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The Tory Collapse

The Conservative Party is facing its worst crisis since Suez. The government is further behind in the opinion polls than any other in post-war history. Major is the most unpopular Prime Minister since polling began. In the Dudley by-election there was the biggest swing to Labour from the Tories in 60 years. With the whip withdrawn from nine MPs the government has lost its parliamentary majority.

The immediate cause of this crisis is the economy. The structural position of the British economy is disastrous. By the end of the recession domestic investment had collapsed to its lowest post-war levels. In the third quarter of this year investment continued to fall. That is why no benefits of economic growth are feeding through to living standards — and why the recovery will be shortlived.

The Tory Party's economic strategy was smashed when Britain was forced out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European Monetary System in September 1992. ERM membership had triggered the longest recession since the 1930s because the UK economy could not compete at fixed exchange rates. British capital can neither compete within the European Union, nor survive outside of it.

From capital's perspective, this impasse requires a radical re-organisation of the British economy and society, including the dismantling of the welfare state, to generate the levels of investment necessary to compete in Europe. But the Tory Party is not an instrument which can accomplish this. It is itself the product of the mode of capital accumulation, the world role of British imperialism, which has long exhausted itself. That is why the dimensions of the present crisis of the Conservatives must be seen in their full historical context.

The Tory Party established its dominance, from the split in the Liberal Party over Irish Home Rule in 1886, on the basis of the independent world role of British imperialism. Tory electoral support was based on rising income from British overseas assets. It has been in historical decline since its peak vote in 1931.

Thatcher did not reverse this decline, she merely succeeded in using North Sea oil revenues to temporarily slow it down. After 1979 each general election was won with a successively lower share of the vote — 43.9 per cent in 1979, 42.4 per cent in 1983, 42.3 per cent in 1987 and 41.9 per cent in 1992.

This historic decline is now coming to a head and producing both the slump at the polls and the cleavage over Europe within the Conservative Party. It is likely to

bring Labour to power at the next general election.

Blair's alternative is to revert to the economic strategy which ended in the ERM debacle. For this reason he is able to win the support of some sections of capital, which seek a party in government which can carry through the social meaning of British integration into Europe.

Blair has rejected proposals to fund increased investment at the expense of capital — for example, by controlling dividends, cutting military spending or significantly raising the top rates of taxation. This will leave him with no alternative but to attack the welfare state.

This is the sense of the proposals of the Commission on Social Justice, of Blair's reactionary statements on single parents and the shift in policy on education. Rather than formulating an economic alternative to the Tories, the Labour right is concentrating its fire on Clause IV and the Labour left.

That whole orientation will put a Blair government on a collision course with the trade unions whose members depend upon the welfare state. That is why the leadership is determined to destroy trade union influence in the Labour Party. The most serious threat in that regard is Labour's commitment to a referendum on PR — which would make a Labour parliamentary majority virtually impossible and detach the parliamentary party from the influence of party conference.

An agenda is being mapped out for Labour in government of a type which has led the French and Italian Socialist Parties to electoral annihilation. It would not only face wide scale opposition to its economic policies, but would unleash a new and more serious cycle of racism.

For these reasons, the strengthening of the left in the Labour Party and trade unions has been crucial. Beginning with its opposition to the Maastricht Treaty, the left has begun to gain ground not merely on individual campaigns, but on the core issues of economic policy. It has forced the twin themes of full employment and defence of the welfare state to the top of the agenda, and therefore the issue of what economic policy is needed to pay for them. This revival of the left was reflected in the NEC elections at Labour Party conference and in the breadth of the alliances coming together on the key issues of economic policy.

The Tory Party is likely to lose the next general election. But capital's project to re-shape British society and politics confronts the working class with its most serious *political* challenge in the 20th century.

The left and Clause IV

IV CLAUSE

Tony Blair's intention to remove Clause IV from the Labour Party constitution shows that he considers it more important to be seen to defeat the left in the Labour Party than to defeat the Tory government. He has deliberately chosen to focus the media spotlight on the internal life of the party rather than on what Labour will do to improve life for those whose votes it needs to win.

The complete crisis of the Tory government makes an election of a Labour government extremely likely. Blair's concern now is to avoid committing Labour to any economic policies which will alienate capital.

Blair picked the moment to fight on Clause IV carefully. Not because there is a majority in the party that wishes to get rid of Clause IV, still less any demand for this from the electorate, but because as a newly-elected leader only two years away from a general election, the time is right to ensure a loyalty vote.

Blair is using his position as leader to force through positions which would not otherwise command a majority. The decision to hold a special conference on Clause IV on Saturday 29 April, a few days before the local government elections and before trade union conferences, shows that the last thing the leadership wants is a debate on the issues. In a *Tribune* survey of fifty constituency Labour Parties only two supported scrapping the clause.

Clause IV simply expresses the aspirations to a socialist society. Capital wants to see it go to the degree that it represents a constant — if distant — danger that Labour might move down a more radical road.

The inclusion of the commitment to equal distribution of wealth through common ownership of the means of production, distribution and

exchange was adopted in 1918 — in the international aftermath of the Russian revolution. Even the British Labour Party, then the most politically backward of the European social democratic parties felt obliged to include a certain socialist idea in its constitution. It was necessary to block off the possibility of Labour being outflanked to its left.

Clause IV always constituted a vague, future aim, which did not determine the actual policy decisions of the party. But evidently if the party's goal is a socialist society this means the market is not the highest criterion by which its policies should be judged.

This is what Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson have now decided to eliminate.

The battle for Clause IV will be fought over the centre-ground in the party. That is what will decide the majority.

At *Tribune's* What's Left fringe meeting at Labour Party conference, immediately after Blair's announcement on Clause IV, there were varying responses. Speakers Meacher, Short, Hain and Berry all addressed Clause IV. Dawn Primarolo and Roger Berry argued that the debate was a diversion and waste of time. Meacher and Short both inclined to support the proposal to get rid of Clause IV, while Peter Hain occupied a middle position, expressing doubts about the wisdom of opening the debate, but concluding that, as it had been decided, everyone should put in their views.

From this came the *Tribune* proposal for a new Clause IV. The re-draft concedes the fundamental issues. It accepts the framework of capitalism but wants to regulate the 'whims of private capital' and the 'caprice of greed'. The existing Clause IV is premised on the fact that capitalism, by its nature,

means exploitation and extremes of inequality, therefore a socialist system is needed. The *Tribune* redraft is premised on concern that some individual capitalists and well-paid company directors are greedy, whimsical and capricious — the bad apples should be weeded out.

Because it concedes the essential points, this proposal has not been well received within the soft left. At a packed House of Commons conference on the proposed re-draft on 21 November, hardly a single floor speaker expressed support.

The views put forward included that of Stan Newens and 31 other MEPs that Clause IV should be retained and that if a statement of values was needed it should be *in addition* to the existing clause. Norman Godman MP argued that any 'updated' Clause IV should retain the same fundamental content. Maria Fyfe and Helen Jackson said the redraft failed to identify that capitalism itself is the problem.

A few endorsed the re-draft. Peter Hain considered that Labour had been damaged by its association with 'statism' and Angela Eagle argued for finding the common ground with the party leadership.

The soft left emerged as a distinct current following the miners' strike, formed by that section of the left that backed Kinnock. The soft left then supported each step that Kinnock demanded in moving the party to the right. By this means the soft left became the mechanism through which the right took control of the party back, reversing the shift to the left following the 1979 election defeat.

With the election of John Smith the right was back in the driving seat and the soft left were no longer needed. This was clarified when a section of it tried to assert itself.

When Hain and others wrote a pamphlet mildly critical of Labour's economic policy the axe fell. The right-wing Solidarity group in parliament had already dissolved itself and joined the Tribune group. Hain was kicked out as chair.

This led to some reorganisation of the soft left. With the Tribune group falling to the right, *Tribune* newspaper took a turn to the left.

Under Kinnock, *Tribune*, particularly when Paul Anderson was editor, had become right-wing, backing the right against the broad lefts in trade union elections, supporting the witch-hunt, advocating membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) and endorsing PR. The touchstone of its tactics were to exclude any common work with the Campaign Group. When Gould broke from the Labour leadership over the fundamental issue of the impact of the ERM, which cost 1 million jobs in Britain's first year of membership, he was particularly attacked by *Tribune*, sneering at his 'national Keynesianism'.

In fact, the right wing's line of support for the ERM ended in disaster while Gould's initiative around the Full Employment Forum and support for the Campaign to Defend the Welfare State helped change the terms of economic policy debate in the party.

Tribune, under its new editor Mark Seddon, has dropped this right wing sectarianism. At the *Tribune* sponsored *What's Left* conference early in 1994 invited speakers included members of the Campaign Group of MPs, although Dennis Skinner, Tony Benn, Diane Abbott and Ken Livingstone, were not invited.

John Edmonds told the conference he would be speaking to meetings of 'the right of the left, the centre of the left and the left on the left' on occasion.

Tribune supported Dennis Skinner and Dawn Primarolo as well as Peter Hain for the NEC elections. However the fact that Diane Abbott was

elected to the NEC along with Dennis Skinner, that Ken Livingstone was runner up, that Dawn Primarolo and Alice Mahon achieved high votes, showed that the Campaign Group remains the core of the left. Attempts to go around that core will fail.

The dilemma for the soft left is that at one pole, its left, are those left Keynesians like Roger Berry, who are keen to push forward the economic policy debate and at the other, its right, are those like Clare Short and Michael Meacher who subordinate policy to agreement with the leadership. This renders the soft left politically incoherent.

This is also why, over the last two years, the Socialist Campaign Group has been strengthened. Not only have significant numbers of new members joined, but it has led the parliamentary opposition to the Tories against the conciliation of Blair. It was the Campaign Group that led the Labour opposition to Maastricht, the Criminal Justice Bill, Clarke's September interest rate rise and on the European Finance Bill.

The Campaign Group is defending the existing Clause IV, while in its majority is prepared to look at any supplementary statements on their merits. The idea behind this is to allow a broad cross section of the party that wishes to retain Clause IV to go into the debate on a united position.

However, it now appears that Blair will allow no compromises. The administrative brutality marked by holding a rapid conference in April prior to union discussions is likely to be mirrored in the voting procedure, with Blair's amendment to the constitution alone put to the vote. Delegates could only vote for or against Blair's proposals. This requires the maximum vote against the amendment.

Tribune and the *New Statesman* should think again rather than concede the issue to the right before the discussion has even begun.

Emma Young

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Blair and Blunkett's assault on education

The recommendations of the Commission on Social Justice on education, together with the U-turn by David Blunkett on school league tables, and Blairs' statements on secondary schooling amount to a fundamental assault on education which, if enacted by a future Labour government, would alter the entire basis of education developed over the past half century. Far from 'modernising' education, the proposals are wholly regressive.

First is the threat to the comprehensive system, one of the most popular Labour reforms. Its abandonment, as signalled in recent statements, would have far reaching implications and such moves have been condemned, even by some on the right of the Party.

Roy Hattersley, for example, stated that 'The comprehensive revolution has been a great success, probably the greatest success ever introduced by the Labour Party. If it is abandoned the Labour Party could collapse'.

The expansion of education after the second world war enabled millions of working class people to enter higher education for the first time. The 1965 Education Reform act abolished the 11 plus system of grammar schools and secondary moderns. The comprehensive system meant that children could advance through local schools on a more equal footing than previously.

Linked to the expansion of

higher education this resulted in a massive influx of working class children to colleges and universities. This in turn had a positive knock on effect in the creation of a mass student movement.

In the past 14 years, the Conservative government has eroded many of these advances.

Now, however, the idea of the individual interest over the interests of the whole of society is dominant in the Labour leadership's thinking on education. Blunkett speaks of the 'dilemma' for parents, who want the best for their own children, which is counterposed to attending the local comprehensive. The reality is that the vast majority of children and their carers have no such 'choice'. Such statements indicate that the Labour right have accepted the Tory assertion that comprehensive education has failed.

Secondly, the report of the Commission on Social Justice argues that any training grants for 16-17 year olds be means tested and, while proposing increased training obligations by employers, suggest that they be allowed to pay 16-17 year-olds a 'Training Wage at a lower rate than our proposed national minimum wage.' In other words, a continuation of cheap youth labour schemes.

Thirdly, the Commission on Social Justice proposals on further and higher education are more savage than any government policy to date.

The last fifteen years has seen a relentless stream of

government attacks on student living standards. Real spending per student has dropped by 24 per cent in the last 5 years. Student travel grants, maintenance and special equipment payments and benefits during college holidays have all been stopped. Housing benefit was abolished in 1990, and loans introduced. Grant levels were frozen, and in 1993 a 10 per cent grant cut introduced, to be followed by annual 10 per cent cuts until 1997. The average student currently leaves university with £2,500 worth of debts in loans and overdrafts.

It is against this background that the Commission's report should be judged. When more than a million students will be looking to Labour to restore grants and access to education, the Commission not only concedes on the issue of loans, but goes further than current government policy by proposing the total abolition of student grants and that twenty per cent of tuition fees are repaid by the student. A surcharge on National Insurance is proposed to pay back loans, with graduates starting to 'repay money while their earnings were as low as £57 per week.'

The aim is to subsidise student maintenance by part-time work, more students living at home, dependent on families to support them and shift the cost of training the workforce from society onto individuals and their family units.

The Report asserts that

'we will have to transform our old education system, designed to serve an academic elite and to fail the rest' and yet it lays out a strategy which will do the exact opposite. Britain already lags behind Europe in higher education: 30 per cent of 18-year-olds are in education in Britain compared with 80 per cent in Germany; less young people are in full time university or tertiary education than in most other European countries. These proposals would make this situation worse.

The sharpness of the government's attacks on students is provoking a new mobilisation among students. In November the National Union of Students held one of their biggest national demonstrations for many years in opposition to the grant cuts. Labour risks alienating this layer of students.

These proposals are a fundamental assault on the idea that education is a right not a privilege. They are coupled with an ideology that consigns the majority of children to the scrap-heap and would alienate the very people on whose support the party is based. Even Neil Kinnock, as leader, was proud to acknowledge that, as the first in 'a thousand generations of Kinnocks' to go to university, he owed his position to comprehensive education, introduced by a Labour government. Ditching these principles will totally divide the Labour Party.

Kim Wood

Don't let the US make Yugoslavia Europe's Afghanistan

Much confusion exists about the conflicts in former Yugoslavia because of the atrocities, the extreme nationalist forces involved and the sheer scale of disinformation by the western media. But as in any war, which inevitably includes injustices and atrocities to which socialists give no support, the fundamental issue determining which side is taken is the class character of the main opposing social forces.

The origin of the war in Bosnia is clear: Germany pushed the European Community to sanction the break-up of Yugoslavia by recognising independent states of Slovenia, Croatia and later Bosnia. This had nothing to do with national oppression. No one claimed national oppression existed against the Croats, the Slovenes or the Bosnian Muslims in Yugoslavia. Slovenia and Croatia wanted to get out of Yugoslavia so that they could stop subsidising the poorer parts of the federation. This was made a lot easier for them by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's chauvinistic campaign against the Albanian population of Kosovo — where extreme national oppression exists.

