

Commonwealth of Independent States

faces austerity!

BORIS YELTSIN has declared that the Soviet Union is now the Commonwealth of Independent States. The name change is much more than symbolic. He has consistently declared his desire for the C.I.S. to have a capitalist economic system. On January 2 they took the plunge. Price control was abolished. This included all essential commodities such as bread, milk, gasoline, electricity and medicine. This, explained Andrei Nachev, vice-minister of the Russian Economics and Finance ministry, was an important prerequisite for the transformation to a capitalist economic system. "We want to bring inflation from the hidden form to the open form ...We can talk about monopolisation and privatisation but the main condition for the market is free prices"

Well, the Russian people have got their free prices.. .with a vengeance! There has been a several hundred percent jump in virtually all basic commodities. Whereas before they merely had to put up with queues and shortages now they have to put up with almost the same queues and shortages *and* inflation. There has been some improvement in the quality and quantity of goods available—the problem is that the majority of Russians now can't afford to buy them. For many, going shopping is like going to the museum. You see goods but you can't afford to buy. It's quite common to have to wake up at 4 am and wait for hours merely to get milk. The creation of entrepreneurs has encouraged hoarding and has exacerbated inflation. Yeltsin has hit out at these monopolists for "sabotaging the reform process". But what else should he expect from capitalists? Russia is being assisted with food from European countries. There are mountains of butter which no one can afford to buy. Without this aid things would be in even direr straits. Forty percent of Russians are now below the poverty line!

The Russian people are now suffering from the defects of both systems - stalinism and capitalism. The bureaucracy on the whole physically remains. And the distribution of commodities remains under its control. Despite the Russian bureaucracies genuine desire to be bourgeois, the bourgeoisie remains very small, only controlling peripheral areas of the economy. A bourgeoisie cannot be created overnight. Nor is there the infra-structure such as lawyers and accountants necessary to make a capitalist economy work. Britain has currently about a thousand Russians training to become accountants and lawyers.

Yeltsin has no real programme to establish capitalism. All he is doing is freeing prices, hoping a new bourgeoisie will emerge. The result is, and will be, continuing austerity for the Russian people. As the British Financial Times has pointed, even Bush and the CIA have had reservations about this quick plunge to capitalism. But they have no programme for capitalism either.

Because of all of this the Russian people are suffering austerity. This ultra-inflation is no mere transitional phenomena required for the new order. No one is predicting anything but inflation and unemployment in Russia for the foreseeable future. Unemployment is predicted to reach six million very shortly, due to those employed in "inefficient" industries losing their jobs. Former soldiers of the Soviet Union are no longer required. These people face not only no job but no adequate social security system.

So what now for Russia and the CIS? There are a few options. All of them except political revolution means hardship for ordinary people. First, they can slow the process by the reintroduction of a degree of price control. If they want capitalism, the hardship will have to come sometime. The emerging bourgeoisie will, naturally, want to make the most profit possible and will fight any restrictions. To establish capitalism Russia needs to create a bourgeoisie price control will hamper this.

The other apparent option is to re-introduce stalinism. This could come through a military coup. For many it would at least mean that they could afford food. But a society based on bureaucratic inefficiency, which could not co-ordinate production leading to queues and shortages is hardly a desirable option for the proletariat. The stalinists are nostalgic for yesterday's Soviet Union. But in no way will they confront the reason millions of people rejected their bureaucratic mess. The answer is not to go back to the past. It is doubtful whether the imperialists who now have an economic stranglehold will allow this to happen.

There is also the option of fascism. With the intensification of nationalism it is possible that these forces will emerge. As elsewhere, fascism is a mortal threat to the working class organisation. With the disorientation of the working class, the aspiring petty bourgeois and bourgeoisie may not consider fascism to be required. However, when fascist forces emerge they must be nipped in the bud.

The only real option for the working class is a proletarian revolution. It is only when the working class take power that prices can be controlled and production can be organised so there are no queues and shortages. This requires workers' control. The emerging bourgeoisie, the parasites, the bureaucrats must be removed. This requires a revolution. Unless the working class organise there will always be austerity for the Russian working class.

