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"The Latest Stage in the Crisis of Stalinism"

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## The latest stage in the Crisis of Stalinism

Presented for discussion by Tony Richardson and John Lister.

Underlying the most recent symptoms of the crisis of Stalinism is the basic contradiction that has dogged Stalin's "theory" of "socialism in one country": the fact that it is impossible to develop socialism in the workers' states in isolation from the rest of the world.

The Polish crisis, for example, is in no way to be explained simply by reference to the particular characteristics of the Polish people and their traditions or by the particular "mistakes" of the Polish bureaucrats in their borrowings from Western banks. It is part and parcel of the fact that the bureaucratically deformed planned economies of Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba are forced to operate in a hostile environment: in the midst of a crisis-ridden capitalist system which exports to the workers states not only credit, food supplies and vital technology, but also elements of its own incurable crisis.

The aim of this document is to explore these issues in order to show how much weaker the Stalinist bureaucrats are today as compared to the post-war period, and the ways in which this enhances the possibilities of political revolution in the East and the building of revolutionary, Trotskyist parties in the West.

### The Economic crisis of the bureaucracies.

The economic crisis faced by the Stalinists flows both from internal and external pressures and problems. The most obvious example is the massive borrowing that has taken place to finance the modernisation programmes in countries such as Poland, China, and even the Soviet Union.

The borrowing has been increased because of the reluctance of the bureaucracy to confront the growing strength and demands of their working classes - particularly following the mass struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, the Stalinists have been forced to attempt both industrial modernisation and the simultaneous satisfaction of demand for consumer goods. Yet they have been unable to secure sufficient expansion to provide the resources for these objectives - and have therefore piled up huge debts to the West.

These debts appeared manageable so long as the capitalist market remained buoyant, and the workers' states could hope to expand their exports of raw materials and manufactured goods to earn foreign exchange. But now the level of indebtedness is rising at a time of worldwide slump, combined with ever-more insistent demands from the working class in the workers' states for improvements in their wages living conditions and the supply of consumer goods.

The fact is that with capitalist countries increasingly looking towards protectionist trade policies, and the capitalist monopolies engaged in a ruthless fight for markets, the only way the Stalinists can hope to compete is to undercut capitalist prices. This, however, means an attempt to cut production costs. In other words the crisis forces the bureaucracy to seek measures which fly in the face of the demands of the masses - wage cuts, speed-up, investment in new industrial technology, rationalisation and even unemployment.

Their cash crisis is made worse because with the slump in world markets many of their expensive modernisation programmes and industrial developments are proving to be redundant "white elephants", operating at only part-capacity. Many projects in Poland and in China have been halted part-completed, and the Peking bureaucrats are cancelling a whole catalogue of major orders with Western firms.

At the same time the interest rates payable on money already owing continue to consume a greater and greater share of the Gross National Product, and simply servicing the loans becomes a major problem.



In Poland the bureaucracy has so far been able to use the willingness of both Western and Soviet banks to bail them out of the worst periods of crisis. This is because both the capitalists and the Kremlin share a fear of the potential revolutionary upsurge of the Polish masses which they recognise could rapidly spread throughout Europe and into the USSR itself. But while they have extended credit, neither the capitalists nor the Stalinists are prepared to pay the bills the Polish leaders have run up: they are merely postponing the date on which the masses must be forced to pay through speed-up and cuts in real wages.

But if Poland and the other deformed workers' states face the most immediate cash crisis, the Soviet Union faces additional problems of its own which equally tax the minds of the bureaucracy. In particular the arms race to keep pace with Reagan's war drive is a huge pressure on the Soviet economy. With Reagan savagely slashing social spending to promote still further increases in arms spending, the Kremlin leaders have said that they intend to keep pace with the US imperialists. To do so they must raise the necessary revenue from the masses of the USSR, and at the same time force their subordinate bureaucrats to do the same in the other Warsaw Pact countries.

One way in which the Moscow leaders have attempted to minimise such expenditure on extravagant nuclear hardware has been its diplomatic and military manoeuvres with national liberation movements and petty bourgeois nationalist regimes. Such policies were most successfully cemented into a lasting alliance in Cuba in the mid 1960s. But now the same policies consume huge amounts of money in Africa, in Asia and in supporting the Cuban economy, while the political returns remain extremely uncertain in many cases.