German imperialism's goals had nothing to do with that. It saw the opportunity to break up the Yugoslav workers' state which blocked expansion of its influence into the Balkans.

The first major foreign policy initiative of the German government following unification was this intervention to break-up Yugoslavia. This corresponded to the historic trajectory of German imperialism to seek to integrate the Balkans and eastern Europe into its sphere of influence. In order to achieve this both regions had to be broken into smaller states. That is why the same states which were created in the last period of German imperialist expansion in Europe, under Hitler, are be-

ing re-created — Ukraine, Slovakia, Croatia, and so on.

The two key obstacles to German imperialism in eastern and south eastern Europe have been, and remain, Russia and Serbia — with whom Germany fought the first and second world wars.

The capitalist unification of Germany, the break-up of the Soviet Union and the crisis in Yugoslavia, put the re-creation of the German spheres of influence in eastern Europe and the Balkans back on the agenda.

This has created a convergence of foreign policy interests between Germany and the United States and conflict with French and British imperialism which wish to impede German hegemony in Europe. This is the most serious inter-imperialist conflict since the second world war.

For Washington the over-riding issue of foreign policy is Russia — the only state capable of destroying the United States. The policy has been to strengthen the hand of Yeltsin against the left within Russia. Until recently, the US moderated other goals, such as the eastward expansion of NATO, to safeguard this primary concern.

As Yeltsin's position has weakened, however, the US has shifted emphasis to simultaneously building up the external pressures on Russia. This policy coincides almost exactly with that of Germany's Chancellor Kohl.

Thus the US and Germany have fought to accelerate the expansion of NATO up to the borders of the former Soviet Union. Both have tried to bolster Ukraine as a potential counter to Russia. Both have taken the most hawkish line within NATO towards the former Yugoslavia.

This is the context of recent events. The US brokered a federation between Croatia and the Bosnian Muslims to create a military alliance against the Bosnian Serbs.

President Milosevic was pressured to cut off aid to the Bosnian Serbs. On this basis the Bosnian Muslims were re-equipped and encouraged to launch a military offensive. This collapsed into the Serb counter-attack on Bihac.

The problem for the US and Germany is that without deploying troops on the ground it is difficult to defeat the Bosnian Serbs. But they fear the political price of high casualties in a ground war would be unsustainable. That is why the option of arming the Bosnian Muslims for use as a surrogate fighting force is gaining ground. The aim would be to bleed the former Yugoslavia in an Afghanistan type conflict.

Much of the left, for example *Socialist Organiser*, *Socialist Outlook* and *International Viewpoint*, has misunderstood the Yugoslav conflict as badly as they misunderstood the dynamics in eastern Europe after 1989. They justify their support for the efforts of imperialism to destroy or reduce to ruin Yugoslavia by references to self-determination. But they forget the most elementary lessons of history.

The fight against national oppression in the Balkans has historically taken the form of the peoples of the region banding together to repel foreign imperialist powers. The very term *Balkanisation* was coined to describe the process of division which made possible their domination by foreign powers for centuries. As Trotsky put it, commenting on the Balkan war of 1912/13, the artificial division of the Balkans was: 'manufactured by European diplomacy around the table at the Congress of Berlin in 1879. There it was that all the measures were taken to convert the national diversity of the Balkans into a regular melee of petty states. None of them was to develop beyond a certain limit, each separately, as entangled in diplomatic and dynastic bonds and

counter-posed to all the rest, and, finally, the whole lot were condemned to helplessness in relation to the Great Powers of Europe'.

The re-Balkanisation of the former Yugoslavia will serve German imperialism not the peoples involved.

Furthermore, the left supporters of this process deny the national rights of those who wish to remain part of Yugoslavia. It was inevitable once Yugoslavia broke up that national minorities within the different republics would also demand the right to self-determination — because not only was the federation multinational, so was each individual republic within it. Thus if the wish of Croats and Bosnian Muslims to leave Yugoslavia was to be respected on the grounds of national self-determination, so too should the right of the Serb minorities in Croatia and Bosnia to remain in Yugoslavia.

This has led *Socialist Outlook* and *International Viewpoint* to take the side of imperialism in the war in Yugoslavia, demanding with the US the lifting of the arms embargo in order to pursue the military struggle against those who wish to remain part of Yugoslavia. *Socialist Organiser* take this to its logical conclusion and support NATO air strikes.

To justify these positions reality has to be turned on its head. Thus *Socialist Outlook* claimed: 'But in order to re-stabilise the Balkans for imperialism, the west regards Greater Serbia, and the regime in Belgrade, as the cornerstone of future order and stability.' (30 January 1993) It is not surprising that those with this upside down view of the world have finished up in a bloc with Germany and the US, the two most powerful imperialist forces on the planet.

Hilda Thomas

The rise and fall of the ARA

lessons for the future

From its launch in November 1991 through to the summer of 1993 the Anti-Racist Alliance wrote a new page in the history of the anti-racist movement in this country. For the first time an equal alliance had been created between the black communities, the majority of the trade unions and the Labour Party to fight racism. But at the peak of its success the ARA made a disastrous turn to sectarianism, which led it to clash with the very black families and communities it was set up to support.

Those who tried to correct this, including two of the three national black groups which had founded the ARA, found themselves subjected to what the *Caribbean Times* called 'latter-day McCarthyism'. This was directed not merely against the left, but also against black groups and individuals. It obstructed the discussion necessary for the alliance to correct its mistakes and go forward.

Given the trust which the ARA originally won in black communities and trade unions, and the fact that the anti-racist struggle must and will go on, it is necessary to learn the lessons of both the rise and the fall of the ARA.

The ARA was launched to campaign against growing racism and racist violence in Britain and to stop the extreme right from making the kind of electoral breakthrough which had already taken place elsewhere in Europe.

Racism had re-emerged as a mass political force after a decade in which the European Community had the highest levels of unemployment in the industrialised world. This was compounded by mainstream parties exploiting racism to divert attention from their own failed economic policies. After 1989 these trends were given greater impetus. German unification and the re-introduction of capitalism into eastern Europe changed the entire relationship of forces between the north and the south and

between the classes within Europe.

The social dislocation caused by economic policies worked out in New York, Tokyo, Bonn, Paris and London devastated Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, the Caribbean and parts of Asia. This was accompanied by the United States' military intervention in Panama, the Gulf war, Somalia and Haiti, while proxy wars continued in southern Africa. The western media explained away the resulting famine, massacres and chaos by claiming that Africans, for example, could not run their own countries — giving another turn to the racist screw.

At the same time policies were coordinated on an EC level to keep the victims, refugees, out. Throughout Europe mainstream parties cynically made refugees scapegoats to win racist votes. Far from standing up to the new rise of racism, social democratic parties in France, Italy, Germany and elsewhere, bent to it — for example, withholding the vote from immigrants in France and voting to restrict asylum rights in Germany.

Naturally the most consistent racists, the fascists, were given legitimacy. Racist attacks mushroomed not only in Germany but throughout Europe.

The Anti-Racist Alliance was launched in this context. It set out to achieve the maximum unity of anti-racist forces. It rapidly won wide support in the black communities, the trade unions and the

Labour Party. The alliance between the black communities and trade unions, on the basis of support for black self-organisation, made the ARA the most advanced anti-racist organisation in Europe.

Learning from the disastrous experience in Europe, the ARA explained that to stop the extreme right it was necessary to tackle the racism on which it based itself. In this framework it pointed out that only those subjected to racism could define the terms of the struggle against it. These were the fundamental political differences with the Anti-Nazi League. The ANL's approach was to try to separate the 'soft racists' from 'the Nazis' — which implied concessions to so-called 'soft' racism.

The ARA took this whole discussion into the trade unions. Literally thousands of trade union activists participated in conference debates on the different principles of the ARA and ANL. The result was a victory all along the line for the view that the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggles were inextricably linked and the principle of black self-organisation in the anti-racist movement. On these issues, the mass organisations of the labour movement proved to be more advanced than most of the far left, the SWP and Militant in particular.

The ARA decided that its campaigning priority should be racist attacks — the most brutal manifestation of rising racism. The first major event organised by the ARA was a national conference on racist attacks in Greenwich.

The goal was to try to make every racist murder a national issue. This meant providing the families of the victims with support and platforms which would not otherwise be open to them. For example, Ken Livingstone used Prime Minister's question time in the

'The goal was to make every racist murder a national issue, which meant providing the families of victims with support not otherwise open to them'

House of Commons to highlight the murder of school-boy Rolan Adams and the connection with the BNP headquarters in Welling, south London.

The ARA worked with the parents of Rolan Adams to help make a success of the demonstration in February 1992, on the first anniversary of Rolan's murder. The march was led by Rolan's friends, family, and the local black community, followed by the ARA and the rest of the anti-racist movement.

The ARA worked for 18 months with the family of Ruhullah Aramesh, the Afghan refugee beaten to death by a gang of racists outside his home, on 31 July 1992. Ruhullah's family asked the ARA to help organise a demonstration in Croydon on the first anniversary of his death. The march was led by Ruhullah's mother, family and friends, followed by the different components of the anti-racist movement. Significantly, the TUC sponsored the march and John Monks was a speaker. Subsequently, the murderers were found guilty and jailed for life.

Through these campaigns the ARA publicised the plight of such families, put pressure on the authorities to bring the killers to justice and highlighted the need for national action. This required sensitivity to make sure that the families, who had suffered great personal trauma, remained in control of everything done in their name. It also meant working with local community groups who had to be convinced that the presence of a national campaign would reinforce, not detract from, their own efforts locally. Tensions arose because some could not understand that the ARA could not simply declare itself the leadership, it had to earn support by painstaking work and respect for those in the front line of the struggle.

Over this first year, the ARA undoubtedly made mistakes, but it was doing a vital job with those most in need of support and this earned it growing moral authority, particularly in the black communities. It was this work, highlighting racist attacks, which put the issue of legislation outlawing racist attacks on the national political agenda.

In April 1993, Stephen Lawrence was murdered, again in south east London. The ARA worked with the family to help make the murder a national issue. With the National Black Caucus a meeting with Nel-

son Mandela took place. The case won major publicity, particularly as the police failed to arrest the killers. But after this good start, problems arose over a number of issues.

The National Black Caucus responded by presenting a paper to the ARA executive in June 1993 which called for strict respect for the wishes of the families. In the meantime the Lawrence family had set up their own campaign which agreed to hold a demonstration in central London on 16 October 1993. The ANL and YRE, who were part of the family campaign, agreed to the proposal. At the next meeting, however, they withdrew their support and indicated their intention to go ahead with a demonstration to the BNP headquarters in Welling on that date. The family representative described this as 'stabbing the family in the back.'

But the family also said that they wanted the central London event put on 'hold' until Stephen's parents, who were in Jamaica, could be consulted. In line with this no publicity about the proposed demonstration was put out at that summer's ARAfest.

A disastrous mistake was then made. Leaflets entitled 'Unite with the families' were produced at the end of August to publicise the 16 October march. By using the names and photographs of the families of Stephen Lawrence, Rohit Dugall, Joy Gardner and Ruhullah Aramesh, these leaflets implied the support of these families for the demonstration. People supporting the march naturally believed they would be uniting with these families. However, the families had not been adequately consulted and on the day none of them took part in the demonstration.

Some executive members and staff warned that the leaflets were unacceptable. But those views were not acted upon. The parents of Stephen Lawrence issued an open letter dated 6th September 1993 condemning the ARA. This stated: 'We are writing to you formally of our concern that the Anti-Racist Alliance is still continuing to link the name of Stephen Lawrence and the campaign around it with the demonstration organised in Central London on the 16th October 1993'.

This was reported in *The Voice*, Britain's highest circulation black newspaper, under the headline 'Just leave us alone, Lawrence family say race campaigners are using son's death as a political football'. The

article quoted the family as saying: 'Our family members were abused and their opinions ignored.' This letter was reported on television, radio and in the press. Myrna Simpson, the mother of Joy Gardner, wrote asking for the offending leaflets to be withdrawn. Other families also complained.

From this moment on the black press stopped supporting the 16 October demonstration — the conflict with the families had split the ARA from its core support in the black communities. Trade unions, religious groups and the black press had worked with the ARA in the belief that they thereby worked directly with the victims of racist violence. Trade unionists who had argued the families' wishes must be paramount found themselves in an impossible position.

Unfortunately, it was not understood that this clash with the families of the victims of racist murders undermined the alliance's most precious asset — its moral authority, something more important than a thousand photo-opportunities. Instead of drawing the requisite lessons from this experience, it was argued that the ARA had given too much publicity to families, and that less priority should be given to work with families in future. For a campaign whose number one priority was campaigning against racist attacks this was impossible. In every such case good, supportive relations with the family and local community are the precondition for an effective campaign for justice — and each such campaign brings the issues home to tens of thousands of people outside the immediate situation.

Furthermore, even if people could convince themselves of such views in small meetings, the outside world would have no sympathy with an anti-racist movement which clashed with families whose children had been murdered by racists.

The crisis with the families then backed into a second, and equally disastrous mistake — arguing that in some sense the anti-racist struggle and the necessity to respond to the election of Derek Beackon, in Millwall in September 1993 were counterposed. It was said that the massive reaction to the election of Beackon contrasted with the minimal concern at racist murders.

This was true. But from this, what should have followed was to address the mass response to

'Trade unions, religious groups and the black press had worked with the ARA believing they thereby worked directly with the victims of racist violence'

Millwall by showing that to defeat the BNP it is necessary to fight the racism on which it feeds. To minimise the importance of that struggle was to let down the black communities in east London and cut off the ARA from the massive number of people who wanted to protest over Millwall.

Millwall marked a watershed, after which not merely thousands, but tens of thousands, were prepared to take part in national demonstrations against racism and the extreme right. For the first time fascists were making a limited, but real, electoral breakthrough, and it was widely understood that this had to be nipped in the bud.

Derek Beackon was only the fourth candidate standing on a fascist platform to be elected in Britain this century. It happened in Tower Hamlets in part because local Liberal Democrats had supported policies which were seen to legitimise racism. Beackon's election posed the possibility of a racist agenda gaining further respectability and support.

In fact Millwall unleashed a tremendous cycle of anti-racist struggle in Tower Hamlets. The ARA nationally played little role in this. But for the black communities of Tower Hamlets, facing random attacks from vanloads of racists, the distinction between the fight against the BNP and the fight against racist attacks had no reality. Racist at-

'The whole mobilisation in east London culminated in the 66 per cent turn out to defeat the BNP in Millwall on 5 May'

tacks rose 300 per cent in the six months following Millwall. As the ARA constitution states: 'the fight against racism and the fight against fascism are inextricably linked.'

