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The economic crises hits:

THE WORKERS AND YOUTH WILL BE MADE TO PAY!

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

PLUS:

★ ***CORRUPTION AND "CLEAN HANDS"***

★ ***BUILD A FIGHTING AND DEMOCRATIC UNION!*** *(LEAFLET FOR THE TEACHERS TRADE UNION PRE-CONFERENCE)*

★ ***ANTI-DRUG LAW AND HOW TO FIGHT IT*** *(THE REPRESIVE ANTI-YOUTH LAW MUST BE SCRAPED)*

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THE WORKERS AND YOUTH WILL BE MADE TO PAY!

Below is the SOP's economic-political analysis for the current issue of our journal (March-May). Notes explaining various names, parties, etc. can be seen at the end of the article

The economic and political crisis has come to a head, with little prevarication or soft options left to Zeman. Most of the domestically-owned enterprises have been sucked dry and bankrupted by their capitalist, ex-Stalinist owners, with the much smaller, self-sufficient section of the ruling class now beginning to demand an end to the subsidies—which the state has precious little cash to keep handing over—and along with them, also pressing hard for their ending are the vultures and rapacious crew of the EU, the foreign banks and multinational companies.

But the crony capitalist enterprise owners and their counterparts among the directors and managers in the boards of the big state-owned banks are holding on to dear life and desperately fighting against the ever-more emboldened anti-subsidy mob. Lined up alongside the crony bourgeoisie, as always, is their equally desperate cabal of corrupt pals in the state bureaucracy made up of ministry officials, judges, police chiefs, tax inspectors, and the rest. On their behalf, their ever-weakening and no longer shining knights, Klaus* and his ODS* corruption mercenaries, are doing their best to lead a defensive battle against the anti-subsidy mob.

Sandwiched between the two groups of capitalist bloodsuckers is Zeman and his motley no-direction cabinet. But Zeman just doesn't know what to do except that, in the end, he must take the side of the increasingly stronger bunch—the small group of self-sufficient capitalists in the ruling class and their imperialist cohorts, or masters among the foreign banks, the multinationals and the EU tops. At the base of their rising strength is the crude economics of the situation: the capitalist economy, in increasing crisis, cannot continue to pay for the industrial subsidies and to keep alive most of the bankrupted enterprises.

UNSTABLE "DUAL POWER" BETWEEN THE CRONIES AND THE "SELF-SUFFICIENT" BIG CAPITALISTS

Meanwhile, a "dual power" situation exists between, on the one side, the minority self-sufficient section of the ruling class—backed by millionaire would-be liberal Havel, the EU and imperialism—and on the other side the crony capitalists and their corruption team in the state. For now at least, the cronies just about have the upperhand. However, the crude economics and the sheer strength of the EU and imperialism cannot but, step by step, force the levers of power over to the self-sufficient section of the bourgeoisie. Bit by bit, Zeman is wielding those levers more on their side. Whatever Zeman's prevarications and episodic sways in the opposite direction to the cronies, ever greater jerks back are inevitable.

ZEMAN'S DESPERATE NEED FOR A COALITION WITH THE BOURGEOIS PARTIES AS HIS ONLY "SOLUTION"

A holding operation of contradictory compromise is his only tactic now. But last long it cannot—and he knows it; his minority "government" is crumbling apart. Thus why he is thinking and working hard over three or four equations for a coalition with the various bourgeois parties, but which somehow and in some way he needs to include the CP in. To help him, Havel is once again appealing to and summoning the bosses' parties to the Castle to work out a reactionary coalition deal. But still no takers—yet. The situation is not made any easier for Havel the ever-more prominent power broker by the refusal of Klaus to participate in the talks, nor by the refusal of Ruml* and the KDU* heads to take part if the CP is invited—even though Havel insists the CP is now a standard pro-capitalist party of the left, but only that their name is "offensive". Likewise also foreign analysts who see the CP has become a standard social democratic-style party, irrespective of any titles.

"COMMUNIST" BOGEY STILL NEEDED AS A SMOKE SCREEN BY THE RULING CLASS

But *US, KDU, ODS and the ruling class still have the desperate need of a "communist" bogey to confuse the different layers of the middle class and to moralise the large sections of trade unionists, workers and youth clearly moving to the left now—and to act as a smoke screen for their capitalist anti-working class projects, bloodsucking and corruption. But in whatever way, sooner or later the CP will have to be brought in. With increasing sections of workers beginning to turn to the CP (up now to 15% in the opinion polls) the Stalinist party bosses will be desperately needed to confuse, hypnotise and hold back an ever-more angry working class, not least in the bankrupt enterprises to be chosen for the axe. Undoubtedly, we can expect an increased number of (non-specific) left statements from the Stalinist party bosses but at the same time no mobilisation of workers whatsoever against the impending jobs massacre.

RUML PREPARES FOR A COALITION, KLAUS OFFERS HIM AN OLIVE BRANCH TO APPEAL FOR RULING CLASS UNITY

This in fact was the central topic of debate at the March conference of US. The party bosses of US know full well that a coalition must be prepared for, most likely late summer or early autumn (if not before, according to the severity and rapidity of the political crisis). Klaus coming to their conference with a bouquet of flowers was more than symbolic; as a ruling class representative he too recognises the fast coming breakdown of Zeman's minority government and that unlike last June the bourgeois parties must in some way come together, even if the CSSD must be one of the two biggest parts in a coalition. And yet worse that the CP must in some form be included. Just as predicted in issue No. 1 of Socialistická Avantgarda in October, Klaus, in his current appeals to US and Ruml, is being seen to have no qualms in striving to bring together a ruling class coalition in defense of themselves and their fragile system.

That was the only real debate at the conference—whether to join CSSD in a coalition (with KDU) or ODS (and the KDU). But not discussed was the delicate issue of the CP. That very big problem will have to be sprung on the US "rank-and-file" and the public at the last minute when the time comes. Also not discussed was the heart of the problem: getting rid of the subsidies and how to liquidate the bankrupt enterprises, which including just how to engage and enforce the bankruptcy laws—and atop the ashes who to sell the remaining viable firms to in an even bigger sale of the century than 1992-94, i.e. to which multinational companies and foreign consortiums.

CLEAR ANTI-SUBSIDIES POLICIES WOULD MEAN OPEN WAR WITH THE CRONIES

But any policies on that—serious policies—would mean US and Ruml would have to present them to the public, and campaign for their implementation. But doing it—openly—would immediately open up a public war with the cronies in the enterprises, banks and general corruption machine, and spell out the letters of doom in

those enterprises—and their thousands of small-firm suppliers—to their middle class managers, accountants, lawyers, scientists and technicians etc. Needless to say, not many of these 50,000 (*population 10 million) or so sacrifices among the middle class (and their families etc.) would be voting for US at the next election. But well before that, in self-defense a great mass of them would rally behind Klaus more strongly than ever. A sizeable portion of the most damaged and enraged—including also many elements among middle class students with no jobs to go to—would turn to Sládek* or DEU*. This is precisely what Sládek and his fascist skull crackers, future trade union smashers and Romany genociders are waiting for. Radical anti-fascist youth should take note: either quickly or slowly, the jobs massacre will work entirely to Sládek's benefit.

But at the same time, for US to declare its central intentions—axing of the bankrupt enterprises—tens of thousands of workers in those enterprises (and their supply firms) would be explicitly forewarned as to what exactly the self-sufficient big capitalists, the EU and imperialism have in store.