Nor can the Kremlin leaders count, as they once could, upon deriving income from their relationship with the Eastern European states. Whereas the 1950s saw the Soviet bureaucracy exploiting cheap supplies of raw materials and commodities from Eastern Europe and enforcing restrictions on the trading links of these states, this relationship has now radically altered. The upsurge of political resistance to such exploitation - embodied in the East German uprising of 1953 and the Hungarian uprising of 1956 - underlined the problems in maintaining such subordination.

As the bureaucrats in the various workers' states have begun to assert a measure of control on their own account, they have broadened their trading links. But they have also come into conflict with the masses in their own countries: and the concessions that they have made in order to retain political control has transformed them from an economic asset to an economic liability on the Kremlin - made worse by the need to prop up the isolated Cuban economy and that of the Vietnamese Stalinists.

These problems have developed considerably beyond the contradictions of the bureaucratised Soviet economy analysed by Trotsky in the 1930s. But they reflect the same root problem: the impossibility of constructing socialism in one country; and the impossibility of a dictatorial, parasitic bureaucracy developing the potential of a genuine planned socialist economy.

The exclusion of the masses from decision-making and planning in the workers' states, the suppression of criticism and of political opposition, prevents the correction of errors in economic policy and management or the fight for alternative policies, and prevents the rejection of the counter-revolutionary perspective of "peaceful coexistence" with the hostile capitalist system.

The bureaucratisation of the economy eliminates honest reckoning of success and failure; introduces a system based neither on profit nor on the genuine assessment and satisfaction of social need, but on the perpetuation and enhancement of the careers and material privileges of the bureaucrats and their vast police/military apparatus.



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The most characteristic recent example of the effects of bureaucratisation was the discussion after Brezhnev's speech to the 26th Congress of the CPSU. He made a wide-reaching criticism of the running of the economy - embracing nearly every sector of production and distribution. Yet there was no reference to these points in the "discussion" which followed; there were no names mentioned, and no steps proposed to rectify the errors alluded to by Brezhnev. They all knew that once top bureaucrats were singled out for blame, the chain of errors would reach downwards through vast sections of the bureaucracy, with unforeseeable consequences. Much better to leave the economy crippled than to harm the careers of a caste of parasites!

### The Political Crisis

It took Stalin years to complete his control of the bureaucracy within the USSR. Even as late as 1934, according to Medvedev, at the 17th Congress of the CPSU Stalin got the lowest vote of those elected to the Central Committee. But he was driven to tighten his grip by the continued problems arising from his policies. He had already seen the rich peasants - the Kulaks - on whom he had initially relied for support, emerge as a major challenge not only to his policies but to the very foundations of the workers' state in the USSR. His resolve to stamp out any and every potential opposition led him to mount the Moscow Trials and the huge purges of the Red Army. All in all millions of workers were imprisoned in camps or executed - the cream of the Russian working class.

But while Stalin was crushing any independent political voice inside the Soviet Union and throughout the Comintern, he was at the same time moving closer towards a working relationship with imperialism. As part of this, the Communist Parties were directed to seek out "Popular Front" alliances with sections of their own liberal bourgeoisie on an explicitly reformist programme. This piled new pressures on the already confused and bureaucratically repressed membership of the Communist Parties.

The same Popular Frontist policy was upheld in the immediate post-war period, as part of Stalin's "spheres of influence" deal with the imperialists. The Popular Front policy assisted in the demobilisation of the proletariat of Western Europe and elsewhere, and came to an end only when the imperialists unleashed their Cold War offensive in 1947.

Under the impact of the Cold War, the CPs turned back towards Moscow - and the Kremlin leaders took steps to buttress their position in Eastern Europe, completing the overthrow of capitalist property relations in the majority of the "Buffer" states, and implementing a series of show trials to purge potential political oppositionists.

But this policy of "defensive expansion" in Eastern Europe brought its own problems for Stalin. The first clear example was the refusal of the Tito leadership in Yugoslavia meekly to submit to the yoke of Moscow's authority. For the first time since the Moscow trials a leading Stalinist bureaucrat defied Stalin's authority and survived - on the basis of firm support from the Yugoslav bureaucracy and a controlled mobilisation of support from the Yugoslav masses.

The continued political suppression and economic exploitation of Eastern Europe produced a crisis after the death of Stalin. Stripped of the lynchpin of the bureaucracy, the Kremlin found itself without a "natural" successor. Revolts in Soviet labour camps and the uprising of workers in East Berlin showed that the masses were ready and willing to press their demands. A worried bureaucracy made a number of economic concessions in order to retain political control. In 1956, in a bid to consolidate his own predominant position, Khrushchev used a secret session of the 20th Congress to lift the curtain slightly on the savage reality of Stalin's dictatorship - facts hitherto only revealed by Trotskyists.



