Fight**

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

half the working population on welfare. When the cost turned out to be higher than expected, Bonn kept pumping in billions of D-marks.

The Soviet Union, in contrast, is a huge country, with over 100 nationalities, a tremendous potential for chaos and no one to finance a capitalist takeover. The U.S. could probably buy the country for a few tens or hundreds of billions of dollars, but the American ruling class is as ideologically opposed to that as it is to financing a decent social welfare or health care system in this country. Soviet petty-bourgeois yuppies believe in a utopian capitalism, dreaming that they will suddenly achieve a standard of living like Scandinavia. In fact, economically and politically their fate under capitalism would be more akin to Mexico, or worse, with deep impoverishment of the masses presided over by an authoritarian state. The forces backing Yeltsin would like to be a capitalist class, but they are not yet one. Even in Poland, where the state is capitalist from top to bottom, a capitalist class has not yet congealed because they lack...capital.

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

**Contact the Spartacist League:**

Melbourne: GPO Box 2339,

Melbourne 3001

Ph: (03) 654 4315

Sydney: GPO Box 3473, Sydney 2001. Ph: (02) 281 2181

Spartacist  Forums

**Bankrupt Stalinism Opens Floodgates to Capitalist Restoration**

# Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin/Bush Counterrevolution!

## Uni of New South Wales

*Tuesday, 10 Sept, 1 p.m.*

Wurth Room  
1st Level, ROUNDHOUSE

## SYDNEY

*Tuesday, 17 Sept, 7 p.m.*

MEWU Council Room,  
136-140 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills  
(near Central Station)

## MELBOURNE

*Saturday 21 Sept, 4 p.m.*

YWCA, 489 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne  
Meeting Room 10