This is the combined dilemma faced by Ruml and all the forces his party represents at top level—the self-sufficient big capitalists, the EU, the multinationals and foreign banks. Or who he would like to represent, but that he hasn't the guts for. However, it is precisely what his predominant base of 25-45 year-old middle class professionals expect of him—to end the subsidies and clear out the bankrupt enterprises in order to allow big tax cuts for the middle class and to clear away the crony machine and its restrictions on "liberal capitalism" thus to open the terrain for more "dynamic" careers and bigger incomes for the "new middle class".

And one more issue: to break the back of the organised working class in the big enterprises—like ČKD* and other big engineering firms, coal mining, steel, rail etc. Breaking that strength will not only weaken the class but will allow creation of an even greater reserve army of labour (mass unemployment) and greatly intensify the struggle for work, followed then by dramatic reduction of wages among large sections of the working class. A big slice of those lost wages could then be transferred to the "new middle class".

However, if Ruml continues to fail in taking up the battle, it can't be long before the most insistent elements in and around his flabby party start to make open demands for real action. Thus, Ruml's dithering inaction carries the seeds of a near-future split.

THE CONTENT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The economy is in tatters, and getting worse. It shrank 2.8% last year after a typically rosy estimate of 2.5% growth from the World Bank. Real wages took a drop of 3.5%—the first time since 1991—and along with it retail sales plummeted a devastating 7.5%, causing numerous shop closures across the country, including stimulating increased hyper-competition among the supermarket chains, which battle the west-European giants now seem certain to win over the next year or two (TESCO, MAKRO, JULIUS MEINL, DELVITA).

The rosy estimate for GDP growth this year is -0.8%, but likely actually to be far worse, probably -2-3%. Industrial production was down in



December by 7.5% in comparison to Dec. 1997, January-on-January -9%, a massive 11% in Feb., and again -11% in April. In consequence, unemployment and short-time working rocketed. In the setting of the current growing political crises, no immediate halt in the decline of production can be expected, much less recovery, albeit that at some point, of course, relative stabilisation will occur.

The floatation in May 1997 of the (Czech) koruna followed by massive currency devaluation of 23% by Jan '98 helped close the massive import-export gap of $4.6 billion, i.e. imports exceeding exports by nearly 20%, where by September '98 the difference had "narrowed" to 8%. But the low productivity of labour in industry hardly improved at all, in fact it began to drop slightly after September last year and even began to fall marginally behind wage "increases" (that is, core inflation excluding price liberalisations). However, that was in domestically-owned companies, not foreign owned (MNCs, foreign joint ventures etc.).

A critical statistic is that MNCs and foreign-owned companies now account for 60% of export production (VW-Skoda alone for 9.2%). Moreover, that 60% is produced by only 18% of workers employed in exports production. Thus, the productivity of labour in these foreign companies is over 6 times higher than among Czech exporters. In two years' time, foreign companies will be responsible for no less than 80% of exports. Likewise, foreign companies are gaining an ever increasing proportion of production in and for the domestic market. That means, economically, the CR is now an undoubted semi-colonial country, especially with the average wage at $2 an hour ($2.50 at VW, e.g., now the most productive car factory in the world)).

Thus, the devaluation merely made exports cheaper, but not more efficiently produced (by non-foreign, Czech companies). Eventually, however, the cheap prices couldn't fall further and were unable to "outcompete", for example, equivalent cheaply produced goods from SE Asia, Latin America and the middle East. Thus the reason why the import-export gap stopped closing. And as stated, productivity in domestically-owned industry has even begun to drop now.

The main sources of the productivity problem are technological backwardness (in general), poor organisation of labour (essentially because of inept management) and top-heavy companies overloaded with managerial and professional layers, i.e. mostly Klausite crony managers in the bankrupt enterprises (just about none of whom have lost their jobs over the past few years).

The technological backwardness arises from simple lack of investment capital, which can only be gained from the banks or through the stock exchange—or foreign joint-venture capital. Because of their huge amount of bad loans, the banks have now just about stopped lending money to industry, the stock exchange could hardly be in worse shape (fall of one-third in the last year), and the state guaranteed incentives for foreign venture capital are "not interesting enough" (especially tax breaks, which are "too small"—so far). Therefore the technological backwardness can only but go from bad to worse.

MASSIVE INDEBTEDNESS OF THE ECONOMY

To maintain their crony capitalist support, the two Klaus-ODS regimes poured tens of billions of crowns into the domestically-owned enterprises, mostly via the state-owned banks and guaranteed by the state. As a vast amount of the loans could not be repaid, Klaus & Co. allowed the crony bank managements to exchange company shares for debts, and then place their men on company boards. Thus, eventually, at one and the same time the banks became both creditors and debtors (to "themselves"). Additionally, he made sure there were no laws introduced to prevent the activity. Lastly, he created laws that made bankruptcy claims from creditors impossible to process.

Along with the debts owed to the state itself by the (now) bankrupted enterprises, total indebtedness in the country amounts to $35 billion, equivalent to 75% + of GDP. Half or so of those debts can never be repaid, except by selling off the bankrupted enterprises to foreign capital, or by liquidations and asset stripping. In any case, the subsidies, bank loans and state bailouts must be brought to an end, sharply.

But that means, either soon or eventually, war with the crony owners/managers and as well a large number of the top half of managers and directors in the banks, just about all of whom form a block with the crony personnel in the enterprises (and their infinitely corruptible adjuncts in the state).

THE WORLD RECESSION AND LACK OF INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS

The exports problem is made worse still by the big enterprises not having sufficient means to gain sales abroad because of lack distribution networks. The former state exports firms were more or less liquidated from 1991-94, but not replaced with much, thus why the state began to set up better export departments at embassies

abroad. And also to engage in organising foreign trade missions among state officials and selected firms.

But all these have had poor effect. The MNCs have huge distribution networks that the big enterprises of the former Stalinist countries cannot compete with. As well, the MNCs are hugely backed, politically etc., by their imperialist governments. They can also rely on the heavy-weight imperialist institutions like the WTO, IMF, World Bank, EU, NAFTA and ASEAN to powerfully assist in securing markets for them—against all types of semi-colonial countries.

Continued world recessions make matters worse still. As markets stagnate, or decline, the competition intensifies to keep hold of international markets, and to gain an even bigger slice of the (shrinking) cake. In this, the MNCs are hugely assisted by their vast capital resources, which big enterprises here lack completely. Japan has been in recession for a year or more now, and the next recessions in western Europe and the USA are due over the next year. Thus, export markets for domestic companies (not least the bankrupt enterprises) will be harder still to acquire.

GRÉGR'S* "PLAN" VERSUS MERTLÍK'S* "PLAN"

The massive crisis emerged quickly in August to October last year. Thus why Zeman prepared raids on the boards of several big enterprises the state has strategic shares in, such as Severočeská energetická (North-Czech generation and distribution company). This ousted key elements of Klaus' men and allows the Zeman government better means to enforce more rational corporate governance and to introduce whatever plans the cabinet may come up with for "revitalisation" of industry.

The Fund Guarantee Council was set up, with 19 members comprised of ministers, economic "experts', and TU officials (who will be vital in selling job cuts and speed-up to workers in the enterprises). The Council was to be largely responsible for enforcing whatever "revitalisation" plan the government would draw up. Bank loans and subsidies to enterprises were also to be further cut back, which started immediately.