In the wake of these revelations, other Stalinists began to feel a sense of confidence. Italian CP leader Togliatti began in 1956 to advocate "polycentrism", through which national CPs would be allowed a measure of independence.

But when the masses began to make their demands felt, the bureaucracy was united in the need for savage repression. Khrushchev moved as brutally as Stalin to crush the revolt in Hungary with military force and threatened similar action in Poland. For the bureaucrats to negotiate themselves some elbow-room was one thing: for workers to challenge the very basis of bureaucratic power was something else.

In 1960/61 came the split between Moscow and Peking bureaucrats, creating smaller splits within most Communist parties, and again weakening the centralised authority of the bureaucracies as a whole. Criticism had emerged as legitimate within a formerly slavish world movement.

As a counterweight to the blows its prestige had suffered, the Kremlin bureaucracy was able to associate itself with the successful developments in Cuba. But, as with Eastern Europe, this apparent strengthening and extension of the bureaucracy was later to turn into its opposite. And the attempt to utilise Cuba as a means to counter the new US Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles fell flat when Khrushchev backed down from confrontation with Kennedy in the "Cuban missiles crisis". Cuba became a deformed workers state in an area firmly established as the US sphere of influence.

The growing challenge to the bureaucracy from the masses within the workers states as well as from the strengthening revolutionary struggles of the international proletariat jeopardising the balance of "peaceful coexistence" was demonstrated yet again in 1968 in the events in France and in Czechoslovakia. The Stalinists responded by seeking to develop more links with imperialism.

Trade deals were followed in the early 1970s by the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and more or less informal "spheres of influence" agreements were consolidated by the Helsinki accords. Loans were negotiated to facilitate provision of consumer goods. In line with this rapprochement, national Communist Parties were once again encouraged to draw closer to their "own" bourgeoisies. And in the wake of the revolutionary upheavals of 1968, they obligingly began to articulate the consciously counter-revolutionary, reformist perspective of Eurocommunism, designed to direct the masses towards parliamentary forms of struggle and Popular Front forms of government.

But while the Stalinists attempted to draw closer to the imperialists on a national and international level, the power of the mass movement disrupted their efforts. In Vietnam, and in Angola, mass struggles weakened imperialism; in Portugal the revolution emerged once again on the streets of Europe in a 2-year crisis of capitalist rule; and in Iran the fall of the Shah created problems for imperialist control in the Middle East.

A weakened imperialism had by now turned to seek ways of exploiting divisions within Stalinism. The Chinese bureaucracy after the death of Mao had made moves to modernise industry with Western loans. The imperialists decided to play along with this, and to play up the national rivalries between the Moscow and Peking bureaucrats.

The defence of national privileges has since led to inter-bureaucratic wars between China and Vietnam, and between Vietnam and Kampuchea. Such wars arise out of the struggle of the bureaucracies for complete control over all forms of political opposition. As such the wars are analogous to the purge trials of post-war Eastern Europe: they are the kind of clash that might have arisen had Stalin pursued his conflict with Tito to its logical conclusion.

We opposed the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and the Chinese



invasion of Vietnam. In each case we called for the withdrawal of troops and for political revolution to overturn both bureaucratic regimes.

But there are differences between such inter-bureaucratic wars and the Soviet invasion of the backward capitalist state of Afghanistan.

The Kremlin leaders were plainly uneasy that, following the Iranian revolution, there might be a revolutionary - or even a reactionary - mass movement among the Muslim masses within the borders of the USSR itself. Since these peoples constitute the biggest of many oppressed minorities within the Soviet Union, a revolt by them could have major repercussions, and the Stalinist leaders felt they could not count on their loyalty.

Meanwhile the US imperialists and the Pakistani dictatorship were supplying arms to the reactionary insurgent forces fighting the pro-Moscow client regime in Afghanistan. The coalition of forces supported by imperialism were dominated by feudal landowners and by religious leaders seeking to reverse the limited reforms initiated by the government, and take the country firmly back to feudalism. Their methods leave no doubt that there would be a pogrom of the left if they were to be victorious.

But of course the way to defeat the right wing guerrillas was not Soviet military intervention. Afghanistan has a strong history of struggle against outside invasions, and the crisis took place at a time when US imperialism was more isolated than ever in the Middle East. A genuine revolutionary leadership in the USSR would have offered material aid to the Kurds, to other oppressed minorities in the region, and sought to mobilise the most oppressed sections of Afghan society in revolutionary action to crush the imperialist-sponsored rebels.