BOB HAWKE GOOD RIDDANCE

BOB HAWKE HAS GONE - and good riddance! We have to get rid of Paul Keating too. But there should be no tears for the man who used the name of labour to ruthlessly attack working class living standards. Bob Hawke has played a key role in the bourgeois offensive - within the working class movement. He and he alone had the ability to tame the left and make them loyal lieutenants of the Accord.

Bob Hawke started off as legal advocate for the ACTU in Arbitration proceedings. In 1969 he challenged the presidency of the A.C.T.U. with the help of the Communist Party of Australia. He represented a technocratic new breed of unionist. He also

sounded left. "This is not our system" is what he espoused on May Day 1969. Bob Hawke came out for nationalisation and against penal powers. He even publically defended unionists in their militant struggle to defend Clarrie O'Shea, jailed under the penal powers that existed against unionists.

Under the Whitlam government things were to change. Hawke became an open right-winger. The Financial Review was well aware of the significance of his about face on the question of whether wages caused inflation. When Whitlam was sacked Hawke took a lone stand. He alone came out strongly against action against the Kerr coup. When Fraser was elected, the first thing that Hawke did was to try and talk to the government that usurped power. What he wanted was union-government co-operation. For a while this led to hostility from the union movement and the Left. But politically Hawke was investing in the future. He knew that it would be only a Hawke-type Labor Government that the ruling class would permit. And he was busy getting the credentials to sell-out class struggle.

After Whitlam, Bill Hayden became A.L.P. leader. His role was to sell the need for an incomes policy to the lefts. In 1980, Arbitration no longer increased wages in relation to cost of living. Wage indexation was a sophisticated mechanism to make the working class pay and contain militancy. However, it did guarantee that all workers would get some rise with inflation. Now there was no such guarantee. The bureaucrats, including Laurie Carmichael of the

AMWSU, had no alternative apart from co-operating with whatever Hayden had to offer. Their acceptance of Hayden's incomes policy paved the way for the Accord. Hayden, however, was making too many concessions to the left for ruling classes approval. He had to make minor concessions to contain the mass movement, still militant and angry.

In 1982, there was a wages explosion. It was an explosion that Fraser couldn't handle. His anti-union legislation was shown as impotent. Despite the explosion in wages which was linked to the mining boom, the bureaucrats had no answer to unemployment. The Accord amounted to a deal to restrain wages for a limited programme for government assistance to save manufacturing. It also meant the curbing of strike action so the Hawke government could administer the system in peace. It was on this basis that the Hawke Government was elected. Adherence to the Accord has been one way. The bureaucrats have been loyal but Hawke has dumped anything that resembles a progressive gain. Under Hawke there has been a greater redistribution of wealth from poor to rich than any other time since the Second World War.

Hawke has done his job for the system. Without a different image Labor would definitely lose the next election. The right-wing machine realised this and have promoted their boy Paul Keating. The irony is that Hawke's main remaining allies were his former enemies - the so-called Left wing! Hawke's preselection was strongly opposed by Gerry Hand who proclaimed irreconcilable antagonism. Now they are bossom allies! Yet Hawke's right-wing positions not only remain, Hawke has dumped anything which resembles a progressive gain, yet alone reform, yet alone socialism. Within the ALP, Hawke has been instrumental in the expulsion of Socialist Left leader Bill Hartley and also for the readmission of N.C.C. unions who were affiliated to the D.L.P. When the bourgeoisie have cracked the whip, Hawke has obeyed. The fact that the Left remained as Hawke's true allies shows their thorough and utter bankruptcy. Now that Hawke has gone the Left has no leadership at all. The rise and fall of Hawke testifies to the death agony of the Labor Left. resemble in any way organisationalty or politically, the continuity of Trotsky's Fourth International. It is time to build a Fifth Communist International. Those who talk about "reorganisation" or "rebuilding" the Fourth International deny the gross class degeneration of the contending "Fourth Internationals" away from the proletariat towards the petty bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy.