A powerful force behind the whole exercise was the EU, who now want the massive subsidies to be axed, once and for all. The reason being that the massively subsidised industries are a "problem" for EU multinationals, which are not subsidised (although in many cases they are substantially protected against Japanese and US MNCs' imports by way of de facto import controls).

Next step was Grégr's "plan". But it was hardly any different than past policies of enterprise subsidies, except that stricter corporate governance and company reporting would be demanded, and that the subsidies would be merely further reduced, but not eliminated. Moreover, most of the crony owners and top managers would be allowed to stay just where they were. Powerful reaction from the media (mostly foreign owned now, the big dailies especially), MNCs in the country, the EU and self-sufficient big capitalists forced Grégr (and Zeman) to modify the "plan".

The modifications were that some enterprises would be quasi renationalised, by the state buying out the shares of crony owners, then selling the firms once they were restructured, which so far has hardly been performed (mostly, only the sacking of a couple hundred-thousand workers over 1991-97, who mostly got jobs in the mushrooming small business sphere—but 10% of which are now going bankrupt per year).

But none of this was enough, and growing conflict began to break out in the cabinet.

ENTER MERTLÍK—ON BEHALF OF THE EU AND THE SAME PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT RUML

That's where Mertlík entered the scene and being given, by Zeman, the job of forming an alternative "revitalisation" plan. Mertlík is just about totally pro-EU, and strongly backs their demands. Therefore Mertlík's acid statement, ".....I will neither endorse his [Grégr's] programme nor his proposal for the cabinet's industrial policy.....because they are not in line with the CR's plan to become an EU member....". Thus, Mertlík has taken up the role of the EU's main man in Zeman's cabinet, and has gathered the necessary team around himself, such as Jan Vrba.

Mertlík pressured for Grégr's plan in a February cabinet meeting to be thrown out and for his own ideas to be accepted. His scheme now is that state aid to enterprises be limited to two years and that only companies "interesting to foreign investors" are included. Vlastimil Nesrsta, T&I spokesman, said ".....revitalised companies will be sold as fast as possible, even to foreigners."

Imperialism likes the scheme—if it is serious. One leading imperialist journal, Business Central Europe, said in its March edition: "It's a welcome shift in attitude, although observers will remain sceptical until companies like tram-maker CKD and engineering giant Skoda Plzen are allowed to go bust.....It has now accepted [the T&I Ministry] that attracting foreign investment is vital—and that many Czech companies will disappear if they don't find foreign companies.....Hence the new Hungarian-style tax-breaks for foreign investors, and the plans to become multinationals' suppliers.....".

TOTAL SUPPORT FOR THE PLAN FROM THE PRO-IMPERIALIST MEDIA—AND CRIMINALISATION OF WORKERS FOR THEIR "OWN" UNEMPLOYMENT

This type of carrot and stick is exactly the stuff being pumped out by the domestic press, the most pro-imperialist dailies especially, such as Lidové noviny and Mladá fronta (both Swiss owned). As well, they are condemning the workers for not "changing their thinking" from former "communist" times, i.e. "laziness" and to expect that work is a right. Statements of this last type—prepared days in advance— saturated the pages of a number of dailies on Feb. 1st when the unemployment statistic was announced of the level going through the "psychological barrier" of 8%. That barrier will be exceeded many times over by year's end, officially forecast at 10% (more likely 12%). And each month that it shoots up, more virulent condemnations of workers from the "democratic" "objective" media will be ready and waiting.

MERTLÍK'S SALE OF THE CENTURY TO MNCs

Another critical component of Mertlík's scheme is to "renationalise" key enterprises by buying out the crony owners, restructuring the firms and then selling them, i.e. only to people with the necessary cash—MNCs and foreign venture capital. Grégr, as said, had ideas in this direction except that the state would sell them back to the crony owners when the companies are put in order! But Mertlík has no intention of selling them back to the cronies, as he has said: ".....We are very, very clear: When there is rationale to bail out an institution, you bail out the institution, but not the people who drove it down..."

Mertlík's (and Vrba's) vision is to form a new institution to centralise the process—the Restructuring Agency. The Agency could be constituted as a subsidiary of Konsolidační Banka, who would take over bad loans [from bankrupt enterprises] held by banks. But the loans—and the companies—would have to be newly evaluated by a "Big Five" auditor (imperialist), e.g. Ernst & Young. (who have said: "The more they deal with it the more the price [for the restructured companies] will go down").

Basically, the state would force the buyout of the cronies by selected banks, i.e. buying the cronies' debts, and give the banks one-third of the cash to do it, then one third later, then the remainder when the restructuring is finished. But to prevent shenanigans from any new bunch of cronies, Vrba wants the whole thing to be participated in by foreign financial institutions, auditors and professional restructuring firms (all imperialist).

Forcing a large number of bankruptcies would be a tactic as well, i.e. to give the cronies no chance of keeping any control of the enterprises they have successfully robbed and bankrupted for 6 or 7 years. But as well, the bankruptcies would force the workers in them to accept whatever terms the government, the Agency and imperialism presented.

TU BOSSES NEEDED TO BUSHWHACK THE WORKERS

For this last, though, the TU bosses—like Falbr*—would be vital in dividing up the workers, preventing strike action and occupations, and then forcing the deal on the tens of thousands of affected workers. Falbr & Co. have shown every willingness to perform this duty, and in fact are already preparing workers to accept the butchery. Workers, however, must start making their own preparations in advance, and reject utterly whatever Mertlík, Vrba, the new Agency, imperialism, the TU bosses and the media moralise and condemn them with.

ANOTHER DANGER FOR WORKERS: KLAUS, THE CRONY "OWNERS" — AND SLÁDEK

A big danger for workers to watch out for, however, is sections of crony owners and managers patronising and appealing to them to reject the Agency etc. in order to "save their jobs". But the cronies will continue to bankrupt the enterprises just as up to now, and in fact will only use the ploy as a threat to the government in order to get a better deal for themselves.

Workers be aware!: The cronies are your enemy just as much as imperialism! They will never cease to embezzle and rob "their" companies, and nor can they defeat the logic of capitalism! Likewise, Grégr's "ideas" are just as bankrupt as the enterprises, and if Klaus appeals to us all on behalf of "economic nationalism", then it is nothing more than patronisation and a tactic for a better deal for his crony supporters.

Similar economic nationalism and rabid chauvinism can be expected form the (anti-EU)

Stalinist CP bosses. They have no problem with capitalism or parliament, it pays better than Stalinist economics, they only wish the "nationalist" capitalists to exploit workers instead of "foreign" bosses. Currently their only policy for workers is the 35-hour week, but which they do nothing about, and 90% of the meaty policies in the manifesto are for support of small businesses, especially ones started up by former Stalinist apparatchiks (in particular who have service and supply contracts with local councils). Rank-and-file CP members should demand from Grebeníček* and his so far do-nothing co-thinkers: Total support to workers in the enterprises, not to their crony owners! Nationalise them all under workers' (and not Stalinist) control without compensation to the crony robbers and imperialist block-share owners! Any support to the cronies, with nationalism and xenophobia as the rhetoric, will be nothing but total betrayal!

GET READY FOR SLÁDEK AND HIS TRADE UNION SMASHERS!