Instead the bureaucracy mounted a crude military intervention which immediately antagonised potential allies of the revolution among the Afghan masses and throughout Central Asia. We opposed the invasion, exposing it as a blow against the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses.

But once the invasion had taken place, it was not a simple issue to reverse it. The imperialists have funnelled increased aid to the rightists. And the battle has become one between Soviet and Afghan troops on the one hand and actively pro-imperialist and feudal forces on the other. Under these conditions we do not simply call for the immediate withdrawal of troops. We put forward a perspective for a programme to unite the anti-imperialist forces in Afghanistan and to direct towards fraternisation with the Soviet occupying forces with a view to the formation of soldiers' councils.

The Soviet Union is not an imperialist country seeking to resolve its crisis by annexations and exploitation - least of all in economically backward Afghanistan. Rather it is a bureaucratised workers' state responding in bureaucratic-military fashion to what its leaders saw as the danger of a successful right wing takeover in a crucial state on its Southern border.

The attempts from above to stifle a pro-imperialist movement are politically wrong: but they are not comparable to the military repression of moves towards political revolution within the workers' states. Even a genuine revolutionary leadership in the USSR or Afghanistan would have to seek ways and means of crushing the Afghan rightists: but only conscious counter-revolutionaries would seek to destroy the movement of the Polish workers for political revolution.

### Conclusion

This complex situation also creates huge problems in sustaining Stalinist ideology amongst the working classes of the world. No longer is there a rigid Comintern headed by Stalin and subject to regular and systematic show trials and purges.



Now the hold exerted by Moscow over the Communist Parties is continuously weakened by conflicts with the national bureaucracies in China, Poland, Rumania and other workers' states.

And within the capitalist countries the pressure of the bourgeoisie upon the leaderships of the mass CPs has in some cases (Italy, Spain) grown almost stronger than that of the Kremlin. While all Stalinist leaders are united in opposing the revolutionary movement of the masses, we must see that they are weaker than ever in their ability to act together to halt that movement.

### Poland

The 1980-81 events in Poland therefore take place in a very different situation from the 1956 struggles in Poland and Hungary. The Stalinist leaders face not only a worsened economic crisis but also a weakening of the grip of the Kremlin over the CPs of Eastern Europe.

In the face of the movement of the Polish workers the Warsaw bureaucracy at first stood firm - then vacillated and collapsed in front of a wave of militant strikes that threatened to become an all-out General Strike. Even the tone of the Soviet bureaucracy has fluctuated as they have attempted to pressurise the Solidarity leadership while remaining reluctant to intervene militarily.

The Moscow leaders know the impact that a military intervention would have not only in prompting a prolonged battle in Poland but also in forcing the issue to the forefront throughout Eastern Europe and the USSR itself. A bid to crush a clearly progressive, proletarian based mass movement would be entirely different from the intervention in Afghanistan - and would be seen differently by the workers of Eastern Europe.

But the wavering of the bureaucracies on the Polish question has also created problems in the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries. The British CP for example began by supporting Gierek and praising his initial minor concessions. But as Gierek himself was ditched by the bureaucracy the British CP switched - to make him the scapegoat for the Polish crisis! It is clear that an invasion of Poland would create a far bigger division within the Communist Parties than the Hungarian invasion of 1956 or the Czech intervention of 1968.

Within Poland, the Solidarity movement has ripped through the whole rotten fabric of Polish Stalinist institutions. The old "unions" have been thrown aside, and the radicalisation has spread into the ranks of the CP itself with demands for fresh elections to oust the old guard bureaucrats.

At the high point of the Gdansk strikes, the Central Strike Committee took on effectively the form and powers of a soviet-type body - a direct rival to the power of the state. If the government had not conceded the right of independent unions, such soviet bodies would quickly have spread to the rest of the country, where the masses had just begun to join the strike.

These developments showed us the form a political revolution would take. In fighting for the "democratic demand" for independent trade unions, the working class saw it had power - and came up against the brick wall of a bureaucracy in crisis. To carry forward the fight, and to give form to the support they received from small farmers and the middle classes, the workers spontaneously moved to establish soviet-type bodies. But the reformist leadership of the Gdansk struggle had only set out to achieve localised reforms within the existing system. They therefore failed to see the need at that point to carry forward the struggle.