This article does not cover all the differences between all of the groups. Many would point out that other questions are more fundamental in defining divisions and splits. The Freedom Socialist Party, for example, considers that the fundamental question dividing it from the Socialist Workers' Party of the U.S. is that of radical laborism. The F.S.P. rightly attacks the SWP for adapting to trade union struggle and therefore to the privileges of the labour aristocracy. They are fundamentally correct in this critique, although their conclusion of calling themselves feminist does not follow and is under attack on Marxism. To deal with all the splits in full requires a book. It is stressed that the reader should only use this as an overall guide, not a complete analysis. More has been written in RED on the International Committee, the International Socialist Organisation and the Spartacist League.

But the fundamental point is this. If we are going to make Trotskyism a living force in the working class internationally, we must do so on the basis of Marxist method and not by selling this out. Some will say that what counts is programme. It is from the correct method that a revolutionary programme flows. Those who ignore method end up being unable to relate the programme tactically to the changing objective situation. Their programme ends up being a dead letter, a useless formalised formal orthodoxy. This ends in opportunism when forced to intervene in real class struggle. Part of the problem with the post-war Fourth International was the embracing of Trotsky's predictions as a substitute for analysing the real objective situation. The result was to grab onto schemas such as "THERE IS NO PEACE" (written after the Second World War in U.S. Militant) which flew in the face of reality. It is only on the method of Marxism - on Marxist principle - that a revolutionary International can be built. All attempts to cobble together international unity that ignore fundamental Marxist principle are destined for the historical scrap heap.

KEATING'S KICKSTART

John Hewson took the initiative with his "Fightback" rhetoric. He put a clear strategy before the electorate. Essentially, this strategy amounted to a goods and services tax. If carried out, this would be a peniculous attack against working class and poor people. With a post-war record of 10 percent unemployment Paul Keating offered- nothing at all! The Australian public were looking for answers, so Keating's approval plummeted. He had to come up with an alternative. If he didn't he would merely be seen as a second rate edition of Hewson. Going further to the right would alienate even more of Labor's working class base.

Traditionally, the alternative to monetarism within bourgeois strategies is Keynesianism. The system opts for Keynesian strategies when it is preparing for war or to head off a potentially revolutionary movement. Franklin Roosevelt offered a New Deal in the United States. But the U.S. was and is a major imperialist power. Australia is imperialist dominated but has a small empire in Asia and the Pacific. Keating knows that a consistent Keynesian strategy is simply not on the agenda. The level of foreign debt would simply fly through the roof. And the bankers and the state would come down on his government like a ton of bricks before it did. Keating therefore the sensible option - a token Keynesian strategy. This he has labeled "Kickstart".

The Keating strategy amounts to a controlled increase in spending. The two billion dollar outlay is just enough to appear to be

doing something without threatening a major debt blowout. Even with this minimal degree of spending increase there was some fear of a blowout. Will this solve the crisis? No it won't! But there will be minor job creation. For a few. The level of expansion of public works is of course - totally inadequate. Keating's ploy seems to have worked for the moment. If the economic crisis intensifies Keating may be forced to eat his rhetoric.

The other part of the Keating strategy is ideological. Keating has ruffled the feathers of the Brits, the Liberals, and the monarchists. Australia should become a republic, more independent of Britain and that Britain betrayed during World War 2, he says. This has tapped strong republican sentiment. After all, migrants have no connection to the Queen of England and Labor Party voters can well remember Sir John Kerr's sacking of Whitlam. The establishment of a republic would be a progressive step forward. The Queen and the Governor-General are political infra-structure aimed deliberately to prevent legislation which interferes with imperialist domination. This also, of course, includes socialism. The Queen is head of the armed forces and either her or her agent the Governor-General will act if the Constitution is defied by any Government irrespective of popular support. The problem with Keating's statement is that it is just rhetoric. *In no way* will the undemocratic political structure be interfered with.

Because imperialist capitalism requires undemocratic political structure it is extremely improbable that a republic will be established before the proletarian revolution. It is only the class-conscious working class that is consistently republican. While Keating has done us a favour by raising the question, Keating is, nevertheless, totally subservient to Japanese and U.S. imperialism. We must expose not just his, but all, bourgeois claims to be democratic - as fraudulent. It is only through proletarian revolution that the republic can be established in this country.