More that we can expect to see, as time goes on, as the "plans" becomes clearer, and the big job losses start—including among the excess layers of lower and middle-tier managers, accountants etc.— is for Sládek to employ even more of the same populist patronisation of workers and the "nation". But his real aim will be to smash the unions and put workers under the yoke of assorted nationalist bosses and foreign owners! Reject completely—in advance—Sládek, his trade union smashers and Romany genociders. Anti-fascist youth! Prepare to defend workers and the unions against Sládek and his skinhead skull crackers and scab organisers! Don't wait for Sládek to act, our hesitation buys him the time he needs.

THE "ALTERNATIVE" OF FOREIGN CAPITAL AND THE RESTRUCTURING VULTURES

The pro-foreign business propaganda—"they are our only chance"—being pumped out by the assorted bag of the media, Mertlík, Ruml's people and the rest, is itself nonsense. Even if Mertlík's plan gets off the ground, only a small number of the bankrupted enterprises will be interesting to potential foreign buyers. The coming conjuncture of recessions across the world—along with the SE Asian, Russian and Brazilian collapses—means imperialism has precious little cash or sufficient markets to buy any large portion of the bankrupt enterprises.

Moreover, it is not only in the CR that a mass of bankrupt enterprises exist. Russia, Poland, the Ukraine, Romania etc. are full of them. Numerous traditional semi-colonial countries are not short of "saleable" companies either. Imperialism will merely pick and chose which companies it calculates are the most viable, which it can fit into its global and regional production and sales plans, and will in combination hunt around and pressure for the best tax breaks it can squeeze out of the desperate governments of all these countries in crisis or stagnation. Each government in the region will be forced into a scramble to offer the best tax breaks, free infrastructure implementation, cheap land, and sale-of-the-century prices for the glut of bankrupt enterprises.

If this road is taken, then in the end each country will only manage to hand over a small portion of these companies to imperialism, and be forced to shut down huge numbers of the rest—with the result of permanent mass unemployment, broken unions and slave wages for large sections of workers—for youth and women workers especially, all forced to be "glad" of whatever work they can get.

Proof of imperialism's inability to buy substantial numbers of these companies can be gained from nowhere better than the imperialist press itself. As the (English language) Prague Business Journal wrote in its March 1-7 issue:

"Others point out that the vultures who count—those with access to foreign capital—are busy feeding elsewhere. 'The whole world is distressed', says the emerging markets head at a premier global mergers and acquisitions firm. 'Asia is a completely distressed market. And Asia's distressed opportunities are better than central Europe's'.....And even those ailing firms which can slim down and shed their debt face a softening world economy. 'The question is: Export to where? There is overcapacity in the world in terms of manufacturing. People don't want to talk about it, but three-quarters of the world is in recession. The mindset is we've got these great cheap [manufacturing] assets. But I was hearing that five years ago. And just because you can get an asset for a song doesn't mean it's worth it. Many of these assets should be razed, or just firebombed".

So, the solution of imperialism is to pick and chose a few select chunks of the economy, and "firebomb" the rest—and evaporate around two-hundred and fifty thousand jobs or more over 1-3 years (including the small firms that supply the big enterprises, i.e. for every job in an enterprise there are three supply and distribution jobs connected to it). But which figure doesn't include the big number of jobs that will be lost simply due to the mentioned recessions that are just around the corner, in the EU especially .

Nor does it include the mass of taxes the state will lose in massive tax breaks given to MNCs that decide to move in. The free ability of the MNCs to repatriate their untaxed profits to their home countries will mean a big budget deficit (and possible eventual need to go to the IMF with the begging bowl), which is precisely what happened in Hungary after selling off a mass of big enterprises and banks to imperialism and giving them the necessary tax breaks to repatriate the great mass of their profits. Business Central Europe, February 1999 (statistical indicators): "[Hungary's] current account deficit almost doubled during the first nine months of 1998, according to Nomura, as the country's numerous foreign investors repatriated profits and dividends. Another test will be the 1999 budget, with public sector workers—from hospitals, schools, and railways—pressing for wage rises."

Therefore, if imperialism is allowed to move in in a big way the need will quickly arise for massive cuts in social benefits and services (hospitals, schools, pensions etc.), or to introduce an even bigger range of indirect taxes (such as VAT) which hit workers several times harder than the rich (which is why these taxes are devised and implemented). In fact, the beginnings of the cuts and indirect taxes are already planned. The only problem is how to sell them to the (non-rich) public.

This is Mertlík's, Zeman's, Falbr's and imperialism's offer to workers and youth. Meanwhile, the CP bosses have nothing much to say. Nor either left leaders like Spidla*, who Zeman is preparing as next leader of CSSD.

BANKS PRIVATISATION: ANOTHER ENFORCER OF JOB LOSSES AND MASS UNEMPLOYMENT

This is also where the privatisation of bank's come in. The public is being told now, incessantly, that the banks must be made profitable and sold off to foreign owners (i.e. international finance capital). Two choices exist for Zeman: either the state buys the banks' debts and sells the banks at a better price, or just sell them as they are, and let the new imperialist owners deal with the bad debts, i.e. from the bankrupt enterprises, which means restructuring a few viable and saleable ones (with the "help" of the restructuring vultures) then selling them whole or downsized, and a mass of closures followed by wholesale asset stripping.

Of course, a way will be found to keep a number in domestic hands and for which the government will allow a certain amount of special treatment, such as heavy engineering and steel firms Vítkovice or Nova Hut (but who will still have to axe more jobs than they already have, e.g. Vítkovice engineering 2500 more this year alone).

Under the guise of the logic of this "absolute need of banking solvency", the banks will be utilised to enforce job losses and increased work discipline on tens of thousands of workers.

Zeman, after his Žofín Island speech in March, seems now to have chosen the course of forcing the banks to demand increased repayment of loans (including enforced bankruptcies to do it), and to give no more bailouts to the banks—except to Spořitelna Banka in order to protect the savings of the middle class—and then to sell them to the highest foreign bidder by the end of 2000. But with a lot of huge debts still on their books, the banks will have to be more or less given away (at the state's and taxpayers' expense, i.e. the banks have so far been bailed out to the extent of $4.6 billion since 1992).

THE EU AND THE PRIMARY POSITION IT HOLDS

The economic crisis has put the EU in a far stronger position to press home its demands, most especially that the massive debt crisis leaves the government with precious little room for manoeuvre, which the EU chiefs are fully aware of. Moreover, as capitalism has been fully restored now, imperialism no longer needs to be "soft" on the local populations of the former Stalinist countries (especially those first in line for membership of the EU "club").

"Non-compliance" with the EU's demands means threats of delayed entry and possible imposition of import barriers on selected products. And it is the EU that Havel, for example, has been promoting as the "great hope" for humanity in Europe, and with whose terms and stipulations we must do all possible to comply. But good liberal humanitarian and millionaire Havel doesn't spend too many words telling us exactly what those terms are. But at least Mertlík has been a little more specific. But only a little. And nor is the domestic mass media telling us much. However, we can turn again to the imperialist economic press (Business Central Europe, editorial column, March edition):

"The EU has set similarly tough terms [as the IMF in Hungary 1995] for the accession countries,

and some of the measures are going to hurt. Witness Poland's plans to sack two-thirds of steel workers, or surging unemployment as the Czechs and Slovaks clean up their banks.....The lessons are clear. Identify the few obsolete sectors that must be treated as social problems, draw up a timetable to run them down and leave other sectors to fend for themselves. Then the Central Europeans can join the EU on equal terms. But if they try and pretend that the destruction of obsolete industry can be avoided, the result will be economic—and social—chaos."