But despite these limitations the period since then has been one of a "duality of power" as Kania has said. The Solidarity movement is now firmly established on a national basis. In every confrontation



so far, the government has climbed down. The 40-hour week has been won; senior Party figures have been ousted throughout the country; and student unions have been recognised. The only body which the regime still refuses to recognise is the farmers' union - in reply to which Solidarity has said it will include the farmers' demands in its own programme.

In the face of this movement the Polish bureaucracy has little power. Its attempts to intimidate Solidarity militants have been a fiasco - with strike action forcing the release of political prisoners and Solidarity going so far as to mount a workers' guard to prevent the arrest of leading KOR militants. So far has the rot gone that it is even doubtful whether some sections of the Polish military would move against the working class.

The real "duality of power" lies therefore in the threat of Red Army intervention. This is a very real threat, since it is plain that the Stalinist bureaucrats cannot coexist with an independent organisation of the masses - not in a single country let alone throughout Eastern Europe. Unless the Polish developments are halted, there exists a growing danger that the working class in the other deformed workers states and the USSR itself may follow the Solidarity example and begin to sweep aside their parasitic Stalinist rulers.

But the bureaucracy is not without allies. On the one hand are the imperialists, offering renewed and extended credit and cheap food supplies to stave off a renewed bout of struggle which they know could spread throughout Europe. And on the other, acting as a broker for imperialist interests is the Catholic Church. The very last thing the bishops and cardinals wish to see is the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy - which would strengthen the working class on a world scale and jeopardise the grip of mystical and reactionary ideology which feeds on oppression and exploitation. The Catholic Church certainly attempted at first to take advantage of the movement to secure for itself a more permanent position in the Polish state machinery. But now, having accomplished this, the Church is bent on curbing and defusing the movement.

There is no doubt that the Church exerts a strong pressure on the Solidarity leadership and, together with the threat of Soviet intervention, has had a "moderating" influence on them. But however much the Solidarity leaders have attempted to hold back, they continue to show that they are capable, under pressure, of leading struggles of the working class. They have not consolidated any real independence as a bureaucracy distinct from the mass movement which brought them to prominence. The working class has, in Solidarity, established an independent means of expression within a deformed workers state. This changes everything in the struggle for political revolution. It is why the Soviet bureaucracy sees Solidarity as so much of a threat. A bureaucracy in power, depending for its privileges solely upon its ability to repress and police the masses and not upon private ownership of the means of production, cannot allow an alternative means of expression to develop.

The Transitional Programme of 1938 pointed to the demand for free trade unions arising in the political revolution. Here we have the development taking place in a way neither Trotsky nor Trotskyists could have foreseen. Solidarity stands as a beacon to the millions of workers oppressed by Stalinist bureaucracies.

### Which Way Forward?

There is however still frustration among Polish workers. They show their strength again and again - yet still have to queue for hours for bread. Their success at removing bread and meat from the "special shops" and removing Polish produce from the "dollar shops" patronised by the bureaucrats has only meant that these goods are unobtainable anywhere.



The great strength of the working class does not resolve the problem. The Polish economy is in profound crisis. Loans from capitalist banks donations from the USSR and cutbacks in Polish industrial investment only help to service existing loans. Socialism cannot be built in a single country, and the bureaucrats' attempts at an internal plan are completely disjointed.

Only by taking political power in its own hands and supporting struggles to overthrow capitalism on a world scale and thus establish an integrated, planned world economy can the problems be completely solved. The first step in this must be the political revolution in Poland, to overthrow the national bureaucracy and bring about workers' management of the already nationalised economy. And the political revolution must be spread throughout the deformed workers' states - not simply for economic reasons, but in order to defend against the imminent danger of a Soviet/Warsaw Pact invasion.

But the present leadership of Solidarity has no such perspective. They seek only "reforms", and fail to grasp that the consolidation of the kind of reforms they want requires political revolution.

This is why Lech Walesa and the Solidarity leadership fail to argue for transitional demands which would prepare the masses for political revolution - such as the demand for the "opening of the books" of the economy to workers' committees; the demand for an end to all secret diplomacy (including the talks between the Stalinist bureaucracies of E. Europe and the USSR); the demand for soldiers' councils; the consolidation of local, area and national workers' councils; and the call for an armed workers' militia under the control of the workers' councils.

It is to fight for such essential policies that a Trotskyist leadership is needed in Poland.

## EASTERN EUROPE

During the first stages of the upheavals in Poland strikes also took place in other Eastern European countries - and just beforehand there had even been stoppages in the USSR itself. In China, too, the demand has grown for independent trade unions.