For a Republic !

For a Revolutionary Workers and Small Farmers Government ! Break from the Keating Government - Agents for Austerity !

International Women's Day

ONCE AGAIN thousands, mainly women, will be marching on International Women's Day. They will be raising some important questions such as abortion rights, the right for women to work, against discrimination and sexism. International Women's Day should be an important day for the working class. Women's Liberation should not be merely a question that concerns women. All working class people should see it as an important question for class solidarity. Sexism is a weapon of the ruling class. It aims to persuade men that they have more in common with the system than with their female class comrades. Through sexism male workers have been persuaded that "women's place is in the home". Male unionists have allowed millions of female jobs to be lost because the unionists don't believe that woman workers should be working. They also have allowed woman workers to be forced to accept the lowest wages, to be super-exploited. All work should be paid the same irrespective of whether the worker is male or female. EQUAL PAY FOR ALL!

The family is an important ruling class weapon. It is used to make housework "private" so it remains unpaid. It is used politically to tie male workers to the system so that they consider that they have more in common with the system than with their female class comrades. The family is used as a major argument against women's right to work.

It is also used as a rationalisation for the superexploitation of youth. After all, the place for women and youth is not supposed to be in the workforce but in the home. Using this rationalisation unionists have permitted firms such as McDonalds to rip-off youth with discount wages. It has also meant that millions of women have been sacked without being defended by the union movement.

The brutal repression of homosexuality - male and female - is a bi-product of capitalism's commitment to maintain the family.

All these must be made important questions for class struggle. They are vital for the creation of a class-conscious working class. Unfortunately International Women's Day is currently the property of a feminist ghetto. As long as it remains so the many important questions raised will be isolated from the only force that can force their implementation - the class-conscious proletariat. There can be no liberation of women under capitalism. Therefore a Women's Liberation Movement must draw class lines. Those who argue that all women are or can be sisters and ignore fundamental class principles in order to let this "sisterhood" sell-out the struggle for women's liberation.

trary - to entertain the possibility of capitalist restoration meant historical pessimism about the revolutionary potential of the Polish working class. This is how the Socialist Labour League in Australia, the International Socialists, who argued that Poland lacked a political perspective. The Spartacist League claimed that Solidarity did indeed have one - a counter-revolutionary perspective. From this analysis it was quite prepared to support the smashing down of not merely a reactionary leadership, but the whole organised Polish working class as well. The SL was even prepared to take responsibility for any Red Army act and even opposed any action against Red Army officers which they argued would harm the proletarian cause. The Bolshevik Tendency also defended the crack-down without taking responsibility for any abuse by the Red Army.

Most of the left supported Solidarity. The Pabloite Tendencies hailed its "progressive dynamic". The differences that arose were based on how revolutionaries should relate to the Polish solidarity movement. Those who proclaimed their solidarity with Solidarity ranged from ostensible Trotskyist tendencies to extreme reactionary cold war tendencies. In Australia, the D.S.P. showed no embarrassment about any such association. Likewise in Britain, the Matgamma Tendency were quite prepared to unite with cold war solidarity supporters. Those who adapted to the cold warriors argued that these became redundant as the dynamic of the movement was progressive. Using this Pabloite rationalisation, the fake Trotskyists adapted to those who wanted to re-establish capitalism in Poland.

For a Fifth International

So what now for the "Fourth International"? Or rather the multitude of self-styled Fourth Internationals? What we have witnessed over the past fifty years is a record of degeneration. It is a degeneration linked to the degeneration of stalinism. We have seen the once proud Soviet Union who, with its allies, occupied about one fifth of the Earth's surface, thoroughly degenerate to the extent of not even believing in its own existence. Yet Trotskyism has not been able to fill the vacuum. The reason has been fundamentally a failure of Marxist method - or rather the lack of it. Stalinism has been opposed as a bureaucratic malignant cancer, which indeed it is. But it has not been analysed in terms of its class roots. The result has been to adapt to stalinism when it appeared democratic or revolutionary.