So much for the EU, the great friend and hope for European workers. But the EU cannot be defeated by "economic nationalism" as the CP are saying (but doing nothing about as usual). Only a combined and massive response of European workers can achieve that, i.e. a workers' Europe. The recent 6-nation rail strike in Western Europe, for example, or the coming mass anti-EU demo in Cologne, are clear signs that workers across Europe are prepared to take powerful action in combined defense. Czech workers in the enterprises set for the above mentioned "firebombing" and "destruction" should begin now to seek the necessary links through their TUs and by forging direct links. For example, CKD workers with Siemens'* workers who themselves are undergoing massive job losses and are being told by their union bosses and managements that they must "compete with Czech workers".

ALL ROADS LEAD TO IMPERIALISM: THE CZECH REPUBLIC NOW A SEMI-COLONIAL COUNTRY

Thus, as all the facts state, the CR has become a semi-colonial country in all but name. That status and relationship with imperialism will deepen as the new phase of plans are put into operation by the EU, the MNCs, the restructuring vultures and the foreign banks in combination with their client forces of Zeman, Ruml, Mertlík, the domestic self-sufficient bourgeoisie, and TU bosses like Falbr. And the various forms and degrees of anti-EU rhetoric, "economic nationalism", xenophobia, and racism being more and more put on offer by the likes of Klaus, Grebeníček and Sládek have no chance of success, much less offer any solutions for workers: imperialism is too powerful for these charlatans and reactionaries.

For those that might still be fooled about the great promises pumped out over the past decade by the politicians and mass media about the capitalist paradise offered by "Western Capitalism" (= imperialism), then we can all just offer them a recent calculation of the IMF (in How far is Central Europe from Brussels?) The calculation is for the CR's GDP to take a minimum of 15 years to reach the GDP level of the EU's poorest countries, Greece and Portugal (but while Greece and Portugal's GDPs grow at below the EU average). For Hungary and Poland the forecast is 25 years.

However, these typically rosy forecasts of the IMF were made before the SE Asian, Russian and Brazilian crises. Nor, as would be expected, do they recognise and take into account the world-wide capitalist crisis, where each recession is deeper, and each "recovery" shallower. A growing crisis now 25-years old, with no hopeful models of dynamic capitalism to "copy"(the collapses over the past 18 months in Korea and SE Asia have finally put an end to that particular ideological tool of capitalism).

ZEMAN MUST PUT IMPERIALISM'S DEMANDS IN MOTION, THEN FORM A COALITION—OR JUST ABDICATE

The growing crisis of the economy and the huge political crisis arising from it has left Zeman's cabinet hopelessly divided, incapable of drawing up a single coherent plan or piece of key legislation. Not only is the press having to admit it but opinion polls confirm it explicitly. 77% of the population (Feb. '99) are deeply dissatisfied with both the government and the general political climate. The figure in September was 64%.

Thus why Zeman is in desperate need of forming a coalition. The question is the equation. KDU will form a coalition with just about anyone (except the CP—but the crisis of the bourgeoisie and their system may force them to, whether they like it or not, the same also for the other bourgeois parties). But because of the mass of divisions within the bourgeoisie the trick for they and Zeman will be by no means easy.

The divisions within the rest of society are no less severe. The middle class is broken up into all manner of different interests and confusion—between the various pro-crony pro-Klaus sections, the anti-cronies, and not least the lower middle class who are being hammered by the crisis and who have no real political representation at all.

Only the working class is relatively undivided, but as usual has nothing but rotten leadership and thus is left with responding to events and being confused by the CSSD, CP and TU heads. The most critical problem is in the unions where the leadership could hardly be more treacherous. When the workers through their unions begin to react—as shown at CKD and their automatic strike call over wages not to be paid—another big threat to be used against them by the union bosses will be that "abiding" with Zeman (and Mertlík) is preferable to bringing him down and letting in "big bad" Klaus once again. It's an old trick, used by union bosses across Europe for decades, and can be anticipated in advance.

Half of US are prepared to form a coalition with CSSD (led by the likes Mlynář and Kühnl of US), and one half not (led by Ruml most especially). Klaus will play his cards completely pragmatically and opportunistically, as ever, and do whatever he can for the cronies, which in fact can only be but damage limitation; imperialism and crude economics are just too powerful for him.

But whatever the eventual coalition, assisted in formation by ongoing talks with and appeals from Havel, it can't be long in coming. Alternatively, Zeman may well just "abdicate". However, whichever he chooses—or rather is forced to by circumstance—his main task beforehand is to put some or other version of Mertlík's plan into action. Then wait for the shit to hit the fan.

The cost of state creation of jobs, the role of the union leaders in preventing serious resistance to the Mertlík-Zeman-imperialism "revitalisation" scheme—and enterprise "firebombing"

The cost to the government of creating one long-term job is over 1.5 million crowns [$42,000], as opposed to 5-20 million crowns for compensating an owner/director on the board of a bankrupted enterprise that might get renationalised (a firm he has sucked dry and bankrupted in the first instance, as well as first acquiring the necessary millions to buy a block of shares in the company by means of bank loans 6-8 years ago gained with the help of giving 5% of the loan as a bribe to the people who agreed the loan).

As an example, OKD coal mining company in Ostrava intends to axe another 4700 miners just this year alone, in an area where unemployment averages at over 13%. The T&I Ministry has just set aside 350-million crowns [$1 million] in the 1999 state budget in an effort to create 300-500 new jobs in various coal fields for redundant miners previously employed at Ostravsko-Karvinsky doly (OKD) coal mining plant. But OKD board Vice Chairman, Antonin Benes, recently stated the money won't be enough to create permanent jobs for the 4700. He added: "This subsidy is too small because you need at least 1.5 million crowns to create one long-term job, and this year we expect unemployment in the region to increase by another 15,000 people". There are currently 20,000 unemployed. Arithmetically, that will take the unemployment rate from 13% to a devastating 22.75%. Similar kinds of job losses in other coal mining areas are expected (such as North Bohemia).

On privatisation of coal mines, Cyril Zapletal, chairman of the mining section of the Bohemian and Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions (CMKOS), just recently stated: "If a private owner comes in, very often they only care about the economic situation at the mine and the social considerations take second place. But if the state has a controlling interest, it pays attention to the social situation first". However, the same TU leaders of the mining section, in April 1998, got the miners in three towns in North Bohemia to accept privatisation of the state's share in their mines! Current unemployment in one of those towns, Most, is 17%.

That was after miners threatened strike action over intended privatisation. The promises given by the then Tosovsky government last year—that any new owners would be obliged to respect employment "guidelines"—are not worth the breath they were spoken with. After the miners were persuaded by their union "leaders" not to strike, the state—which "cares about social conditions first"— subsequently gave up its majority share in OKD and MUS to private investors—who "care about social conditions second".

Exactly the same pattern, especially from the TU "leaders", can be expected in every instance of the coming Mertlík-Zeman "revitalisation" scheme. These "leaders" must go, they are nothing more than the toadies of the state and privatisation "investors". It can't be doubted that these leaders will sink to new depths of treachery when the government, the bosses' parties, the media and imperialist firms demand that workers accept the privatisations, restructuring and "firebombing".

As a result of the restructuring plan to come, most of that trouble will come from the cronies—both in the enterprises and the state machine—also the middle class layers to be damaged or axed in those enterprises, and workers faced with the sack, either immediately or over a year or two.