But the bureaucracies have attempted through quick concessions to head off a united explosion of struggle. In Czechoslovakia for example the 40 hour week has been conceded. And in Rumania Ceaucescu has begun to talk of making the CP-run unions more responsive to the feelings of the workers - in a bid to head off any fight for independent, Solidarity-style unions.

In the Soviet Union, Brezhnev's 26th Congress Speech was designed to show the masses that the bureaucracy are not ignoring their problems - while showing his fellow bureaucrats that no scarificial heads are yet scheduled to roll.

In criticising everything from food shortages through housing shortages to the crisis in the health service and the poor quality of household goods, Brezhnev was attempting to prompt action by relevant sections of the bureaucracy to resolve aspects of the crisis and put more food on workers' tables. But they are no more capable of doing this adequately now than they have been since the rise of the bureaucracy in the mid 1920s.

The bureaucrats talk of course about " dangers from the West": but they know that the biggest threat to their control comes from their own working class. Each in their own way, the Stalinists are attempting to protect themselves from this danger. The Rumanian bureaucracy, for example, loudly professes its "independence" from the Kremlin: but within Rumania it continues to act in high-handed dictatorial fashion. In Poland and Yugoslavia the bureaucrats have attempted to borrow their



way out of crisis, using vast amounts of Western capital - digging themselves ever deeper into the same hole.

In the light of the conditions in Eastern Europe it is useful to look briefly at the various opposition currents that exist. One difficulty arises because the reactionary politics of the Stalinists, carried out in the name of "Communism" inevitably creates anti-communism, and drives even socialist opponents into such positions. But it is important not to look for every mistaken word or over-hastily to brand each opposition current as anti-communist.

In many ways the opposition is a foretaste of the future mass movement. As the Polish movement shows, the anti-bureaucratic movement carries with it all the confusion and the political weaknesses first displayed by the small groups of early oppositionists. They retain illusions in such frauds as the international labour laws and the Helsinki agreements. But it is not sufficient for us simply to counterpose our Trotskyist programme to such confusion. We must find ways of relating to the present opposition groupings - with the obvious exception of the openly right wing, restorationist groupings.

The KOR for instance has played a very important role in Poland. Its limitations are now clear: but the Polish masses still look towards those who have suffered in order to spearhead the fight for democratic rights.

Similarly we must find ways to relate to Charter 77, to intellectual oppositionists in the Soviet Union, and similar currents. But we must not do so in such a way as to substitute such groupings for the working class. Some of the embryo "trade union" groupings do just this. We must direct towards the mobilisation of the working class as the way to achieve democratic rights. The Polish example helps make this clear.

Particularly important are the developments in the Soviet Union, where no opposition is allowed. The 'Helsinki group' of oppositionists has been broken up and Sakharov - its leading figure - has been moved out of Moscow to Gorki where he is watched and harrassed 24 hours a day. Such measures flow not from a confident bureaucracy but from fear that the conditions are ripe for mass opposition. Since the Soviet Union is the power base for Stalinism on a world scale, the opposition currents in the other workers' states must also raise policies directed towards the Soviet working class and the rank and file of the Red Army.

## CHINA

Following the split with the Kremlin, the Peking bureaucrats carved themselves out a niche as a supposedly "left" wing of Stalinism. But the reality was that this left face was only ever donned for propaganda purposes. The Chinese leadership, which had ridden to power as recently as 1949, had less links with the capitalist countries than their Moscow colleagues; they therefore felt free to sponsor more radical sounding policies in various parts of the world. On the other hand they lacked the protective flank of mass Communist Parties upholding their line in foreign policy - which the Kremlin leaders had been able to exploit to further their objectives.

Of course far from rejecting "peaceful coexistence", the Chinese bureaucrats were ready and willing to recognise dictators like Boumedienne (Algeria) and Pinochet. Far from rejecting the discredited, class collaborationist politics of the Popular Front, the Maoists' version of this line - the "bloc of four classes" - was implemented by the pro-Peking Indonesian CP, with catastrophic results in the destruction of one of the world's largest CPs.

The superficial 'leftism' of the Cultural Revolution should also be examined critically. We should remember it was Stalin who outlawed as "decadent" any form of culture other than "socialist realism".