The ARA national executive did not meet to discuss Millwall in spite of requests that a special meeting be called for this purpose. Bill Morris and the TGWU's call for a national solidarity march in east London did not receive the unequivocal welcome it deserved from the ARA.

If the conflict with black families damaged the ARA's moral authority, sectarianism to the mass response to Millwall meant that the ARA had not placed itself at the head of the tens of thousands of people who wanted to express abhorrence at the election of the BNP.

By this politically wrong response to Millwall, the ARA ensured that the ANL march to the BNP HQ on 16 October would be seen as *the* way to protest against Beackon's election. As a result of this, and the discredit attached to the ARA's conflict with the families in the black communities, the ANL held a demonstration between five and six times the size of the ARA event, which was attended by 4,000 people.

The result was an event which vastly under-stated the scale of the mainstream anti-racist movement even though it had been sponsored and publicised by both the TUC and

the Labour Party.

All of these points were made in a paper to the ARA executive immediately after 16 October. This argued: 'The main political instrument of the fascists today is racism. Consequently they can only be defeated on the basis of an uncompromising anti-racist agenda. That in turn requires acceptance of the leading role of the Black, Jewish and other minority communities in the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggle. That is why the struggle to prevent any breakthrough by the extreme right in Britain must be led by the Anti-Racist Alliance. It would be a major error to consider this a diversion from the fight against racism and racist attacks. The two go hand in hand, as the communities in east London and Greenwich can testify — with different emphases necessary at particular points of time.'

'We must build the necessary flexibility into our work which means, among other things, improving the democratic functioning of the ARA and its ability to act.'

The paper added: 'We should have responded to Millwall by meeting to discuss how to bring together what would be a massive national response. Other organisations like the TGWU, TUC, Labour Party conference etc did start this discussion.' and 'The mistakes in relations with some of the families (producing leaflets without the agreement of the families whose support they implied) resulted in bad publicity which undermined the mobilisation of the black community and local ARA groups for 16 October. *The Voice* did not carry a single article or comment supporting the march after this. The ARA's own publicity was delayed, for the first month as we awaited the decision of the Lawrence family and then as successive *Unite with the families* leaflets had to be withdrawn.

'These problems were real and required political discussion to sort them out. One of the ARA's founding black organisations, the National Black Caucus, expressed their concerns in writing, on at least two occasions... the means must be put in place to ensure that different points of view can find constructive expression.' Unfortunately the constructive discussion suggested in this paper did not take place.

When the TUC took up the call for a demonstration in east London, it was quite obvious that the ARA had made itself too



narrow to serve as the umbrella for the march. The TUC decided to call the historic *Unite Against Racism* demonstration in Tower Hamlets on 19 March 1994 under its own banner.

Incredibly, unjustified criticism was then turned on the TUC, accusing it of 'parachuting into Tower Hamlets'. The local black community saw things differently. The TUC provided a platform for the local community and in fact showed how the ARA should have been conducting itself in solidarity with east London.

The January 1994 ARA AGM which occurred in the midst of these events made clear its views by giving a standing ovation and a virtual apology to the Lawrence family and adopting motions making the 19 March demonstration the ARA's top priority. An attempt to purge the critics of sectarianism from the executive backfired when they received some of the highest votes.

In spite of its AGM decision the ARA nationally did little to promote the 19 March demonstration. The ARA presence on the day was tiny.

The whole mobilisation in east London from September to the local elections on 5 May 1994 culminated in the spectacular 66 per cent turn-out which defeated the BNP in Millwall. But the national ARA played virtually no role in it. Those local ARA activists in east London who, along with the Tower Hamlets Anti-Racist Committee, worked to make this campaign a success felt that they had received hindrance rather than help from the national ARA.

As a result internal tensions continued to rise. In just six months the ARA had reduced itself from the leading umbrella group of the anti-racist movement to an organisation viewed increasingly as divisive and internalised. Even at this stage a discussion of the mistakes and how to correct them could have saved the alliance. But instead the sectarianism which was destroying the ARA's good name externally was also transposed into the internal life of the campaign — with equally destructive results.

An alliance like the ARA contains different political views, communities, religious faiths, trade unions and so on. It requires no great talent to split up such a coalition. The real skill is to create and hold together a broad alliance of forces, who may disagree on other issues,

in a united struggle against racism. Exactly the opposite of this was done.

For example, it was continually attempted to portray the differences as between white and black organisations. This was completely false. In fact, three of the ARA's main national black affiliates, the Indian Workers' Association (GB), the National Black Caucus and the Society of Black Lawyers, together with representatives of the Bengali community in Tower Hamlets, played the leading role in the coalition of viewpoints which came together to try to correct the mistaken course which was undermining the alliance.

Trade unionists, who could not follow the day to day developments first-hand, were told the problem was *Socialist Action*. Others were told this or that black member of the executive had a criminal record. A rumour circulated that there was a plan to take over the ARA by Asians. The tabloid press ran a story that left wing extremists and militant black nationalists wanted to turn the ARA to street violence.

This obstructed rational and objective discussion of the political mistakes which were discrediting the ARA in the outside world.

This approach was taken to extraordinary lengths. For example, a totally fabricated news release was faxed to the press, apparently from the ARA office, stating that a black member of the executive was guilty of fraud. The individual's family was harassed by journalists for days until they were able to set the record straight.

The ARA National Committee was told in March that an Asian community leader in Tower Hamlets, and member of the ARA executive, was simply a 'godfather'.

Tabloid journalists contacted executive members on their home telephone numbers about their politics. An internal inquiry found that two members of staff who had been critical were harassed.

These methods were more akin to the way the tabloids might conduct themselves than a political debate in the anti-racist movement.

This made it extremely unpleasant for those subjected to such behaviour. People had joined the ARA to fight racism, not to spend endless hours in meetings being abused.

In such situations it is sometimes tempting for those outside the immediate situation not to take the time to get to the bottom of the dis-



pute but instead demand simply that the conflict cease. But what was at stake in the ARA were relations with bereaved families, how to respond to events like the election of fascists to public office and how to work with local black communities. These are vital issues for any anti-racist movement. It was to their great credit that people had the tenacity to spend a year trying to save the ARA in the face of the most extraordinary sectarianism.

In May the organisation sub-committee of the ARA decided that: 'the earliest possible AGM is necessary to correct the sharp decline in the national public campaigning of the ARA and to resolve the internal tensions which are the result of this. The last AGM adopted clear priorities. These have not been carried out.' The executive agreed to bring forward the AGM to 15 October.

But the sectarian approach which was undermining the ARA's good standing externally, and obstructing discussion internally, was also applied to the AGM. There were numerous complaints by national and local black organisations, ARA groups and trade unions regarding non-receipt of AGM papers and other irregularities. Finally, in the light of the irregularities in the organisation of the AGM, the September meeting of the ARA executive decided to call in the Electoral Reform Society. Even then legal action was necessary to force the AGM papers to be handed over to the Society.

At the AGM an atmosphere of near hysteria was whipped up. The meeting was seriously disrupted on more than one occasion, most notoriously when a heckler had to apologise for calling an EC member an 'Asian poodle'. A leaflet in the name of the Black Section plumbed the depths for red-baiting — referring to black people who had opposed mistreatment of families as 'misfits and

'the fight to save the ARA from summer 1993 was just as important as the far more pleasant first two years of the campaign's existence'

dupes', attacking named individual members of ARA staff and claiming the Indian Workers' Association (GB), one of the ARA's main black affiliates, did not exist.

Given the concerns about the organisation of the AGM many expressed the view that the elections would be a foregone conclusion.

But in fact Kumar Murshid was elected as National Secretary, in what was universally understood to be the key contest. That result showed that, in spite of all the misinformation, the fundamental issues had got through to the great majority of trade union delegates, ARA groups and black community delegates to the AGM. The TGWU, UNISON, USDAW, NUCPS, FBU, UCATT, as well as the Society of Black Lawyers, the National Black Caucus, the Indian Workers' Association (GB) and the majority of local ARA groups had voted for Kumar Murshid.

In addition motions were passed making clear that the ARA membership wanted to put a stop to the sectarian course of the previous year. For example, the National Assembly Against Racism, called by Tower Hamlets Anti-Racist Committee, was unanimously supported.

Following the AGM the new officers were determined to put past disputes behind them and turn the ARA back to anti-racist campaigning. But within days officers reported that a group on the executive had no intention of allowing the elections and decisions they disagreed with to be carried out. They explained that the National Secretary was denied keys to the office, financial information, mailing lists and everything else necessary to do his job. The new officers' instructions to make available crucial financial information and change the signatories to bank accounts were ignored — raising serious concerns. A press release was issued from the ARA office attacking past and present members of the executive.

None of these problems were resolved by the first meeting of the new national executive. Instead the first hour and a half was taken up by attempts to adjourn the meeting. Appeals by Diane Abbott, the new chair, and Ken Cameron, the treasurer, that the ARA would not be forgiven if it wasted another year of the anti-racist movement's time and resources, were ignored. The officers' proposals on what was nec-

essary to allow them to function were rejected.

After consulting national black organisations and other affiliates the main officers concluded that after a year of trying, nothing more could be done to save the ARA. Diane Abbott, Kumar Murshid, Ken Cameron and Peter Herbert, therefore resigned, as did a number of other incoming executive members. They explained that they were resigning in order to get on with serious anti-racist work. Those resigning included the representatives of black organisations central to founding the ARA.

Those who had taken part in the launch of the ARA had in its first two years taken the whole anti-racist and labour movement forward. They set a new bench mark from which every future anti-racist initiative will have to start. In that sense the fight to save the ARA from summer 1993 was just as important as the far more positive first two years of the campaign's existence.

The principles on which the ARA was founded — black self-organisation in the anti-racist movement, the inseparability of the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggles and the need for maximum united action against racism — have been tried, tested and proved essential by the experience of the last three years. Positively, the organisational and political successes of the ARA in its first two years and negatively, its degeneration since the summer of 1993, show that the anti-racist movement must have the confidence and trust of the victims of racism if it is to make any meaningful progress. It must, in order to unite disparate currents, ensure the discussion, debate, and respect for different opinions necessary to reach well-considered decisions and correct the mistakes which are an inevitable part of any political process.

The ARA ultimately collapsed because it appeared to have lost sight of the fact that the sole rationale for its existence was to fight racism. As the events of the last year have shown, the ultimate test is how forces measure up to the real demands of the anti-racist struggle. On the basis of that test there is no doubt that the anti-racist movement will rapidly find the necessary means to move forward.

Louise Lang

What the Black press said

The Weekly Journal

"It is time to bury the ARA once and for all. Instead of trying to salvage a body racked with internal bickering, efforts should be put into setting up a new organisation, with a clean slate, where fighting racism takes priority over the battle of egos."

The Caribbean Times

"the organisation is facing a crisis of terminal irrelevance...Among those who have quit are newly-elected co-chair Diane Abbott MP, the only black woman on the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party; her colleague Kumar Murshid, one of the most respected Asian community activists on the 'frontline' of London's East End; Peter Herbert a leading African-Caribbean barrister and mainstay of the Society of Black Lawyers; and Ken Cameron, General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union and one of the most consistent anti-racist, anti-imperialist and pro-socialist figures in the leading echelons of the British labour movement."

"Whether or not a body calling itself the ARA continues to exist, it now seems doubtful that it can retrieve its credibility or realise its original potential"

"those now faced with the task of beginning again must draw the key lesson that anti-racist work is fundamentally work with people and not the contention of personalities or sectarian wars of position"

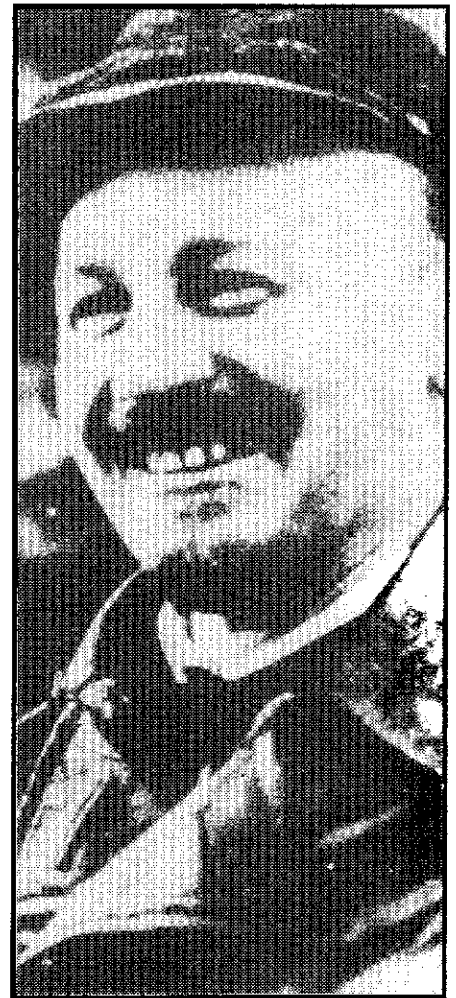
Eastern Eye

"The Anti-Racist Alliance has been plagued by in-fighting and destroyed by the selfish individuals who are using the organisation to feed their own egos, rather than fighting racism...Mr Murshid has proved himself to be an effective anti-racist campaigner, both as head of a local race group in east London and on a national level."

The Voice

"The ARA was set up with the intention of fighting racism but has degenerated into chaos and discord because some of the egotistical individuals involved seem to have lost sight of the most important issue".

Which class will organise an international economy?



The most important strategic debate in the international labour movement since Marx and Engels was that which took place between Stalin, Bukharin and Trotsky in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. The fundamental issue at the core of that debate was Stalin and Bukharin's strategy of socialism in one country. Although Stalin resolved the debate by liquidating his opponents he could not liquidate the real contradictions which gave rise to the conflict. Those remain the fundamental driving forces of the crisis which has unfolded in Russia since Yeltsin came to power in August 1991. As the Russian working class faces a struggle with capital today as desperate as 1917 and 1941 the starting point for a theoretical understanding of that struggle remains the issue of socialism in one country. In this supplement James Carter re-opens the debate.

The issue of 'socialism in one country' is the most fundamental question of socialist strategy in the twentieth century. Trotsky regarded *this* issue, not, for example, democracy or the popular front as the fundamental point of divide with Stalin and Bukharin — between what he called 'national reformism' and Marxism.

The starting point of Trotsky's analysis of socialism in one country is the most classical position of Marxism — that each transition from one mode of production to another is made necessary by a constraint upon the productive forces. As Marx put it: 'At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production..' (*Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*). One of Trotsky's first books to be published in English, *The Bolsheviks and World Peace*, starts with the simple statement: 'the forces of production which capitalism has evolved have outgrown the limits of the national state'. The present political form is too narrow for the development of the productive forces.

That contradiction, between the international division of labour and economy and the national state, manifested itself with immense violence in the first and second world wars — fought for the re-division and domination of the world economy between national capitalist states.