Critical for Zeman is the April conference of CSSD in Prague. He will be relying completely, and opportunistically, on the support of the rank-and-file left—who see him as a "left"—to support him unconditionally (as usual) against the right specifically, and attacks in general. "Left-wing" Spidla will be lined up to help him in gaining that vital support.

But we have to say the rank-and-file left of CSSD: Your class comes before Zeman's career, before Mertlík's plan, before the stability of the bourgeoisie and their system, and before the EU and imperialism! Oust Zeman and his pro-imperialist henchmen, put Spidla in the hot seat and make him act—or face the axe like Mertlík plans for thousands of workers! No temporary renationalisation for the "self-sufficient" bourgeoisie and imperialism, but expropriation of the 100 or so big enterprises—without compensation to the crony and imperialist "owners"— under workers control and a workers' plan of rational production!

To workers, the unions and youth: A bosses' coalition has no legitimacy! Defy every version of it completely! The only coalition can be between CSSD and the CP, with Zeman, Mertlík & Co. out of the way—totally—and no reactionary nationalism and xenophobia from Grebeníček and his "economic and political nationalists"! And if Zeman and the bosses scurry for a quick coalition, then the demand must be for new elections—without delay!

AUTHORITARIAN "BONAPARTIST" REGIME IF THE POLITICAL CRISIS EXPLODES?

However, there is one more danger to watch for—and defy utterly. In the instance of a massive class explosion, either all at once or progressively—mass strikes, occupations, and protests—the bourgeoisie is prepared to install an authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regime, led by a "Bonapart-type" figure with a personally assembled team around him, ready to produce "stabilisation" decrees within days—anti-strike and anti-protest rulings, with full authority to the police chiefs and cops to enforce the crackdown, possibly even elite forces in the military. A small

Imperialism, semi-colonialism, mass unemployment, low and slave wages, "cultural imperialism", and emigration (among the youth especially)

As a comparison to the CR's semi-colonial status and coming levels of unemployment to astronomical levels, a simple look at the Republic of Ireland is useful. Ireland was a British colony for several centuries, followed ever since by semi-colonial status after gaining "independence" just over 75-years ago. Due to its lack of industrialisation and semi-colonial wages (and super-profits to imperialism, including massive, low-taxation profit repatriation for imperialist companies—British, US, Dutch, and others) for over a century and a half it has suffered huge emigration, mainly to Britain and the USA. In all cases, especially in Britain, these immigrants have suffered massive "racial" discrimination, especially in the case of jobs, i.e. the lowest paid—often the most dangerous—and the first to be sacked in recessions etc., but also similar treatment in areas such as education, health care and housing.

In Britain (especially), the Irish are regarded as second or third class citizens and both they and their culture are denigrated as primitive and backward despite, for example, Ireland producing arguably the best writers over the past century or more in the English language, e.g. James Joyce, GB Shaw, W. B. Yeats, Samuel Becket, and numerous others, including several Nobel Prizes in that category. Additionally, up to the early 1990s at least, Irish high-school leavers had the second to third highest level of education in the EU (but not many jobs to go to—unless one emigrated)

As well, to help maintain imperialist domination, it is not just the immigrants who are denigrated but the culture of their country itself, aided and abetted by its own politicians, media, education system etc., i.e. by sycophantic clients of British and world imperialism (half of whom directly and indirectly are bribed and corrupted by the British state and foreign MNCs).

A main task of the British in the first centuries of colonial occupation was to eradicate the Irish language (successfully). The entire history of the country has either been rewritten or expurgated, particularly its revolutionary past (against the British) most especially the mass workers and peasants uprising of April 1916 led by the revolutionary socialist James Connolly (shot 5 times, tried more or less on the spot by British Army officers, found "guilty", and summarily shot dead tied to a chair [already with 5 bullets in him]).

The main stream of the nations' ideological strata have historically and to the present portrayed their people and culture as "incapable" in their own right of rising above their industrial and economic backwardness. They are "their own worst enemies". To sublimate the domination and denigration, the population are force-fed on religion and fatalism, and whose sense of underlying resentment and opposition to (British) imperialism has been narrowed down into producing a mass of folk music, a significant amount of which are in the vein of anti-British imperialism and national lament.

Without this form of comprehensive ideology of imperialist domination and national denigration, i.e. "cultural imperialism", it would be impossible for imperialism to maintain its stranglehold over the country and its economy.

Otherwise, mass opposition to imperialism—concentrated on Britain—would be the only result, and as the economy is without its own investment means, and that the state, politicians and bourgeoisie are completely in the tow of imperialism, then the permanent revolution—the flowing over of the struggle for national independence to workers' and peasants/small farmers mass struggle for socialism—could be the only outcome of successful ousting of imperialism. That result itself would have a massive political effect in Britain itself, for the capitalist state and the ruling class, thus sparking off mass mobilisation there, including large scale disaffection among the middle classes who would loose confidence in their all-powerful "Britania rules the waves" state. Therefore the extra need of the British state and imperialism to keep the lid on the political situation in Ireland, both North and South.

Even in the 1980s (and similarly so still) the emigration statistics were that 1% of the population emigrated per year (i.e. 35,000+, or equivalent to 80,000 in the CR.), mostly to Britain. Moreover, three-quarters of these immigrants were (and are) in the age category 16-25, essentially leaving the country to escape low wages, unemployment and poverty. If not for the high birth rate, the country would have been thoroughly depopulated long ago; which birth rate maintained by ideological enforcement from the Catholic Church (critically including the illegalisation of abortion and extreme [enforced] lack of other forms of contraception, including womens contraceptive pills. For abortions, women take a two-day shopping "holiday" in Liverpool, by ferry).

Over the coming decade, similar levels of economic emigration will become a reality in the CR, unless the (racist) EU can find some way or other to keep out coolie labour from the CR (and other ex-Stalinist countries that become members over the next 4-6 years). The EU is in fact already drawing up "special" agreements on this requirement. As with Ireland, for example, the great bulk of the emigrants will be of the 16-25 age group.

Also as with Ireland, but likewise as in all other semi-imperialist countries, various forms of cultural imperialism will be developed, side by side with extremely distorted forms of national chauvinism and xenophobia (not unsimilar to the hot-air type pumped out by the CP—or worse still by Sladek and his Republican Party, whose fascist-capitalist politics and ideology can in fact can do nothing whatsoever to stop imperialism).

Thus, a complex mixture of varying degrees of superficial national chauvinism and self-denigration (mostly subliminal) for the industrial destruction and subsequent backwardness of the country—with imperialism maintaining its domination. It's simple: imperialist domination plus mass unemployment and slave wages = cultural denigration and large-scale emigration (among the youth especially),

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) conducted a survey in spring/summer 1998 among 10 former Stalinist countries to find out what number of the populations of each would seek to emigrate to EU countries over the coming years. A cross-sectional sample of 1000 people in the 18-60 year-old age bracket in each country were surveyed. For the CR the figure was 25% for a "few years" and 11% permanently. However, that was before the current mass unemployment became a reality. When the level hits twice the current one (or more), for several years, the proportions desiring to seek work abroad for a "few years" (mostly as coolies) or to emigrate permanently, will undoubtedly increase to far higher levels—a desire that large numbers will exercise.

trial run has already been seen in last year's quickly created Tošovský* "government", but that the next will be far more powerful and vicious, even if it has a neutered parliament as a mask and prop.