The Cultural Revolution flowed from the material requirements of the Mao leadership to extricate itself from a crisis by singling out rival bureaucrats as scapegoats. The masses were utilised as a lever to lend weight to Mao's position and isolate his opponents - in the course of which he unleashed a "cult of personality" rivalled only by that created around Stalin in the USSR. Indeed behind the veneer of leftism Mao was denouncing Khrushchev's attacks on Stalin as "revisionist". In reality the Maoist onslaught on "bourgeois culture" brought an actual lowering of the cultural and economic level of the Chinese masses.

With this in mind we can recognise the recent trials of the Gang of Four not as a battle between 'left' and 'right', but as a faction fight between two equally anti-working class sections of the bureaucracy.

The dominance of Deng and demise of the Gang of Four has now led to the fall of Mao's successor, Chairman Hua. But the problems for Deng are by no means over.

His grandiose plans to open the floodgates to imperialist investment as a way out of the stagnation of the Chinese economy have run into crisis as the world market has collapsed - limiting the opportunity to finance the elaborate new plant and equipment. Projects are being cancelled nearly as fast as they were initially agreed - while the Chinese workers continue to press their demands. And now, as in the USSR, a politically bankrupt bureaucracy, having abandoned socialist solutions, is looking once more to small scale private enterprise to stimulate a bureaucratically-stunted economy.

Small wonder that the much-vaunted "Democracy Wall" has been closed, and that even the token involvement of the masses in decision-making embodied in the Cultural Revolution is now witchhunted and denigrated. The moves to demand an independent trade union in China must under such conditions strike a chill into the hearts of the bureaucracy.

On an international level the Peking bureaucracy maintains the reactionary course of recent years. They are attempting to reestablish their influence on Kampuchea by bringing pressure to bear on the Khmer Rouge to drop Pol Pot and ally themselves with the CIA stooge Lon Nol in a new fight for power.

And their reactionary war against Vietnam was an extension of their political struggle for dominance in South East Asia. The disastrous and costly invasion attempt was not a direct proxy action on behalf of the US imperialists, any more than was the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. It was part and parcel of the manoeuvres of a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy struggling to secure its position in relation both to its rival bureaucrats and in relation to imperialism.

But the lurches in Chinese policy, and splits and purges have provoked a further disintegration of the many fractious Maoist groups on a world scale. These groups have clung to a deceptive "leftist" image, largely because of their retention of the destructively sectarian policies of Stalin's "Third Period" in relation to social democracy and to the pro-Moscow CPs. But the death of Mao, the disgrace of his followers, the dominance of an openly class collaborationist leadership must bring about the collapse of the Maoist groupings parallel to the extinction of Guevarism.

#### THE CPS OF WESTERN EUROPE

Developments have confirmed the correctness of our analysis of Eurocommunism, and our insistence that the Euro CPs were not simply social democratic parties but still centrally linked to the Soviet bureaucracy.

Recent events show also that for all the CP leaders would like simply to cosy up to their "own" ruling classes, the class struggle



arises time and again to make this collaboration increasingly difficult.

The Spanish CP is possibly the most craven in its subservience to its own capitalist class, as Carrillo's response to the February coup demonstrated. But even before the coup the CP had been calling for a coalition between the PSOE and the capitalist parties, with the loyal support of the CP.

When the attempted coup took place the first response of the CP leaders was to call on its members to stay at work, and to rely on Juan Carlos to "restore democracy". Only later in the week did the CP participate in demonstrations, with Marcelino Camach seen marching arm-in-arm with Francoist reactionary Manuel Fraga. The CP has now gone so far as to call for the banning of all Basque nationalist parties. But as Carrillo has moved further to the right, so divisions have arisen within the ranks of the CP. Prior to the coup the Catalan CP (the biggest) had called for the Party to revert to the call for the "dictatorship of the proletariat". And when the coup was announced, the Catalan CP issued an initial call for a General Strike - which it later withdrew. The Basque CP also took steps towards General Strike action.

The tensions in the CP will be exacerbated by the continued governmental crisis in Spain. The PSOE has, meanwhile, taken up Carrillo's suggestion of a coalition government without CP involvement - but the right wing is at present feeling strong enough to reject such proposals.

Hanging over political developments remains the threat of a further coup and the inability of the CP leadership to offer any perspective to the millions of workers who demonstrated throughout Spain against that threat.

In Italy, the cutbacks in Fiat, combined with the government's handling of the earthquake disaster exposed the nature of the Christian Democrats to the Italian masses. And at this point the Italian CP took a 'left' turn, announcing that they were breaking their "historic compromise" policy of seeking a coalition deal with the Christian Democrats. They were now only in favour of working with "honest" Christian Democrats, they argued - for instance those in Naples, where the CP called for unity with the CDs.