Nonetheless, the fact that this has transpired to be *the* most fundamental of all questions in the development of the productive forces under capitalism was not fully appreciated until the recent events in the Soviet Union.

But the disintegration of the Soviet Union confirmed that the content of the class struggle at its most fundamental level in the present epoch can be summed up as: which class will succeed in organising an *international* economy? Whichever class succeeds in this will come out on top.

What is the evidence for this assertion? We will look first at the negative evidence and then at Trotsky's examination of the question of socialism in one country in its internal effects inside the Soviet Union and on foreign policy.

Consider the relationship of the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union with capitalism. It is obvious that a major cri-

sis developed in these states. From what did it flow?

It was not because 'socialism in one country' was less productive than 'capitalism in one country'. This has been settled not merely in theory but in practice. In every case in eastern Europe the re-introduction of capitalism has led to a catastrophic fall in production.

We will leave aside East Germany — where 70 per cent of industry has been wiped out — because the fixed exchange rate imposed when the former GDR had only 40 per cent of the level of productivity of West Germany was bound to lead to collapse.

The cases of Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia are a clearer test. The impact in Poland was a 30 per cent drop in industrial production, a fall in real wages of 30 per cent and there are similar figures for the other countries. The IMF estimated that these countries would not recover to 1989 living standards until 1996, and in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania not until the next century.

In short, there is no evidence that a worker's state in one country is less effective than capitalism in one country.

But the decisive thing is that the non-capitalist states confronted not merely 'capitalism in one country', but an *international* capitalist economy. Since the second world

war the capitalists have succeeded in organising a rather rickety but nevertheless real *world* economy. It is essential to grasp the significance of this fact.

It is quite fashionable to talk about inter-imperialist competition. But it is to destroy all sense of historical seriousness to believe that what has taken place since 1945 is profound inter-imperialist competition. On the contrary the situation was characterised by the lack of serious inter-imperialist competition, a fact which was rooted in the high levels of profit, the hegemony of the United States and the loss of the Soviet Union and China in the course of two world wars.

The type of inter-imperialist conflicts in the 1970s and 1980s, over textile tariffs, the Common Agricultural Policy, European Union or the trans-Siberian gas pipeline from the Soviet Union to western Europe are comparatively piffling affairs.

Inter-imperialist or inter-capitalist competition in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced the following conflicts: the war between France and Austria for hegemony over northern Italy; the war between France and Prussia to construct the German state; the war between Prussia and Austria over hegemony within Germany; the Crimean war between Russia, France and Britain; the First World War; the Japanese invasion of Manchuria; the Italian invasion of Abyssinia; and the Second World War. These are serious examples of inter-imperialist competition.

Compared to these, recent disputes are roughly in the proportion of a flea to an elephant. Serious comparison has to be quantitative. On that basis we have to conclude that inter-imperialist competition has been at such a low level that it has practically not existed from the point of view of shaping events in the post-war period.

In fact what characterised the 1970s and 1980s was the most extraordinary example of inter-imperialist *collaboration* to sustain the US-led arms drive against the Soviet Union. There is no doubt that the decisive thing that cracked apart the Soviet Union was the formidable pressure placed upon it by the US's armaments build-up during the 1970s and 1980s.

The single most important class struggle in Europe in the 1980s was that over the deployment of

'The non-capitalist states confronted not merely capitalism in one country, but an international capitalist economy.'



Pershing and Cruise missiles into western Europe.

It was the inability of the West European working class to stop that which made the Soviet leadership decide that it had to come to a deal with the west.

If the working class of western Europe had been successful in stopping the deployment of those missiles then the course of events in the Soviet Union would have been quite different. Gorbachev only won the general secretaryship of the CPSU by one vote!

What made this US armaments drive possible? It was not the internal resources of the United States. The US is incapable of sustaining such a drive — it has neither the necessary level of savings nor investment.

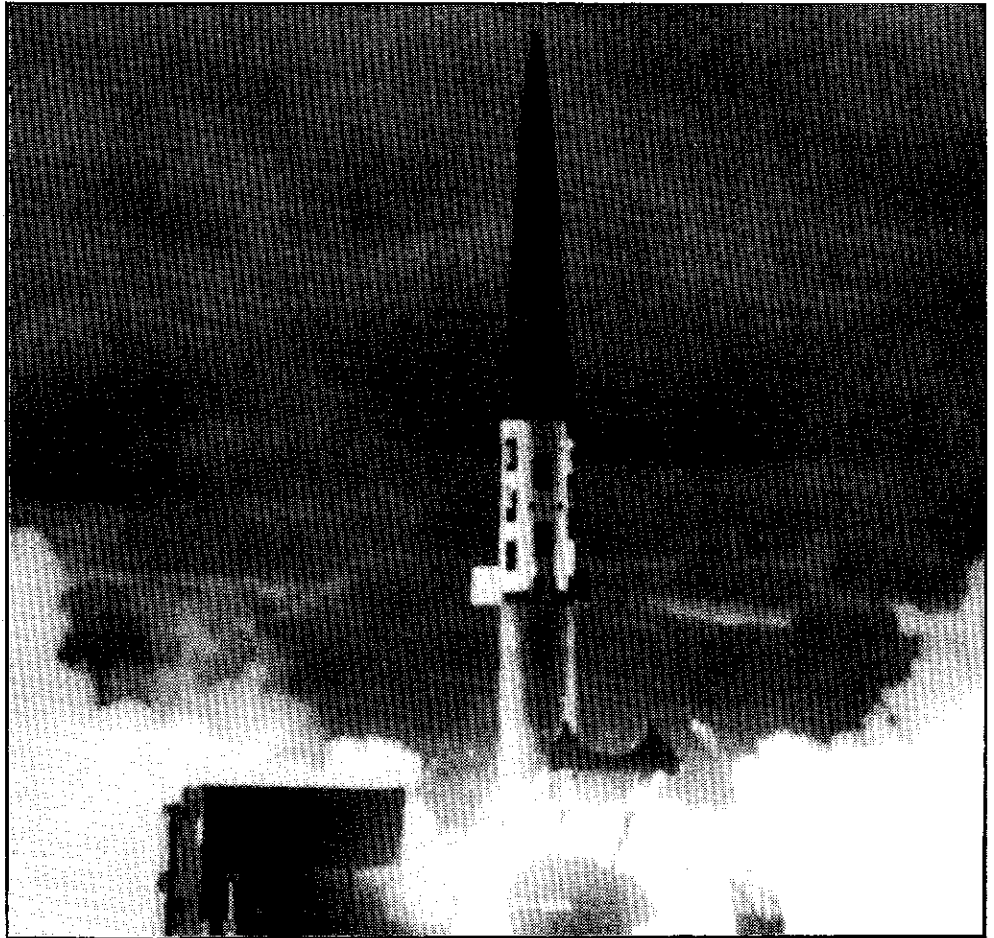
But in the 1980s a trillion dollars flowed into the United States. Japan contributed \$300 billion. The newly industrialising countries contributed over \$100 billion. The so-called third world contributed \$400 billion.

If the Soviet economy had received a subsidy of \$100 billion a year for a decade it would be shooting ahead on a scale that would leave the United States far behind. Thus behind the minor inter-imperialist squabbles of this period there lay a collaboration embodied in this colossal transfer of wealth.

But this could not continue indefinitely. Indeed one of the issues posed by the destruction of the Soviet Union is the possibility of serious inter-imperialist competition re-emerging. The differences between Britain, France, Germany and the US over Yugoslavia mark a new degree of inter-imperialist conflict. But nevertheless the lack of inter-imperialist rivalry in the 1970s and 1980s had profound negative consequences.

What did this mean for the quantitative relation of forces? The Soviet economy was a big economy — the second or third largest in the world depending on how you do the calculations. The IMF estimated Soviet GDP in 1990 as of the order of \$2000 billion including the service sector — about equal to the size of the Japanese economy and half that of the US.

But measured against the *international capitalist economy as a whole*, the Soviet economy was tiny. The net output of the world capitalist economies as a whole in 1990 was \$17-18 trillion. Thus the



'The Soviet Union was a very small economy compared to the *world capitalist market as a whole*.'

Soviet economy was only about a seventh or an eighth of the size of the world capitalist economy.

To the degree that this capitalist international economy was held together, that created a relation of forces with the Soviet economy of an entirely different order to that with any individual capitalist state in isolation.

Nevertheless, Stalin succeeded for a period in advancing with socialism in one country. Why?

It is because Stalin himself never confronted capitalism as a *world* system. He confronted, not an international capitalist economy, but capitalism in one country or, more precisely, capitalism in various empires.

The history of the 20th century is divided into three big periods in this regard. The first, before the first world war, was the steady internationalisation of the world economy. This collapsed in the 1914-1918 war.

The second period, from 1918 to 1929, was one in which world trade was a much lower proportion of GDP. This collapsed even further between 1929 and 1939. For example UK foreign trade was 30 per cent of GDP in 1913, but by 1938 it had fallen to only 12 per cent, a drop of almost two thirds.

Thus in the inter-war period the world capitalist economy disintegrated into a series of warring capitalist economies with Germany, Japan, USA, Britain, France all protected by tariffs and not engaged in major transfers of capital with each other.

The *third* period followed the Second World War. The world economy was reconstructed under the hegemony of the US and an international market was progressively developed where gigantic flows of capital took place.

The Soviet Union was a very small economy compared to this *world* capitalist market taken as a whole.

For example, in the international capitalist economy there are now only two serious producers of airliners, Boeing and Airbus, and they sell into a market of \$17 to \$18 trillion. The Soviet Union built its own civil aircraft, but sold into a market of only \$2 trillion, a seventh of the size.

Take computers, the market for personal computers was built up in exactly ten years. *One* company dominates the manufacture of personal computer chips — Intel.

Production in the Soviet economy was only a tiny fraction

of what was possible in the world capitalist economy.

That is the economic reality which makes the theory of socialism in one country in the most strict sense 'a reactionary utopia'. It is a utopia because it cannot be achieved. You cannot achieve, in an economy one seventh or one eighth the size of the world capitalist economy, the division of labour and scale of production which can be achieved in the world capitalist economy as a whole.

It is reactionary because the consequences of trying to achieve it undermine the whole revolutionary process. It is a classic example of the dialectic, that you cannot stay in the same place, you either go forward or you go backward. The attempt not to go forward, to preserve the status quo rather than try to spread a non-capitalist mode of production to the rest of the world, inevitably meant going backward.

In fact, to be precise, the theory of socialism in one country is a pre-bourgeois theory, it does not even reach the level of bourgeois thought. The founding work of classical bourgeois economics published 200 years ago is Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. The purpose of this book was to convince the British government to abandon the attempt to have a self-enclosed economy and instead to embark on an international division of labour buying and selling goods abroad.

From a theoretical point of view the theory of socialism in one country is a regression from that starting point of classical bourgeois economics back to the idea of self-contained production in a single state.

The whole point of Adam Smith's book was that the division of labour acquires its greatest level of development on the *international* not the *national* scale.

If the theory of socialism in one country is utopian from an economic point of view, the attempt to apply it had extremely reactionary consequences.

Firstly, it leads to a total misunderstanding of the nature of the Russian revolution itself, a complete failure to understand why the revolution took place in the first place and what would be the consequences of its overthrow.

The Menshevik view, which was revived after 1989 by groups like the Democratic Left, was that it was a mistake to have a socialist revo-

lution in Russia. This view says Russia was not ripe for socialism, the productive forces were not developed enough, it was a peasant country, the proletariat was only 10 per cent of the workforce and the revolution should take place first in the most developed capitalist country.

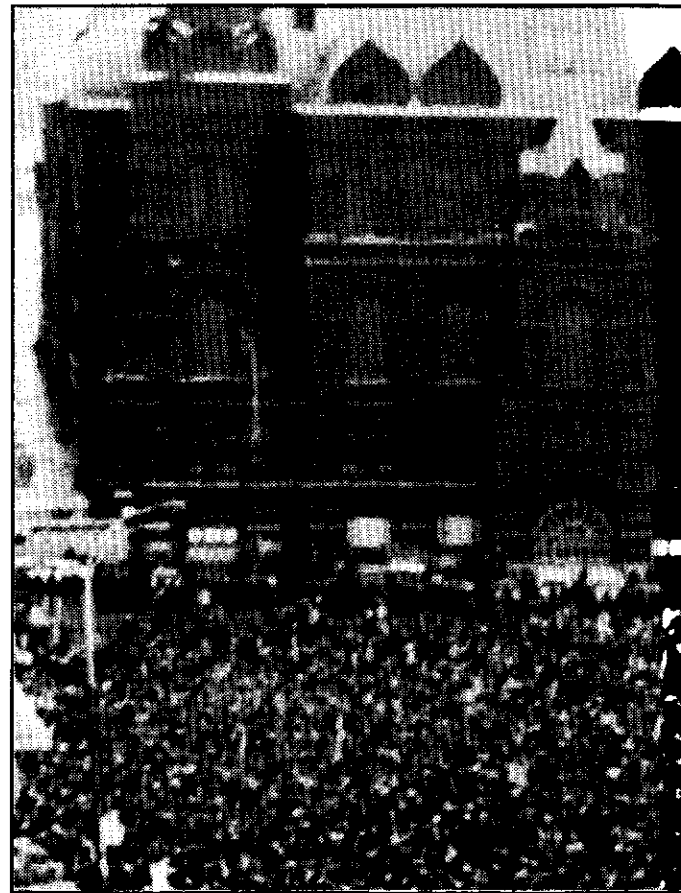
But the revolution did not take place in Russia because people thought that the productive forces were more developed than they were. As Trotsky put it in the *Revolution Betrayed*: 'Russia took the road of proletarian revolution, not because the economy was the first to become ripe for socialist change but that she could not develop further on a capitalist basis. Socialisation of the means of production had become a necessary condition for bringing the country out of barbarism.'

If there had not been a Russian revolution Russia would have been torn apart during the first world war or after it by the two more powerful imperialisms to its west and east. Japan had already defeated Russia in the war of 1905 and would undoubtedly have seized the eastern part of Russia. Germany crushed Russia in the first world war and demonstrated in the second world war its dynamic of expansion into the USSR from the west.

This is why the Russian revolution was able to attract not merely socialists but democrats and even the cultural intelligentsia in Russia — because if the October revolution had not taken place the country would have been enslaved and broken up.

As Trotsky put it in 1929, the Soviet system with its nationalised industry and monopoly of foreign trade, in spite of all its contradictions and difficulties, was a *protective* system for the economic and cultural independence of the country. This was understood even by many democrats who were attracted to the Soviet side, not by socialism but by a patriotism which had absorbed some of the lessons of history. To this category belonged many of the native technical intelligentsia as well as the new school of writers.

One sees this more clearly when recent events are seen from a Russian point of view. For example, when people were tearing down the statue of Dherzhinsky outside the KGB headquarters, British TV showed a war veteran telling them:



'If the October revolution had not taken place the country would have been enslaved and broken up.'