No doubt Havel will be needed for support, in order to lend it a "human face". Which assistance he will be only too willing to perform. The only question is as to whom the Bonapartist figure will be. The bourgeoisie is desperately short on charismatic personnel, but that won't stop the media and the likes of certain pop stars and cultural figures giving full support to whichever figurehead is pulled out of a magician's hat. In that eventuality, all workers and youth must be ready to react and defy.

If such regime is assembled, and the necessary response comes from workers and youth, then without doubt Sládek will work towards bringing into action—in particular after defeats of workers—all his skinhead skull crackers and strike breakers, including, also, rabidly reactionary students—against the workers and youth. We must respond accordingly! The movement for anti-fascist and anti-scab defense squads must be embarked upon now, even irrespective of any near-future "Bonapartist regime" as such ground level forces are being prepared for already—the mass gathering of fascist and skinhead forces to take place in Prague on May Day is a portent of the not so far-off future. We cannot allow ourselves to be taken by surprise. Meanwhile, expect no advance warning or workers' support from the likes of Falbr; he and they will not only do nothing to mobilise against it, but will do all possible to prevent active defense—in the name of "reason" and "moderation"—they dread mass mobilisation of workers more than they fear fascism itself.

UNEMPLOYMENT SET FOR 20%—THE WORKING CLASS MUST BE MADE TO PAY FOR THE CRISIS

The medium-term effect (2 years or so) of imperialism's selective take-overs and "firebombing" will be to send the unemployment level to about that in Spain (the third poorest EU country), i.e. 18-22%. At the end of last year the moderate forecast for the end of this year was 10%. However, that estimate was produced before the reality of the crisis became fully apparent: nearly nine per cent was achieved in the first quarter.

Most likely, the level will hit 12% by year's end, even before one or other of the Mertlík-Zeman schemes is started in earnest. Full-scale implementation, coupled with the EU and generalised global recession next year, will see a further 6-10% added.

Some simple statistics on current unemployment from the Ministry of Trade and Industry present some frightening trends, for women workers and youth especially. The biggest groups of unemployed people are those with limited skills, women with young children, young people generally, school leavers with no previous job experience, and those in areas with the highest concentration of industry (i.e. where most of Mertlík's job clearouts are to take place). Over half the unemployed are under thirty, 57% of the unemployed have now been jobless for at least 6 months, and one-quarter for over a year. (** See box on page below for more details and analysis of unemployment and the role of the TU leaders



to ensure there is no serious resistance from workers to the coming Mertlík-Zeman "revitalisation" plan).

CONFLAGRATION OF WORKERS' STRUGGLES FAST DEVELOPING

The state, the bourgeoisie and imperialism are well aware that workers will not take the coming onslaught lying down, especially as the working class has remained more or less united and undefeated since bringing down the Klaus regime in November 1997 after the 100,000-strong TU demo in Prague (which the TU misleaders did all their best to prevent, and have done still more to remove from the consciousness of workers).

Moreover, the workforce is over 30% trade unionised, in two closely aligned federations (notwithstanding the CP's fake mini-federation). And the period is no longer the first few years after capitalist restoration, thus, for example, unlike in Poland and Hungary and the then powerful disorientation of the class, in combination with mass "popular capitalism" culture, the political attitude of the class has changed dramatically. The class has been slapped in the face so many times by the ex-Stalinist, new capitalist class and their politicians—and many times even kicked—that it has learned numerous bitter lessons.

The strike call by miners last April over possible job losses through proposed privatisation, and the automatic response of a strike call by CKD workers in January (which was a deliberate test on the part of the government) is a clear sign that the working class is prepared to fight, especially in conditions of suddenly imposed and ever-rising unemployment. In consequence we can only expect to see large-scale class actions in defense of jobs, wages and working conditions (possibly also against government cuts in social welfare and health care).

This will no less involve the youth, who as witnessed increasingly since the November 1997 100,000-strong demo have been prepared to demonstrate, at quick notice, against oppressive police laws (e.g. anti-youth "anti-drugs" laws) and against fascist and skinhead violence and murder of Romanies (gypsies). As it is the youth (along with women workers) who are bearing and will bear the greatest hardship in the rising unemployment levels, it is they who will form a large part of the vanguard in the class actions against enforced enterprise closures and job losses. This will be despite the concerted efforts of the employers, the state and especially the TU misleaders to keep them a thousand kilometres from trade union activity.

On the point of anti-fascism, and as described many times, radical anti-fascist youth have the desperate need to see the connection between the coming jobs massacre, mass unemployment, organised scabbing and fascism. The anti-fascist youth need to form themselves into picket line and anti-fascist defense guards to swell the picket lines to come and to defend their brothers and sisters against the cops, the scabs and any fascists forces sent to break strikes and occupations. It is vital that anti-fascist youth—and trade unionists—go to the apprentice schools and enlist the apprentices in the movement against the fascists and in defense of jobs in industry and elsewhere. It is exactly the apprentice schools—among job-hungry youth seeking near-future employment, in big enterprises especially, and who have no knowledge of the trade unions—where Sládek will be looking to build his much desired fascist youth movement. Campaign among the apprentices as a first step!

THE TRADE UNIONS, THEIR ROTTEN FALBR-STYLE LEADERSHIP, AND THE NEED FOR A POWERFUL RANK-AND-FILE MOVEMENT IN THE TRADE UNIONS

In view of this, and of the coming jobs massacre over the next year and beyond, workers and trade unionists need to start preparing now in self-defense. The unions are currently led by a body of people that can be described as nothing other than a herd of pigs and donkeys. That must be changed, radically. Trade union activists need now to place these "leaders" under massive and unrestrained pressure to defend jobs unconditionally against the coming Mertlík-Zeman and imperialist scheme of "revitalisation" and "firebombing". Further than that—which is by no means sufficient however severe the pressure placed on the "leaders"—these misleaders need to be ousted from their positions and replaced with leaders from the ranks who are prepared to fight—to the bitter end, and to complete victory.

As a vital component, a powerful rank-and-file movement is needed in the unions. A movement which is self-organised, open to all—without discrimination as to sex, age or race—who seek to discuss openly, to organise, and to fight both the employers and the rotten "leadership". Such a movement needs to discuss a strategy of defense for both their individual workplace and entire branch of industry. Destruction of the bureaucratic structures and rules imposed on the new unions by the imperialist and EU/USA controlled International Labour Organisation (ILO) in the

1990-91 period is a primary task.

In substitution, the unions must be fully democratised by the rank-and-file so that the unions can be utilised as an unimmasculated weapon in the hands of workers. Along with this, the new, fighting leadership that is struggled for—as well as regards the current misleaders—must put in place rules allowing for all leaders who betray or backslide to be subject to automatic recall, and that all leaders receive no more than the average skilled wage—leaders who seek higher salaries than their members, and "extras", can but only have more interests in common with the employers than with their members they purport to represent. Any leader, or new candidate for a full-time union position, who rejects the principles of automatic recall for betrayal, and of a skilled workers wage—without "extras"—can in advance be seen as a traitor.

AN INITIAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION IN DEFENSE OF JOBS, WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS

In the coming and inevitable instance of plant closures and job losses from downsizing, and the claim of bankruptcy—the workers concerned must demand to see the capitalists' books! Factory committees need to be formed to oversee the inspections, and select whichever honest experts they see as necessary. Where the employers attempt to sabotage production prior to declaration of bankruptcy—or where it is happening in any case, such as at CKD—the factory committees need to fight for workers control to stop the criminal and slothful mismanagement, embezzlement and sabotage, which again including the use of any competent and honest specialists they see as necessary.