The link between the Italian CP and Moscow continues to be strained - with the Italian delegate to the CPSU 26th Congress being relegated to a tiny fringe meeting to make his address, criticising the Kremlin's foreign policy. But the Italian CP was at the Congress: the fact is that while not in a sense dependent upon the Kremlin the party leaders depend politically upon the historic link between their party and the Russian Revolution as part of their ideological hold over their mass membership. The more they distance themselves from Moscow, the harder they know it will be to retain control over their own members.

The French Communist Party never went the whole way with Eurocommunism, and has now turned strongly back towards Moscow. These moves stem from a major political crisis in France. The CP's links with the Socialist Party in the popular frontist Union of the Left had minimised the political differences between the two parties - and brought the CP heavy electoral losses. The SP was visibly gaining support at the expense of the CP.

In an attempt to win back its lost support, the CP resorted to a leftist stance in relation to the SP - breaking the Union of the Left, attacking the SP's programme from a superficially left position, aggressively defending the Moscow Stalinists against Mitterand's anti-communist criticisms, and eventually moving to oppose a vote for Mitterand even in the second round.

There is no doubt that such policies are welcomed by the Kremlin leaders who have made little secret of the fact that they favour a



return of Giscard.

The Marchais leadership, seeking to rally mass support on any basis to combat the SP, has now gone so far as to play the racist card, campaigning against immigration and against immigrants. The fact that the Stalinist mayor of Vitry can call up CP goons to mount a racist raid on an immigrant workers' hostel is a symptom of the profound political degeneration of the CP. And this exposes how hollow is the 'left' veneer offered by the CP's link with Moscow and its criticisms of the SP as "right wing". And it shows how the CP regards itself as part and parcel of the French capitalist system.

But already the CP policy of refusing support for the SP has been broken by rank and file members in local elections. And it is very uncertain how much support Marchais could muster for his threat to call a general stoppage of the CGT if Mitterand were elected. Instead these manoeuvres have tended further to expose the CP as splitters, and given the SP the pretext to refuse to incorporate CP ministers in a Mitterand government, and to mount an overtly anti-communist election campaign.

As Trotskyists we argue for a CP/SP government as providing the best conditions for politically mobilising the working class to break from their existing leaderships. the fact that both Marchais and Mitterand oppose such a government - thus openly or tacitly endorsing a class collaborationist alliance with bourgeois formations - must be used to expose them to the French working class.

Meanwhile the French CP's racist turn is bound to produce revulsion from the best militants. It has been condemned by the Madagascar CP, and even reportedly by four journalists on the staff of the CP daily 'L'Humanite'.

In Britain, the moves by the CP towards Eurocommunism brought a split in the party and the emergence of the New CP. Since then one of the most revealing incidents has been the defection of Sue Slipman to the Social Democratic Party. For years Slipman, as an NEC member of the CP, had led their student work, and as such supervised the cynical alliance between the CP and the Tories against the (Trotskyist-influenced) left wing within the NUS. Now she has drawn the correct conclusions from these counter-revolutionary activities.

Elsewhere the British CP has rallied to defend the trade union bureaucracy in its refusal to fight the Tory government. This was shown to millions when the Longbridge mass meeting was televised - with Stalinist convenor Jack Adams arguing against strike action to press the BL pay claim.

In BL - as in the NUS - the main opposition to the Stalinists has come from Trotskyist-led forces, while the CP has responded by moving to the right. Adams' reactionary role - extending to a refusal to fight in defence of 8 victimised Longbridge shop stewards - offers a useful means for exposing the politics of the CP to worker militants.

Meanwhile the British CP is to a certain extent being pulled back towards Moscow. Significantly it was MacLennan and not the leadership of the arch-Brezhnevite NCP who was invited to speak to the CPSU Congress. The NCP has failed to take off and offer the Moscow leaders a credible force to counterpose to the official CP.

But there is an ideological crisis in the CP, as the letters written in response to Sam Russell's critical articles on the CPSU Congress demonstrate. This confusion, together with the continuing crisis of the Morning Star are no bad things for Trotskyists. Rather they offer opportunities to press home the political offensive against Stalinism. And they offer a glimpse of the possibilities for such an offensive could be opened up if the crisis and divisions within the world Trotskyist movement could be resolved.

\*\*\*\*\*CONCLUDED\*\*\*\*\*