'I can tell you, I am a historian, Lenin and Dherzhinsky saved the country. This statue should be there for ever.'

That is an aspect that one doesn't generally see. One sees Lenin as a towering figure of the international proletarian revolution, and that is his first claim to fame, but, in addition, from the point of view of Russia he is a great *national* figure. Because the Russian people would have been enslaved by Germany to their west and Japan to their east were it not for the 1917 revolution.

This was also the case in 1941. The struggle to prevent the country being subjected to foreign domination was an entirely progressive struggle notwithstanding some of the methods used by Stalin to prosecute it.

This reality reflects the fact that taking Russia *in isolation* it would be impossible to understand either why the revolution took place at all or what would happen today if capitalism were to be restored there.

What is happening is that Russia is being inserted into a world market in which there is no place for its goods. Thus the IMF proposes that the Soviet Union become a supplier of raw materials to the rest of the world.

These proposals demonstrate why the October revolution occurred in the first place — because



the international pressure of imperialism would have prevented, and now would destroy, the development of the productive forces in Russia.

This dictated Trotsky's attitude to the defence of the Russian revolution, not merely from the point of view of socialism, but from the point of view of Russia.

As he put it: 'In their appraisal of the possibilities and tasks of the Soviet economy Bolshevik-Leninists take as their point of departure the real historical process, its world relations and living contradictions. Only the foundations that have been laid by the October revolution can guard the country from the fate of India or China. Without a planned economy the Soviet Union would be thrown back for decades.

'The fall of the bureaucratic dictatorship, if this were not replaced by a new socialist power, would thus mean a return to capitalist relations with a catastrophic decline of industry and culture.'

The second objectively reactionary consequence of the attempt to build socialism in one country was that it distorted the entire economic framework *within* the Soviet Union.

As Trotsky put it: 'The productive forces of capitalist society have long ago outgrown the national boundaries, to aim at building a na-

tionally isolated socialist society means in spite of all passing successes, to pull the productive forces backward even as compared with capitalism.'

From Stalin the official ideology of the Soviet Communist Party, was that the Soviet Union could build a fully developed socialist society within its borders. This was the basis of the absurd pledge of Khrushchev that they were going to build *communism* in the Soviet Union by 1980. That was actually written into the programme of the Soviet Communist Party!

But in fact the more the Soviet economy developed, the more it became constrained by its isolation and the far greater division of labour in the world capitalist economy.

Even in the 1950s, let alone the 1930s, there were still half a dozen firms making aircraft in Britain. Today there are only two — Rolls Royce and British Aerospace — one producing engines and the other producing parts for the Airbus.

Thus as the Soviet economy developed it ran more and more into the constraint of the limited scope of its division of labour.

The conclusions flowing from the fact that international capitalism cannot be overtaken by building socialism in one country are not that nothing can be done. On the political field the working class comes to power first, not where capitalism is most developed, but where its contradictions are most acute. But in order to advance it means that the most important thing is to spread the revolution otherwise it will finally be rolled back.

This did not mean *waiting* for the revolution to spread. The theoretical conclusion that you cannot overtake capitalism in one country leads to definite priorities and action on the internal economic field. Equally, the wrong perspective of the Soviet Communist Party that a fully developed socialist society *could* be built in one country led to the wrong internal economic and political choices.

The attempt to construct a self-contained socialism in one country distorts the entire economy. It means absolute priority to heavy industry — dams, steelworks, power stations and so on — at the expense of the production of consumer goods.

If it were possible on this basis

to overtake capitalism the sacrifice involved would be merely temporary and therefore rational.

If, however, the Soviet Union by itself could not catch up with, let alone overtake capitalism, then it would remain permanently locked in the phase of building steelworks, dams and coal mines. That is exactly what happened. Tremendous development of the means of production, vast heavy industries, but acute shortage of refrigerators, housing, quality foods, consumer services — of everything necessary to improve the life of the proletariat.

Trotsky, writing about the impact of Stalin's economic priorities, vividly described these processes. He said the composers of the plan proclaimed that it was their task 'to lift up the country to a new and hitherto unseen high level of material and cultural development. In actuality the shortages in commodities has become unbearably acute, the supply of bread has sharply decreased, meat and dairy products have become rarities, in the midst of newly constructed factories, plants, mines, electric stations, collective and Soviet farms the workers and peasants begin to feel more and more as if they are in the midst of gigantic phantoms indifferent to the fate of humans.' That is a brilliant description of what the workers in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union felt sixty years later.

If, conversely, you believe it is utopian to aim to build socialism in one country, then *the most important task becomes to raise as rapidly as possible the living standards of the working class*. This is exactly the way that the Cuban leadership, for example, is responding to the attacks on Cuba. Not by saying you must tighten your belt so we can produce ten thousand more machine guns. Because what motivation will the working class have to use the machine guns if their living standards are given no priority?

The contrast between the destruction of Saddam Hussein's 3,500 tanks, compared to the total mobilisation and final victory of the Vietnamese over the US, shows the difference which the morale and commitment of the workers and peasants makes even on the military field.

Again, Trotsky put it: 'Socialist construction is a task for decades. One cannot guarantee the solution of this task except by a systematic advance of the material and

'The working class comes to power first, not where capitalism is most developed, but where its contradictions are most acute.'

cultural living standards of the masses. This is the principal condition more important than the gain in time in the construction of a Dnieprostov, a Turksib or a Kusbass, [big projects of Stalin's industrialisation — ed] because with the fall in the physical and moral energy of the proletariat all the gigantic enterprises may lack a tomorrow.'

That was indeed what happened in the Soviet Union. Instead of trying to raise their living standards the consequences of socialism in one country alienated the working class from production. It made the economic situation worse and worse. It was not neutral or indifferent.

Nowhere was this clearer than in the consequences of socialism in one country for agriculture — the catastrophe created by forced collectivisation started in 1929 by Stalin. It is often claimed that Trotsky favoured extreme administrative methods and was no different to Stalin in this respect. But Trotsky's total opposition to the forced collectivisation of agriculture is the clearest refutation of this.

There is a view, among even some of Stalin's critics like Isaac Deutscher, that forced collectivisation was a step forward. What Trotsky said at the time was: 'An exaggeratedly swift collectivisation took the character of an economic adventure. Twenty five million isolated peasant egoisms, which yesterday had been the sole motive force of agriculture, the bureaucracy tried to replace at one gesture by the commands of 2,000 collective farm administrative offices lacking technical equipment, agronomic knowledge and the support of the peasants themselves. The dire consequences of this adventurism soon followed.'

'Fifteen million peasant farms have been collectivised and ten million private enterprises have been deliberately placed under such conditions so as to hide the superiority of primitive small scale farming over purely bureaucratic collectivisation. Thus by means of combined methods the bureaucracy succeeded in weakening if not killing all stimulus for work amongst the peasantry. The harvest of crops even previously extremely low began to drop ominously. From season to season the supply of raw materials to industry, of food to the cities worsens catastrophically.'

This was Trotsky's view of the



'Commodity relations can no more be administratively suppressed than the family or religion.'

forced collectivisation and 60 years later the Soviet economy had still not recovered. Just to give an indicator, in 1990 97 per cent of all Soviet farms were collectivised, while peasant plots accounted for only 3 per cent, but that 3 per cent of the land produced 50 per cent of the total agricultural output by value.

Even making allowances for the fact that more value-added crops were cultivated on the peasant plots, this illustrates the scope of the disaster caused by forced collectivisation.

For the economy as a whole socialism in one country was an attempt on an adventurist basis to supercede the laws of economics. Competition in the world market, the dominant world economy, takes place on the basis of prices. This is merely the application of the labour theory of value. What determines relative prices is the socially necessary amount of labour time to produce something.

In conditions other than communism, where there is an abundance of everything, commodity relations can no more be administratively suppressed than the family or religion. The labour theory of value cannot be abolished by decree.

If an economy tries to isolate itself from the world market its pricing system will be totally distorted.

That was the great problem of the Soviet Union, nobody knew what anything cost. That undermined planning because without knowing what things cost it is impossible to plan rationally. In Marxist terms labour time is wasted.

The most striking example of this was oil pricing. The Soviet Union under Gorbachev had a shortage of oil to export — the one thing it can sell on the world market.

That sounds like a problem of physical production. But in fact it had nothing to do with technical problems. It was because the price of oil in the Soviet Union was set at one fifth of the world price. This then influenced the entire economic structure of the country. For example, the price of transport was so ridiculously low that it was cost efficient for a farmer in Georgia to get on a plane with two baskets of peaches, go to Moscow to sell them on the open market, fly back to Georgia and make a 100 per cent profit on the airline ticket.

That is an example of irrational pricing. As a result Soviet industry used 2.5 times as much oil per unit of production as the west. The inability to export sufficient oil was an inevitable result of an absurd pricing system. Furthermore once such a system was set up it was incredibly difficult to escape from it.

An irrational pricing system also

made proper accounting impossible. There was virtually no accounting system in the Soviet Union. Without accounts it is impossible to decide what is a rational use of labour time. It is impossible to say whether a firm is profitable or not, and therefore to plan the efficient use of resources.

With no adequate accounting and no basis for determining a rational use of resources quality inevitably deteriorated dramatically.

Another aspect of irrational pricing was interest rates. These were fixed in the 1950s at 0.5 per cent and remained unchanged for decades. When inflation was more than 0.5 per cent that meant that interest rates were negative. In those circumstances firms logically borrowed gigantic sums of money to accumulate stocks. Bourgeois firms don't carry very high stocks because they have to pay for them which gives them an incentive to develop techniques like 'just in time delivery' whereby firms may maintain stock level sufficient to keep production going for a few hours or even less.

But negative interest rates made it rational for a Soviet factory to typically keep months supplies of stocks, immobilising the country's resources.

That is why Trotsky opposed the distortion of the pricing system. Instead he called, for example, for direct and transparent subsidies in the form of social security, pensions and higher wages.

But the possibility of rational pricing, accounting and therefore planning is inextricably bound up with relations with the international economy. The only way to develop a coherent price system is by an orientation to compete in the world economy, which means prices of commodities being set in terms of the labour time socially necessary to produce them, while at the same time taking the necessary political measures — state monopoly of foreign trade and planning — to ensure that its development is not *subordinated* to international capital.

Trotsky argued, in opposition to trying to outdo world capitalism on the impossibly narrow basis of one country, that the highest priority was to raise the living standards of the working class and thereby also its morale and political commitment.

That would pose problems such as consumer goods production run-

ning into shortages of steel to make fridges, or cement and bricks for housing or of fuels. But in the Soviet Union the shortages were of the exact opposite character. In the context of endless amounts of steel and coal there were no televisions, no quality food, no consumer services and so on.

In other words the Soviet economy was not run to improve the living standards of the working class. This had the effect of catastrophically demoralising the Soviet working class.

Trotsky's views on this, that the working class's living standards and morale took precedence, were attacked by Stalin as economism. But Stalin by embarking on something which was objectively impossible — overtaking the productive forces of capitalism on the basis of a single economy — inevitably had to violently attack the working class to hold back its living standards.

In most western economies, even Japan, private consumption averages of the order of 60 per cent of the economy, compared to 40 per cent in the Soviet Union. The difference was explained not by welfare provision, but by the massive compression of the wages fund in the Soviet Union. That destroyed the incentive to work and the commitment to the society.

Stalin's policy was not just brutal realpolitik. It was a theory. If it were possible for the productive forces of the Soviet Union to outgrow capitalism then Stalin would have been correct. If the

Soviet Union could have achieved higher living standards than the west, then the bourgeoisie would be incapable of restraining the world proletariat.

But, in fact, the consequences were the reverse. *Economically* utopian its *political* consequences were reactionary, treating the international working class not as the Soviet Union's fundamental ally to extend the revolution but as a sort of border guard to stop intervention.

Every other struggle of the international working class was subordinate to Stalin's diplomacy. For example, what Stalin feared in Germany in 1929-33 was that social democracy would come to power in an alliance with Britain and France and attack the Soviet Union, so Stalin preferred Hitler to come to power.

It leads to the most brutal type of chauvinism. The two most striking examples were the treatment of Yugoslavia and China.

Tito had an independent base: when he went to Rumania after the second world war 500,000 people turned out to greet him. Stalin did not see this as a second leader of the proletariat with great authority able to inspire the masses, but as a threat and therefore excommunicated Yugoslavia and attempted to crush it.

The Sino-Soviet dispute was the most criminal act of all. On the field of foreign policy this was the most catastrophic thing for the Soviet Union, because there is no doubt up until the 1970s the United States

'The international working class was treated not as the Soviet Union's fundamental ally, but as a sort of border guard to stop intervention.'



and the capitalists, despite the strength of their economies, were losing the class struggle internationally. For there is one thing that is even more powerful than the world capitalist economy and that is the world proletariat.

Prior to the 1970s the United States had to fight on two fronts. It had to fight against the Asian masses, in the Chinese, Korean then Vietnamese revolutions, and it had to prop up western Europe militarily and economically against the Soviet Union. And the US was losing. It was fought to a draw in the Korean war, it lost the Cuban revolution, it lost the Vietnam revolution, it lost the colonial revolutions. Like Germany in the first world war, fighting on two fronts, it lost.

This dynamic was broken by the consequences of the Sino-Soviet conflict. Khrushchev, in line with socialism in one country, had embarked on his policy of great power chauvinism towards China, for example refusing to help it develop nuclear weapons in the 1960s when the Chinese were directly threatened by the United States. He withdrew Soviet economic advisors from China to teach Mao-tse-tung a lesson. The Chinese leadership turned in desperation first to an ultra-left course and the cultural revolution and then to an accommodation with the United States against the Soviet Union.

The United States was enabled to split the world's two most powerful workers' states and to concentrate all its resources against the USSR in Europe and win.

In conclusion, therefore, if one had to reduce the programme of the proletariat in Russia to two things it would be: one, total priority to light industry and secondly, reverse the relations with China.

Total priority to light industry, including the consumer service sector, means giving pre-eminence to raising, as rapidly as possible, the living standards of the working class.

That was Trotsky's position, as against both the supporters of Stalin or Brezhnev and the theorists of the free market — who both seek a solution at the expense of the working class — Stalin by forced industrialisation, the bourgeois theorists by unemployment and the capitalist market.

Trotsky's position, to raise the living standards of the working class, combines the political and economic because, as Marx said, the

greatest productive force is the rising class itself. The greatest productive force in the revolution against feudalism was the bourgeoisie, the way the bourgeoisie organised production. The greatest productive force in the world today, which even the bourgeoisie acknowledges in its own distorted way, is the working class.

We have witnessed how a country, Germany, in which the physical capital stock was almost destroyed could rebuild itself as the primary economic power in Europe in the space of ten years on the basis of its highly skilled labour force. Skilled labour is a much more valuable productive force than physical capital, although, evidently, you also need physical capital.