This has been dramatically demonstrated by the attitude of many fake Trotskyists and ex-Trotskyists to the Gorbachev leadership in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's moves towards more democracy were hailed by tendencies such as Gerry Healy's Marxist Party in Britain and the Democratic Socialist Party in Australia. Gorbachev stood for a few minor reforms but not for proletarian power. In fact he stood for promoting precisely these structures antagonistic to the proletariat and aspiring to become the bourgeoisie. Once again this empiricist method leads to adaptation to stalinism.

It is dead clear that there is no real continuity of Trotsky's Fourth International today. The United Secretariat of Ernst Mandel will undoubtedly boast that it is as big and significant as the Fourth International was in Trotsky's day. Well! A real Fourth International would not adapt to student vanguardism. Nor would it adapt to stalinists such as Castro or the National Liberation Front of Vietnam. Or the Sandinista's bourgeois regime in Nicaragua. It even adapts to the African National Congress of South Africa. Their embracing of so many non-proletarian counter-revolutionary forces refutes their claim to be in continuity with Trotsky.

The International Committee is discredited by the adaptation of the Healy tendency to reformism in the British Labour Party. This is part of the heritage that Dave North of the U.S. Workers League leader of the I.C.F.I. defends. He does not defend most of Healy's subsequent treachery like supporting Qaddafi of Libya or Saddam Hussein of Iraq. However, a so-called International which permits these gross betrayals, cannot be called the continuity of the Fourth International.

The Militant Tendency for forty years has been entrenched in the British Labour Party. The Australian group was formed in solidarity with a deep enterist perspective into the Labor Party. Recently it has rethought this and reoriented towards an open organisation. However irrespective of whether Militant is inside or outside the Labour Party it is doubtful whether it will break from its ingrained reformism.

Another with a treacherous record is the Lambert tendency in France. This tendency has a gross record in adapting to reformism and chauvinism as well. Its "revolutionary method" amounts to getting a mass petition calling for a Socialist Party-Communist Party united parliamentary government. Its members too, like the Healyites, are known for their thuggery.

The Leninist International Tendency whose leading section is the MAS of Argentina is tainted by the liquidation of the MAS into the bourgeois party of Peron.

None of the above, nor the smaller tendencies, resemble in any way organisationalty or politically, the continuity of Trotsky's Fourth International. It is time to build a Fifth Communist International. Those who talk about "reorganisation" or "rebuilding" the Fourth International deny the gross class degeneration of the contending "Fourth Internationals" away from the proletariat towards the petty bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy.

This article does not cover all the differences between all of the groups. Many would point out that other questions are more fundamental in defining divisions and splits. The Freedom Socialist Party, for example, considers that the fundamental question dividing it from the Socialist Workers' Party of the U.S. is that of radical laborism. The F.S.P. rightly attacks the SWP for adapting to trade union struggle and therefore to the privileges of the labour aristocracy. They are fundamentally correct in this critique, although their conclusion of calling themselves feminist does not follow and is under attack on Marxism. To deal with all the splits in full requires a book. It is stressed that the reader should only use this as an overall guide, not a complete analysis. More has been written in RED on the International Committee, the International Socialist Organisation and the Spartacist League.

But the fundamental point is this. If we are going to make Trotskyism a living force in the working class internationally, we must do so on the basis of Marxist method and not by selling this out. Some will say that what counts is programme. It is from the correct method that a revolutionary programme flows. Those who ignore method end up being unable to relate the programme tactically to the changing objective situation. Their programme ends up being a dead letter, a useless formalised formal orthodoxy. This ends in opportunism when forced to intervene in real class struggle. Part of the problem with the post-war Fourth International was the embracing of Trotsky's predictions as a substitute for analysing the real objective situation. The result was to grab onto schemas such as "THERE IS NO PEACE" (written after the Second World War in U.S. Militant) which flew in the face of reality. It is only on the method of Marxism - on Marxist principle - that a revolutionary International can be built. All attempts to cobble together international unity that ignore fundamental Marxist principle are destined for the historical scrap heap.