This explains the emphasis of modern capitalist economies on education and training. It is often quicker and cheaper to re-equip a factory physically than it is to re-train the workforce. Many of the features of modern capitalist production are a distorted acknowledgement that the most fundamental productive force is the working class.

Hence the priority to raising the living standards of the working class as rapidly as possible is not merely politically correct but also the most rational economic course.

Trotsky argued that no investment pays greater economic dividends than investment in the proletariat. That is why one of the two most necessary things in the Soviet Union was total priority to the development of light industry and the

service sector.

The other, key goal, to reverse the Sino-Soviet split, so that imperialism is faced by a united force of the proletariat in Russia and China, needs no further explanation. It is utterly obvious.

This issue of the alternative to the failed strategy of socialism in one country remains the most important question in world politics because the outcome of the struggle in Russia is far from resolved. We are going through a period today which only happens once in a generation. There have only been two crises like this in the 20th century, in 1917 and in 1941.

The objective economic content of the modern epoch is the following: which class will organise an international mode of production. It is not an issue of which class will finally triumph, eventually the proletariat will win if the world is not annihilated in a nuclear holocaust first. But the struggle in this century has turned on that question. And on this fundamental issue of the class struggle in our epoch, since 1917, Stalin and his successors oriented away from the objective of organising an international mode of production and that led inevitably to catastrophe.

The point is not to claim that to have embarked upon an internationalist course would *inevitably* have led to success — although even with distorted policies a united Soviet Union and China were probably enough to crack the United States. But simply that the road of socialism in one country *inevitably* led to defeat.

'The
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The left *and the* anti-racist struggle

The initiative to launch the ARA was taken by an alliance of black organisations and the left. Those who originally opposed the ARA rejected the idea that the communities oppressed by racism must have the leading role in the movement against it. They saw racism as primarily dividing the white working class. But by viewing the anti-racist struggle merely on the British or European stage, they fail to grasp that, more importantly, racism is the ideology which justifies the oppression and exploitation of the non-white *majority of humanity*. Seen from this perspective the anti-racist struggle, and black self-organisation to pursue it, is one of the fundamental struggles of this epoch. The anti-racist struggle is an indispensable and central aspect of the international class struggle against imperialism.

Racism is the ideological product of imperialism, which expanded from western Europe to world domination in the space of 500 years. The *majority* of peoples on earth are oppressed by racism and imperialism. Any socialist movement which does not place the struggles against racism and imperialism at the centre of its political perspectives simply is not socialist — it is restricting its concerns to those of a relatively privileged minority of the human race.

It was Lenin who first formulated the relationship between the socialist and anti-imperialist struggles: 'The socialist revolution will not be solely, or chiefly, a struggle of the revolutionary proletarians of each country against their own bourgeoisie — no, it will be a struggle of all the imperialist-oppressed colonies and countries, of all dependent countries against international imperialism. Characterising

the approach of the world social revolution... we said that the civil war of the working people against the imperialists and exploiters in all the advanced countries is beginning to be combined with national wars against international imperialism. This is confirmed by the course of the revolution and will be more and more confirmed as time goes on.'

Lenin's view contrasted sharply with the chauvinism which had progressively destroyed the Second International until it collapsed in the carnage of the First World War. One of the first symptoms of the rot was the attitude to racism.

At the 1907 Congress of the Second International in Stuttgart minorities wanted to support both colonialism and immigration controls. For example, Morris Hilquit, a US delegate, argued that immigration 'threatens the native-born worker with dangerous competition' and that the Chinese 'cannot

be organised. Only a people well advanced in its historical development such as the Belgians and Italians in France, can be organised for the class struggle. The Chinese have lagged too far behind to be organised'.

On colonialism Bernstein argued: 'We must get away from the utopian notion of simply abandoning the colonies. The ultimate consequences of such a view would be to give the United States back to the Indians... Socialists too should acknowledge the need for civilised peoples to act somewhat like guardians of the uncivilised.' Eduard David argued: 'Europe needs colonies. It does not have enough of them. Without colonies we would be comparable from an economic standpoint to China.'

The congress rejected this racist nonsense and instead agreed: 'The congress considers that by its inherent nature, capital-

'The majority of peoples on earth are oppressed by racism and imperialism'

ist colonial policy must lead to enslavement, forced labour, or the extermination of the native population of the colonised regions. The civilising mission that capitalist society claims to serve is no more than a veil for its lust for conquest and exploitation.'

But the vote was only 127:108!

The internationalist current which became the Communist International in 1919 cut its teeth against this degeneration of the Second International.

In his 'Report on the National and Colonial Questions' to the second congress of the Comintern, Lenin spelled out that the fundamental division between states was between imperialist, oppressor states and oppressed states: 'What is the cardinal idea underlying our theses? It is the distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations. Unlike the Second International and bourgeois democracy, we emphasise this distinction... The characteristic feature of imperialism consists in the whole world... being divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressor nations, the latter possessing colossal wealth and powerful armed forces. The vast majority of the world's population... belong to the oppressed nations...'

Lenin stressed in the most extreme manner the damage that would be done to the revolutionary movement by any concessions to chauvinism: 'It would be unpardonable opportunism if, on the eve of the debut of the East, just as it is awakening, we undermined our prestige with its peoples, even if only by the slightest crudity or injustice towards our own non-Russian nationalities. The need to rally against the imperialists of the West, who are defending the capitalist world, is one thing... It is another thing when we ourselves lapse, even if only in trifles, into imperialist attitudes towards oppressed nationalities, thus undermining all our principled sincerity, all our principled defence of the struggle against imperialism. But the morrow of world history will be a day when the awakening peoples oppressed by imperialism are finally aroused and the decisive long and hard struggle for their liberation begins.'

In this spirit the Communist International in 1922 called for 'an international black movement' because 'The black question has become an integral part of the world

revolution.'

Lenin believed that it was the revolutionary struggle in the east which would drive forward the international socialist revolution. He spelled this out in one of his most famous articles, *Better fewer, but better*, written towards the end of his life: 'In the last analysis the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured.'

In his discussions with CLR James and the US Socialist Workers Party in the 1930s Trotsky applied these principles to the position of the communities oppressed by racism in the United States in an equally uncompromising manner: 'the white workers in relation to the Negroes are the oppressors, scoundrels, who persecute the black and the yellow, hold them in contempt, and lynch them' and 'Ninety nine point nine per cent of the American workers are chauvinists; in relation to the Negroes they are hangmen as they are also to the Chinese etc'.

Trotsky supported not only the right to black self-organisation but also to a separate black state: 'The argument that the slogan for self-determination leads away from the class point of view is an adaptation to the ideology of the white workers' and 'The worst crime on the part of the revolutionaries would be to give the smallest concessions to the privileges of the whites. Whoever gives his little finger to the devil of chauvinism is lost.'

Malcolm X, coming from a black nationalist, not a marxist, tradition, formulated the relation of the struggle against racism in the USA and the international struggle against imperialism, in very similar terms: 'the black nationalists... don't look upon themselves as Americans, they look upon themselves as part of dark mankind. They see the whole struggle not within the confines of the American stage, but they look upon the struggle upon the world stage. And, in the world context they see that the dark man outnumbers the white

man. On the world stage the white man is just a microscopic minority.'

As Malcolm X never tired of explaining, the most important blows against racism in the post-war period were the decolonisation struggles and colonial revolutions in Asia and Africa. Objectively the most important ally of those struggles was the Soviet Union and later China. That is why Malcolm saw the socialist struggle as an ally of the anti-racist struggle. In 1965 he said: 'all of the countries that are emerging today from under the shackles of colonialism are turning towards socialism, I don't think it's an accident. Most of the countries that were colonial powers were capitalist countries, and the last bulwark of capitalism today is America. It's impossible for a white person to believe in capitalism and not believe in racism. You can't have capitalism without racism. And if you find one and you happen to get that person into a conversation and they have a philosophy that makes sure they don't have racism in their outlook, usually they're socialists or their political philosophy is socialism.'

This is the fundamental reason why McCarthyism has no place in the anti-racist movement — it is designed to split two of the key components of the broad anti-racist struggle, black self-organisation and the left. That is also why McCarthyism was always a weapon *against* the anti-racist and civil rights movements in the United States. Both Malcolm X and even Martin Luther King were the objects of US government red-baiting campaigns.

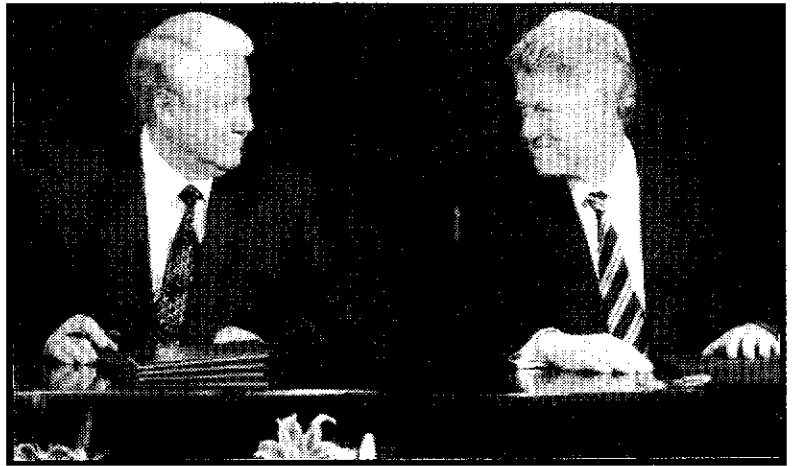
It is no accident that the most advanced international currents of Marxism in the 20th century, and Malcolm X, the outstanding leader of the black struggle in the United States, should come to such similar conclusions. Malcolm's life was cut short by an assassin. But the direction of his political evolution, particularly in the last year of his life, was towards translating the kinds of international alliances which had taken forward the post-war struggle against colonialism into the struggle against racism within the United States. The resurgence of racism in Europe and the United States today poses the necessity of developing the strategy of the anti-racist struggle from the point at which Malcolm was forced to break off.

Joe Clarke

'In the last analysis the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China etc account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe'
— Lenin

Russia's race for survival

The Communist Party has become the leading political party in Russia. In September it moved into clear opposition to the government of Victor Chernomyrdin. The rouble collapsed and the government was thrown into crisis. In response the United States increased its pressure on Russia with the IMF demanding an even harsher budget next year and NATO moving to accelerate its expansion into eastern Europe.



A new political upheaval began in Russia in September 1994. At its root was the deteriorating economic situation. An International Labour Organisation study in October 1994 found that life expectancy had fallen from 65 to 58 years for men over the previous seven years and to 72.5 years from 74 for women; 50 per cent of enterprises were paying their workers late, less than the contracted rate or not at all; 53 per cent of companies were in debt and afraid of going bankrupt within a year and more than 20 per cent of workers studied were on so-called long-term administrative leave, with little prospect of returning to work and receiving little or no income from their companies or unemployment benefits from the state.

If that is the economic and social context, what sparked the political crisis from September was the decision of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation to launch a campaign of no-confidence in the government of Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin.

For the previous seven months the CP had given de facto support to the government with its fraction in the lower house of parliament deciding by a narrow margin to vote for the budget. This had allowed Chernomyrdin to carry out an economic policy so severe that it won praise from the IMF.

Within the CP the support for the budget had provoked major opposition and a public debate which finally led to the change in September. That in turn provided the channel for the opposition to the gov-

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ernment to be expressed. It also put the squeeze on Zhirinovsky who had previously been able to pose as the only serious opposition to the government — he responded by radicalising his own rhetoric to demand that ministers be arrested!

The crisis burst into the open with the collapse of the rouble in September. Yeltsin took the opportunity to remove the chair of the central bank, Victor Gerashenko, and later gave Anatoly Chubais, the minister closest to the IMF, overall control of government economic policy.

On 27 October 1994, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FITUR), called a national day of protest against arrears of wages and the threat of unemployment. The protest was initiated by the left within the unions and 2-3 million workers took part. The same day parliament voted 194:54 in support of a motion of no-confidence in the government. In spite of the large majority the motion was invalid under the new Russian constitution which requires an absolute majority of all members of the parliament.

But the message was clear — the seething discontent of the Russian working class was finding a national political focus for the first time since the December 1993 parliamentary elections. These had been a shattering blow to Yeltsin. With Russia under presidential rule, parliament destroyed, its main leaders in prison, more than a thousand people killed, opposition newspapers and parties banned and TV and radio under presidential control, the

parties closest to Yeltsin were still decimated at the polls.

The Communist Party, although banned at the beginning of the campaign, emerged, with Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democrats, as the main victors. This was a clear vote against not only Yeltsin's economic policy but also his attack on parliament. Furthermore, the biggest margin against Yeltsin's supporters was in the armed forces. After this defeat Yeltsin did not appear in public for three months and had to accept the release of the parliamentary leaders he had jailed.

The United States government was shaken by the results. Washington understood that it would no longer be possible for the parties and ministers more directly linked to the IMF, notably Gaidar and Fyodorov, to control the Russian government. The US therefore switched its support to the Prime Minister, Victor Chernomyrdin, and to neutralising parliamentary opposition. This was signalled by the IMF granting a \$1.5bn credit to Russia. The advantage was not merely that Chernomyrdin carried out the essential goals of the IMF, but also that the parliamentary opposition would be tarnished with responsibility for it. To this end, given that the US could not accept Zhirinovsky's international policies, they set out to cultivate the Communist Party.

Since the elections the Communist Party has become the leading party in Russia. Its revival began with the launch of the National Salvation Front of Communists and nationalists in 1993. At that time

the leadership of the parliamentary opposition was in the hands of the non-communist centre led by the Ruslan Khasbulatov and Vice President Rutskoi.

Gennady Zyuganov, CP chair, argued that the Communist Party had to lead the patriotic resistance to the destruction of Russia and form a centre left bloc against Yeltsin. After the destruction of parliament by Yeltsin's tanks the CP's position was further strengthened by the fact that it had not shared Rutskoi's mistake of trying to turn the demonstrations which lifted the seige on the parliament into an armed uprising. Zyuganov had specifically warned on television that the opposition should not let itself be provoked into armed actions. This meant Yeltsin was unable to make his attempt to ban the CP stick. Finally, by deciding to take part in the December elections, the CP had emerged as a major force in parliament.

However, it was the support given by the Communist parliamentary leadership, particularly the speaker Ivan Rybkin, which allowed Chernomyrdin, Yeltsin and the US to retrieve the situation in the first half of 1994. The basis of this was the idea that the patriotic struggle should be waged in alliance with the national bourgeoisie — in this case Chernomyrdin.

In reality, however, Russian capital won't support the measures necessary to defend the country. Patriotic struggle, in this progressive sense of preventing Russia being torn apart by more powerful imperialist powers, imposes con-

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Russian
bourgeoisie'

flict, not alliance, with the national bourgeoisie. For example, it is impossible to stabilise the Russian economy without stopping the flight of capital amounting to \$15bn a year and taking control of the massive export, often illegal, of Russia's raw materials. But that would mean attacking, not allying with, two of the most important groups of Russian capitalists, the commercial banks and the commodity traders — both of which enjoy strong links with the mafia. More than 2,000 banks have been set up since 1992. Moscow's Most Bank, for example, has 3,000 armed para-militaries led by the former head of the KGB's fifth directorate (which dealt with dissidents), its own newspaper and a TV station.

The imposition of state control of the banks and foreign trade — indispensable to defend the Russian economy, industrial capacity and independence — is totally unacceptable to the new Russian bourgeoisie because it would destroy its main sources of accumulation. As in 1917, Russian national capital will not and cannot take the measures necessary to prevent the destruction of Russia. That is why the Russian working class came to power in October 1917 and why there is no way out of Russia's current crisis on anything other than a democratic socialist basis.

Neither can democracy be maintained in alliance with the emerging Russian bourgeoisie because in democracy it will be challenged by political forces, those based on the working class, which will fight international capital. The fundamental dynamic of Russian national capital is subordination to more powerful imperialist powers externally and an anti-communist dictatorship within the country.

As Trotsky explained in a different context, this would be a case of dictatorship to subordinate a country to imperialism as opposed to dictatorship to pursue an imperialist policy: 'The most important and the most difficult thing in politics, in my opinion, is to define on the one hand the *general* laws which determine the life and death struggle of all countries of the modern world; on the other hand to discover the *special combination* of these laws for each single country. Modern humanity without exception, from British workers to Ethiopian nomads, lives under the yoke of imperialism. This must not be forgotten for a single minute. But this

does not at all mean that imperialism manifests itself equally in all countries. No. Some countries are carriers of imperialism, others — its victims. This is the main dividing line between modern nations and states. From this viewpoint, and *only* from this viewpoint should the very pressing problem of *fascism* and *democracy* be considered... we cannot speak of fascism 'in general'. In Germany, Italy and Japan, fascism and militarism are the weapons of a greedy, hungry and therefore aggressive imperialism. In the Latin American countries fascism is the expression of the most slavish dependence on foreign imperialism. We must be able to discover under the political form the economic and social content... The conclusion is that it is impossible to fight against fascism without fighting imperialism' (*Fight imperialism, fight fascism*, LT 1938/39)

In Russia, it is impossible to defend democracy without opposing international imperialism and that cannot be done in alliance with the new Russian capitalist class.

On the other hand, alliance is possible, and necessary, with those sections of the Russian state apparatus and bureaucracy which oppose the destruction of the Russian economy. Russia's capitalist class does not hold state power. Yeltsin and the government are working frantically to bring a capitalist state and society into existence, but that battle is not resolved. When parliament, or the central bank, or regional authorities or sections of the armed forces take actions objectively impeding capitalist restoration that obviously merits vigorous support.

But the left's vote for the budget had the opposite effect. It not only implicated the left in an economic policy reducing millions of people to penury, it also endorsed the budget's savage attacks on the Russian armed forces. This allowed Yeltsin to try to re-coup his position with the military.

At present the general assessment has been that the military would not take sides in a new political crisis for fear of splintering into opposing military camps and the civil war which would ensue. This appears to have been even more the view after Yeltsin used the army to attack parliament. For that he pulled together a motley collection of officers and military units and had the greatest difficulty persuading them to open fire. The De-



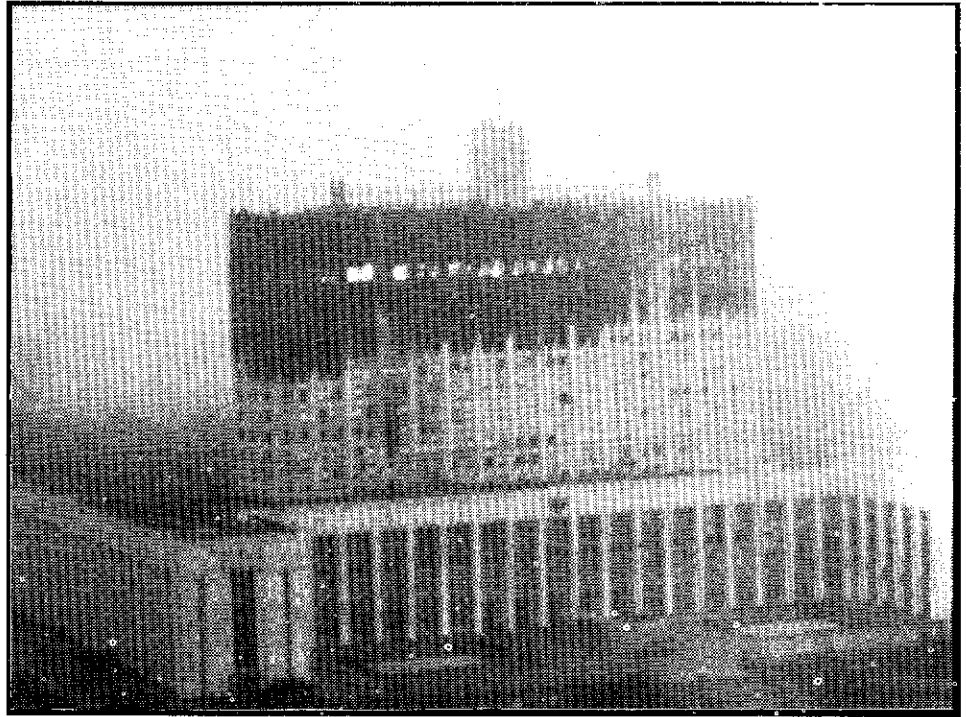
ember election results then showed massive disaffection in the army as a result.

The United States responded to the change in Russian politics with a shift in its own tactics. This started at the IMF's annual meeting in Madrid in October. Russia was told that favorable treatment by the IMF would be conditional upon the adoption of a far stricter budget this year: 'Russia has failed to achieve a significant part of what it hoped to obtain from the IMF in Madrid — but the biggest disappointments may lie ahead... Either real cuts are made in the structure of subsidies and industrial production is reshaped — or say IMF officials, new borrowing will be at risk... The message from Madrid is that the world cares less about Russia and is less well disposed towards it than many in its government had thought. Is it ready to heed that message and tighten the belt again? Or can it no longer do so?' (*Financial Times*, 4 October)

This is basis of the budget proposal agreed with the IMF. It suggests large-scale loans may be available to back a much tighter budget cutting subsidies to industry, agriculture and the military. But in the past such credits used to entice parliamentary support have consistently failed to materialise.

The US also shifted the axis of its Russian policy towards the goal of extending NATO to Russia's borders, with NATO adopting a US and German proposal in November for a rapid timetable to bring eastern European states into NATO, making clear that no Russian veto would be accepted. A Russian official pointed out that 99.99 per cent of Russians opposed this. The US decision not to enforce the arms embargo against Bosnia and the red carpet treatment given to Ukrainian president Kuchma are part of the same picture of US policy emphasis moving from 'Russia first' to containment of Russia.

Yeltsin's key goal now is to avoid a Communist victory in the parliamentary elections next year and the presidential elections in 1996, if necessary by preventing them from taking place. The parties to the right of the Communist Party are re-grouping against it. An anti-communist social democratic party has been endorsed by Gorbachev and the millionaire ex-Mayor of Moscow, Gavriil Popov. Gaidar, Fyodorov and Yavlinsky, the three key comprador bourgeois



currents, are discussing an electoral pact.

The Communist Party is now the centre of gravity of the entire opposition. A vigorous debate is taking place. There are three currents. The first led by Zyuganov, the majority, stands for a union of patriotic forces. They grasp that Russia's existence is at stake. But they are not clear about the class alliances necessary to defend the country, seeking an alliance with a patriotic bourgeoisie, nor on whether the country can be defended on a socialist or capitalist basis.

The second current, with roughly 30 per cent support, particularly around *Pravda*, vigorously opposed the budget, opposes strategic alliances with the bourgeoisie, strongly supports working class struggle against the government and believes that the only way out is on the basis of a socialist economy and state. But this current completely underestimates the Russian national question, rejecting the view that the Communist Party must lead the patriotic struggle against the destruction of the country. On this latter line it is impossible to lead the CP let alone the alliances necessary for victory.

A third, current, perhaps 5 per cent, is Stalinist, against any private ownership, against the budget and strongly patriotic.

The debate proceeds on two levels, around the practical line of the Communist Party in Russia, but also around the CP's programme, which

'Russia is the one country where the crisis of leadership of the working class really is the key to the entire situation'

boils to whether the way forward for Russian national survival is capitalism or socialism.

Since Yeltsin came to power in August 1991 there has been a regular pattern to Russian politics. Yeltsin does the bidding of the IMF. This impoverishes tens of millions of people and finally is blocked by mass opposition. Yeltsin responds by attacking democracy but has neither the mass support nor enough control of the armed forces to smash the opposition. The opposition, however, then fails to consolidate the situation and its political mistakes allow Yeltsin to regain the initiative.

What this pattern shows is that the key problem in Russia is not the objective relationship of forces — that is heavily stacked against capitalism — but the subjective political weakness of the leadership of the working class. Russia is the one country where the crisis of leadership of the working class really is the key to the entire situation.

A race is taking place. The issue is will the Russian working class create the leadership necessary to take control of the situation, and save Russia from capitalism, before international capital is strong enough within the country to destroy the opposition and create a capitalist dictatorship? On the outcome of that race hangs not only the fate of the peoples of the former Soviet Union but the next 50 years of world history.

Alan Dalby

The Serge-Trotsky Papers

Victor Serge lived most of his adult life 'in the tail of Trotsky's comet', according to his son. More accurately, he lived his life in the tail of the Bolshevik revolution.

Ian Robertson looks at this collection of articles and correspondence which attempts to detail Serge's turbulent relationship with that comet as it moved from the intoxicating highs of October 1917 to the horror of the Stalinist purges.

In his introduction to the first chapter Philip Spencer describes Serge's politics as 'Libertarian Leninism'. This is an attempt to credit Serge's personal views with the strength of an ideology. In fact, what emerges is a man committed to the spirit of the revolution and inspired by the Bolshevik victory but devoid of a consistent Marxist analysis with which to understand the unfolding inter-war events.

In the early correspondence, following Serge's flight from the USSR, Serge and Trotsky frenetically exchange information about their old comrades in the Left and Joint Oppositions. The scale of the purge is staggering, as is the capacity of the two men to deal with the personal loss. As the book closes, the focus returns to these themes, with Serge's moving obituaries of Trotsky and Leon Sedov, Trotsky's son. Serge sees Trotsky as part of a broad social phenomenon, one of thousands of his generation steeled in the struggle for revolution, a personality made great not through bourgeois notions of individual triumph but in the collective historical experience.

Any writer capable of producing such work whilst battling tirelessly against the brutality of Stalin's regime deserves their place in socialist history. In giving him that place we have to avoid using Serge's politics to undermine the actual lessons of the revolution.

Serge's lack of programme leads him into dead ends. Only weeks before his death he wrote:

'proletarian revolution is no longer to be our aim; the revolution which we are waiting to serve can only be

Socialist...Beyond the borders of Russia, the Bolshevik idea of the party has failed completely.'

Deprived of the hegemony of 1917 Serge became increasingly politically disorientated. He returns to his earlier anarchist framework declaring:

'an alliance with all the left-wing currents of the workers' movement...in free comradely discussion of every issue.'

He defends the participation of the POUM in Spain's Popular Front, attacking Trotsky for his 'sectarianism' towards Andres Nin, the POUM leader and former Left Oppositionist. Serge is more concerned to construct a non-Stalinist unity than with analysing the circumstances which would eventually lead to the repression by Stalin's followers of the POUM and the murder of Nin.

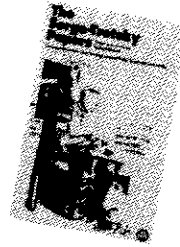
As Serge's political crisis deepened he reopened the debate on Kronstadt:

'Lenin was certainly wrong and Kronstadt right, but however right it was, Kronstadt was going about pushing the revolution into a fatal chaos...Thus I am in complete agreement...that the degeneration of Bolshevism began in 1920; I would say even earlier...'

This flip-flopping infuriated Trotsky, who by this time had broken off all political links and was engaged in a bitter polemic against the most famous literary 'Trotskyist'. Despite the best efforts of the editor and contributors to portray him as sectarian, brutal and dogmatic, it is Trotsky's arguments which retain the consistency and clarity necessary to understand the dynamics of history.

Trotsky outlines the

danger of writing off the concrete achievements of 1917 in the rush to venerate the purely liberating and heroic aspects. He reasserts the necessity to defend the Soviet Union in the face of vacillation. He argues that Russia 'would be thrown back fifty years' should capitalism be restored and that to 'disregard this fact because the bureaucracy is so vicious means taking the stance of a liberal, not that of a



revolutionary Marxist'.

This is a fascinating collection of documents by two of the greatest figures of revolutionary writing. It is by no means a good introduction to either's work and the attempt to use Serge's weakest points to attack the legacy of 1917 will fail. As Trotsky wrote to Serge: 'I think it would be quite unreasonable to expect you to waste your energies on current politics. In the final analysis, your books will make a far greater contribution to the cause'.

Correspondence and Other Writings between Victor Serge and Leon Trotsky
Edited by David Cotterill
Pluto Press, £14.95
paperback

Red Hot & Cool

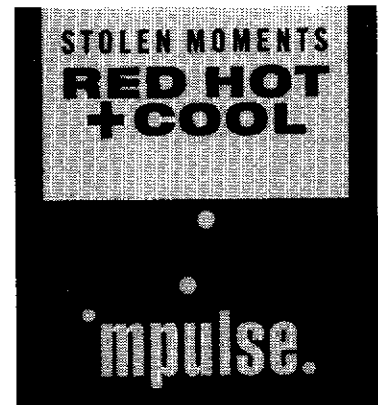
Stolen Moments — Red, Hot + Cool, the latest in the Red Hot series of music compilations, deals with the effect of AIDS on African-Americans.

Fusing jazz and funk with the social content and hard boiled radicalism of rap effectively conveys the real danger facing the African-American community.

In the track 'Time is moving on' the political and social context that racist America has produced is shown as the stark backdrop upon which AIDS takes a further toll: 'Unemployment is rocking the nation, on top of that crazy inflation, you know what else adds to the frustration — they're building more jails, this is the new plantation, to have qualifications, don't stop discrimination, that ain't on the news and that's the real situation.'

The dynamics of Black

music are described by Cornel West as being divided into three main strands. The first is the backwardness of homophobia, sexism and a self-destructive obsession with violence — currently exemplified by West Coast 'Gangster' rap which is sold to white Middle America by the million. The second is largely uncommittal on social issues, while the third attempts to represent the interests of the whole of the Black community and can be found on the *Stolen Moments LP*.



Matagari has escaped and is amongst us

No African novelist has sewn the thread of Marxism into the fabric of fiction as successfully as Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'O, argues John Church.

In January 1987 the Kenyan police attempted to arrest Matagari. Rumours of his campaign for truth and justice were circulating amongst Kenyan peasants. Clearly the intelligence services of the government of Daniel T. arap Moi had to act.

The problem was that Matagari had no existence outside of a Gĩkũyũ novel written by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'O. The police did the next best thing. They seized every copy from the bookshops.

In doing so they confirmed the exceptional power of the novel.

A diet of European and North-American contemporary novels may lead one to other conclusions. Here one is bound to literary conventions exhausted of any social power. The function of the novel appears to be an ever more precious refinement of perception. A perception made up of ironic shrugs about the world's upheavals.

In Africa the novel has acquired epic stature. A century of wars and revolutions has found an artistic register.

African writers work with experiences of transition and disruption. Tribes are broken. Dispossessed peasants driven from the land. Chaotic new cities sprawl. A single lifetime can embrace colonialism, anti-colonialism, neo-colonialism and opposition to the sour fruit of false independence. All around are the numberless struggles to secure life in the face of absolute insecurity. Reflections on the great population movements, and the great popular movements, give ground for the imagination to range. Such writing is both a product and producer of change.

For Ngũgĩ the most

personally significant of Africa's dramas is the unfinished Kenyan revolution. The cultural basis of his art lies here. The armed struggle of the Land and Freedom Army (commonly called Mau Mau) informs all his work.

Ngũgĩ goes further than almost any other African novelist. He does not end by describing the squandering of the liberation struggle by the neo-colonial regime. He defines a social continuity between the liberation struggle and a new alliance of the oppressed to complete the struggle against imperialism. Matagari is his most complete expression of the new hegemony.

The story seems simple. A freedom fighter returns from the mountains to claim his home, having that day, after years of pursuit, killed Settler Williams and his black servant, John Boy. In returning he feels that it is essential to find his people in order to celebrate with them under the roof of his reclaimed home.

But he finds the country wracked by poverty, and groaning under the puppet regime of His Excellency Ole Excellency. His home is occupied by John Boy Junior who is in a business alliance with Robert Williams, the son of Settler Williams. Matagari's search for allies, and the actions they must take to try and oust the new usurpers, completes the story.

The story telling is based on the traditions of African oral literature. In using this literary method Ngũgĩ has a definite audience in mind: the dispossessed peasants and workers whose first language is Gĩkũyũ. The novel is thus an instrument in giving an identity to Kenya's oppressed.

To achieve this end the writing invokes national traditions, creating a complex



web of familiar associations.

So at the start of the story, Matagari having defeated the enemy buries his AK47 and other weapons under a Mũgumo (fig) tree. Though not stated in the story, the choice of tree is not accidental. The Mũgumo tree is the sacred tree under which Murungu, the almighty god of the Gĩkũyũ, created Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi, the founders of the Gĩkũyũ people. The Mau Mau fighters swore a creed of allegiance to Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi. Matagari cuts a strip of bark from the tree. This belt of peace replaces his automatic rifle in his search for truth and justice. Before the end of the story he must go back to the tree to retrieve his weapons.

Even more opaque is the character of Matagari. At first Matagari is identified as a single man. But the more the story develops the less certain the character. We learn that his name is Matagari ma Njirũngi. This means 'the patriots who survived the bullets', a plural. Further, are we dealing with the living or the dead? After all the significance of, for example, Che Guevara is that his ideas and deeds have long survived the bullets

which murdered him.

And must Matagari be a man? Many women played a leading role in the Mau Mau. In Ngũgĩ's 'Devil on the Cross' the crucial representative of the Mau Mau is Wangart, a woman.

There are many cross themes. Not least of these is the Biblical parallel, on the return of the Saviour.

Ngũgĩ uses Christian and Gĩkũyũ religious symbols, though he regards much of the discourse in Kenyan society as a fantasy. Yet to create an art that dreams of transformation Ngũgĩ is prepared to employ ideologies which he does not accept. Religious contradictions are explored because Ngugi is addressing readers who are living those contradictions.

In these terrible years the African novel offers insight into the experiences of oppression and rebellion. No body of literature this century is so ferocious. Matagari is coming back to the people. Let us welcome those 'who survived the bullets'.

Matagari, by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'O. Published by Heinemann.

Women, the family and the attack on the welfare state

Since the Second World War the position of women in society has progressively advanced. The driving force of this was the mass entry of women into the workforce. But its consequences spread into all spheres of society — the education system, rights to divorce, abortion and contraception, equality legislation, legal, economic and property rights and the massive expansion of social provision via the welfare state. Today women face the first sustained attempt to roll back these gains, not by driving women out of the workforce, but by dismantling the welfare state.



This directly threatens the living standards and freedoms of millions of working class women, and thereby degrades the status of all women in society. That is why the attack on the welfare state is accompanied by a wave of ideological reaction — as with the way 'single mothers' have been demonised to justify benefit and housing cuts.

Dismantling the welfare state means transferring as much as possible of the costs of reproducing the labour force from society to individual family units, and within them women. That is why it deepens all class and social divisions among women, and also men — between those who can, and those who cannot replace public provision by individually buying private provision.

This anti-woman attack on the welfare state is being assiduously obscured by attempts to misrepresent what is in the interests of women and subvert the labour movement's support for universal benefits and the welfare state. Patricia Hewitt and Harriet Harman have developed a pseudo-feminist discourse which claims that deregulation of the labour market is a 'modernisation' of the economy in the interests of women.

Others defended the Child Support Agency on the basis of 'making men pay', when its real impact and goal is to replace social provision for the upbringing of children with payments by individuals.

The Social Justice Commission justifies its vicious proposal to remove automatic benefit rights from single mothers with children over five with the argument that women are more financially independent if

they work. The Commission proposes to raise women's retirement age to 65 by arguing that women live longer than men and concedes the principle of taxing Child Benefit on the grounds that this would allow targetting of benefits to those most in need.

Given the attempts to disguise the real impact on women of the destruction of welfare provision it is even more necessary to grasp the social relations which determine women's position in society and how they have changed. In this first of two articles we look at how the family is central to the origins of women's oppression.

The fundamental work explaining the historical lynch-pins of the position of women and its interrelationship with all other developments in society is Engels book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Engels argues that the social position of women is rooted in the nature of the family as an institution of society.

The theoretical starting point of Engels examination is laid out at the beginning of the book: the production and reproduction of life are the determining factors of human history — the conditions under which people live are determined by the stage of development of the forces of production and the social form of the reproduction of human life, the family.

'According to the materialist conception of history the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is of a two-fold character. On

the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools requisite therefore; on the other, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labour, on the one hand, and of the family, on the other.'

From this premise, Engels attempted a scientific understanding of the development of society by looking at the articulation of its main institutions. While stressing that the driving force of each fundamental change in society was the stage of development of the forces of production and the battle over the distribution of the social surplus, he outlined how each fundamental change in the mode of production brought with it a set of particular changes in the form of the state and of the family.

This begins at the first emergence of human society from 'primitive communism' into civilisation, with the first development of a significant social surplus, and the appearance of the first classes as one section of society seized control over the distribution of this social surplus.

Engels starts with the attempt to explain how it was that men, as opposed to women, gained this control, at the point at which class society emerged.

'The first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in

'That woman was the slave of man at the commencement of society is one of the most absurd notions' — Engels

monogamian marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male'.

Smashing the view that the family and the oppression of women were natural, existing from the first primitive development of human society, Engels argues that both the family and the oppression of women developed at a particular stage in the development of human society, the emergence of class society, and hence both could be transcended with the destruction of class society.

'That woman was the slave of man at the commencement of society is one of the most absurd notions... Woman occupied not only a free but also a highly respected position'.

While anthropological work has elaborated, refined and in some cases discarded some of the particular mechanisms that Engels considered as leading to this change in the status of women and the emergence of the patrilineal family, his fundamental argument has been reinforced, not weakened by subsequent research and understanding.

Engels argued from anthropological evidence suggesting that early societies were matrilineal, that the units of these societies were not individual families but broader kinship groups, nor were they divided into economic classes, all property being held in common.

It was the overthrow of 'mother right' societies, alongside the emergence of private property, economic classes and a coercive centralised 'state' power in the form of 'bodies of armed men', that constituted 'the world historic defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude, she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children... This degraded position of women... has gradually been prettified and glossed over, and sometimes clothed in a milder form, but in no sense has it been abolished'.

The driving force for this entire development was a huge step forward in the productivity of human labour which produced for the first time a substantial social surplus allowing a further development of the division of labour beyond the 'natural' division of labour.

It was this earliest division of labour — which had once regulated equality — that became itself the mechanism which secured the sub-

ordination of women.

The conclusion of Engels' investigation led him to the unequivocal view that the oppression of women in society as a whole lay in the family system, in particular through their exclusion from social production that it entailed. Against the sanctified images of late 19th century ideological glorification of the family and the mother, Engels said: 'The modern individual family is based on the open or disguised domestic enslavement of the woman; and modern society is a mass composed solely of individual families as its molecules... In the family, he is the bourgeois; the wife represents the proletariat'.

The path from the first emergence of the family to the family of modern capitalist society involved many changes and developments, including in the family's organic relationship with the other structures of society, changes determined by changes in the mode of production and the development of the forces of production.

Even the word family/familia 'did not originally signify the ideal of our modern philistine, which is a compound of sentimentality and domestic discord' but 'a household slave' and specifically 'the totality of slaves belonging to one individual'.

Monogamy became necessary to ensure children of undisputed paternity. This monogamous family — monogamous for the wife only — was the *first* form of the organisation of human relationships based on economic conditions — with it accordingly arose prostitution and adultery.

For the social position of women, the key historic development was that in this monogamous family domestic work — the upbringing of children, the reproduction of the workforce — became a private function, excluded from social production, with the wife becoming 'the head female servant' rather than an equal participant in society.

In feudal society this monogamous, patriarchal family was extended to the whole of society as family property, rights and responsibilities became the form whereby the social surplus itself was distributed. Family estates were the basic economic unit of society, with social and political forms corresponding directly to this form of property.

Similarly, women were therefore the property of the male head of the household. Harm to women

was judged in the sense of damage to the property or status of the male head of the household. Laws on rape for instance were concerned with the protection of male property and were bracketed with the theft or harm to other such property.

Until the advent of capitalism, each development in the mode of production had strengthened the family and bonded women more firmly within it. Capitalism however is much more contradictory. The advance to capitalist production and the establishment of capital as the economic unit of society, disassociated the family from its fundamental economic role in society. The function of the family became different for each class.

Capitalist production in transforming things into commodities, ended relations of obligation and duty, substituting the illusion of free choice and equality as the ideological bonding of society. The family ceased to be the key unit fixing the individual's relationship to society. Capital rather than inherited rights determined social and economic position. For the working class in particular the function of the family was reduced to a defence against the worst ravages of capitalist brutality, with no property to inherit the function of the family as a permanent element ensuring place and position in society came to an end.

Moreover, the very development of capitalist industry begins to break women out of the confines of the family.

It is in this way that capitalism as well as containing the seeds of its own destruction — like previous modes of production — also contains the seeds of destruction of the oppression of women and of the family as an economic unit of society.

Capitalist industry requires a large and flexible workforce. Capitalism first of all creates this proletariat from men from the peasantry. It is then obliged to draw women and other sources of labour into production. This creates the material basis to challenge the oppression of women. As Engels said: 'The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale and when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree. And this has become possible only as a result of modern large scale industry which not only permits of the participation of

'In the family,
he is the
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— Engels

women but actually calls for it'.

By drawing women into paid employment capitalism therefore begins the process of undermining the dependent and isolated position of women in the family. The entry of women into the workforce is in contradiction with their domestic role in the home.

But since the key role of the family under capitalism is the reproduction of labour power, both the economic function of this and the repressive and socialisation function, capitalism also acts to reinforce the family. Hence for instance the series of laws introduced by British capitalism in the 19th century to reinforce the family and regulate divorce, sexuality, education of children, forms of social welfare relief and to create a particular ideology of private and family life as an ideal.

In this materialist analysis, the family can only be replaced by a superior basis for human relations on the basis of a higher development of the productive forces. As Engels states full freedom in human relations will only exist 'when the abolition of capitalist production and of the property relations created by it has removed all the accompanying economic considerations which still exert such a powerful influence'. What will replace this system can only be speculated upon, to be answered by those who have grown up under such conditions who "will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual — and that will be the end of it".

The analysis developed by Engels that the family is an oppressive institution tied to the mode of production is essential to understand what is happening in it today and what needs to be done to fight women's oppression.

The history of the post-war period is a startling confirmation of the theory advanced by Engels. Capital has dramatically begun the work of destroying the family and liberating women from its confines in the advanced economies, while at the same time proved incapable of delivering any alternative.

The scale of the transformation in women's lives in the second half of the 20th century has to be grasped. Between 1881 and 1951 the number of women in work re-



mained static at less than 30 per cent. Between 1951 and 1992 the percentage of all women in work rose from 27 per cent to 53 per cent. For women aged 35-44 the figure is 77 per cent.

This precipitated other enormous changes including legal reforms, the expansion of education and training to women, a radical shift in household, marriage and living patterns and has unleashed a range of political struggles by women. To take just one example, the greater economic independence of women was reflected in an enormous increase in divorce, from 80,000 in 1971, the first year under the divorce law reform, to 168,000 in 1990, three-quarters of which were initiated by women.

The post-war expansion of the welfare state was central to the nature of the political and social progress made by women. As a result of the welfare system, women's involvement in paid work was accompanied by an increase in the degree of responsibility taken by the state and society collectively for what, to a much greater extent hitherto, been seen as domestic tasks performed unpaid by women in the home. This included social provision for the care of the sick and aged, the education and care of children, and, through the benefits system, a meagre financial contribution to those responsibilities which remained with women.

The attacks on the welfare state by Conservative governments have already begun to reverse this process of socialisation of domestic tasks. The proposals in the report

'The proposals in the report by the Commission for Social Justice would be an enormous defeat for women.'

by the Commission for Social Justice to dismantle the welfare state would throw it into reverse. This would be an enormous defeat for women which would work its way through the fabric of women's lives and status in society, with a huge impact on the working class as a whole.

The Commission for Social Justice's agenda is to deepen the involvement of women in paid work, but by undermining the welfare state rob them of the safety net that ensured minimum levels of income, employment and social rights.

In the context of dramatic changes in household structures, particularly a huge increase in lone parent families in the last thirty years, this will drive women's social position downwards, starting in economic terms. Such regressive action is incapable of reversing the historic trend towards the disintegration of the traditional family, but will deepen the class divisions among women and reverse the process of redistribution of wealth organised through the welfare state, from which working class women have benefitted.

Those without access to highly paid work and the possibility to pay for services will find themselves at the mercy of an increasingly double workload while forced to work for minimal wages.

In our next issue we look in detail at those proposals and at the truth behind attempts to present them as advantageous to women.

Karen Hurst

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