Where any announcements of closure, job losses, or imposition of wage cuts or short time are made by the crony capitalist owners, the "Mertlíkites" and imperialist vultures—the automatic response must be for immediate expropriation—under workers control—and without compensation for the ex-Stalinist now capitalist "owners" and plunderers, the shark "investment" funds, crony managed banks and their block shares, and foreign imperialist shareholders.

To end the scourge of mass unemployment, and to unite the employed and unemployed, a programme of useful public works must be elaborated. That means areas such as development of railways and public transport, a massive programme of flat building and repairs to end homelessness and waiting lists, repairs to and re-opening of closed hospitals, likewise for old peoples' homes—and the necessary staff to go with them—the training of thousands of new teachers to stop the rot in education in schools and universities, and the raising of salaries to levels acceptable to the now overworked and grossly underpaid teachers—thus why few young people wish to take up a career in teaching now—and that the schools be placed under combined control of teachers, students and parents—and the equivalent in the rotting universities.

When the capitalists, their politicians and sycophantic media machine say, inevitably and automatically, that there is no cash for such a programme—then the reply must be the implementation of massive, progressive taxation on the rich—including MNCs and imperialist firms who already enjoy and who are screaming for yet further "tax breaks".

If the capitalists engage in stimulating mass inflation—just as they did in the period during and after coupon privatisation to shrink the money value of the shares so to enable dirt cheap buying (by the 300+ robber "investment" funds) of ordinary citizen's coupons and to dramatically reduce the value of the hundreds of state-owned enterprises—then a sliding scale of wages must be instituted immediately—under workers control through the trade unions, factory committees and housewives groups (on housing estates especially). At the same time, this cannot prevent free right to take strike action to fight for better wages.

★ Organise the Fight! Deny the media, the rotten TU leadership, the different sections of the ruling class, and imperialism!

★ Accept not one job cut or pay reduction!

★ Employed and unemployed unite!

★ Open the capitalists books! Nationalise without compensation every enterprise announced for closure, under workers control!

★ Democratise the trade unions and build a fighting leadership!

★ Build anti-fascist anti-scab defense squads!

★ Mobilise on a Workers' Programme of Action!

★ Put CSSD and the CP in power, sack Zeman and Mertlík, put Spidla in the hot seat!—To these leaders and parties, we say: Break with the bosses!

★ But in the long run this shall not be enough: Build an internationalist revolutionary party and revolutionary movement to take the power and to smash the rotten capitalist system once and for all! — across the planet — "socialism in one country" and "peaceful coexistence with capitalism-imperialism" is a bankrupt utopia!

NOTES:

1. (Václav) Klaus. Leader of ODS (Civic Democratic Party), main party of the bourgeoisie since 1991, and main governmental party up to December 1997. Based entirely on the domestic crony capitalists and cronies in the state bureaucracy. Now derided by imperialism as completely corrupt crony machine (although given full support by them in the restoration of capitalism from 1991-1997). Klaus and ODS were brought down by a massive TU demo of 100,000 in December 1997, with the final push given by imperialism and the mass media in a big corruption scandal.

2. KDU. Christian Democratic Party. Receives 8-9% of votes. Main coalition forming party. Right wing, anti-worker, anti-woman, powerfully homophobic.

3. (Jan) Ruml. Leader of US (Freedom Union). Split from ODS after above mentioned corruption scandal. US is the attempt at formation of a liberal conservative party to represent the non-crony bourgeoisie and imperialism. Membership comprised almost entirely of 25-45 year-old "new middle class" of dynamic professionals and medium-sized businessmen. Received 8.5% of votes in the June 1998 elections.

4. US. See point 3.

5. (Miroslav) Sládek. Leader of fascist Republican Party. Lives in a somehow very cheaply acquired mansion in the countryside, with one-hectare of grounds surrounded by a 3-metre high security wall. Party received 8% of votes in 1996 elections, vote collapsed to 3.9% in the 1998 elections, no parliamentary representation as a result. Seeks to expel Romanies (gypsies) from the country (2% of the population). 30 Romanies murdered by fascist skinheads since 1992. But only two convictions despite overwhelming evidence (the 2 convictions only for "non-racist" manslaughter)

6. DEU. Non-fascist ultra-right parliamentary party. Received 2% of votes in 1998 elections, mainly from enraged small businessmen being slowly crushed by big business. Blames "communism" and "communists" for all faults and problems in the country (classifies just about all political parties as communist or quasi-communist, also likewise the EU).

7. ČKD. Huge engineering firm in Prague. Employed 30,000 workers up to 1989. Now down to 15,000 in four divisions. The locomotive division (3500 jobs) now facing complete closure, at the demand of Siemens of Germany and creditor banks. Has a collaboration contract with Siemens to produce the high-speed train for the Berlin-Prague-Vienna corridor. Siemens will take full possession of the contract if ČKD Locomotive closes. ČKD was the working class centre of the 1968 revolutionary uprising for political democracy and end to market reforms attempts, and subsequently centre of opposition to Brezhnev-Red Army invasion force. Rotten TU leadership, refuses to mobilise against the planned closure of the loco plant.

8. (Miroslav) Grégr. Minister of Trade and Industry (T&I). 71 years old, right-wing, pro-crony.

9. Mertlík. Minister of the Economy. 39 years old, right wing, completely pro-EU and pro-imperialist. Seeks to flatten ("firebomb") bankrupt domestically-owned big industrial enterprises (with consequent knock-on effect on their suppliers). Including suppliers, up to 400,000 jobs at stake over a 2-3 year period. All such big enterprises progressively bankrupted by their former Stalinist now capitalist owners, by means of systematic embezzlement and plunder.

10. (Richard) Falbr. Boss of main TU federation. Installed by imperialism in 1990-91. TU lawyer under former Stalinist regime. 100% pro-restorationist, and completely anti-strikes.

11. Špidla. Minister of Labour and Social Affairs. Acts as left-wing cover for the right-wing ČSSD minority govt. and its incessant attacks on the working class and budget cuts.

12. Siemens. See point 7.

13. (Josef) Tošovský. Governor of the Czech National Bank (ČNB). Quickly installed as (6-month) caretaker prime minister after Klaus' downfall. Immediately embarked on swinging deflationary programme. Unemployment began to rocket three months into the programme. Adored by MNCs in the CR, also the EU and imperialism generally. Still very much an influential figure.

14. Grebeníček. Leader of the CP (KSČM). Party strongly nationalist and xenophobic, and powerful supporter of Miloševič regime. Very few workers policies. Huge vote amongst pensioners, mainly on the basis of crack-down on crime policies, and the like. Enjoying steady rise in popularity as a result of continued attacks and betrayals of the ČSSD govt. (steady 10-11% vote up to 1998, now a steady 15% in the polls). Mobilised no workers action since 1989.

WHAT CHANCE "CLEAN HANDS"?

The ČSSD (social democrats) minority govt. led by Miloš Zeman (elected June '98) promised as a central part of its election programme to clean up the mass of state corruption that continued over from the former Stalinist regime. The only difference with the corruption of the pre-89 period is that "zeros" have since been added to the bribes. Imperialism, for its own reasons, wants the corruption to be "streamlined" (i.e. concentrated into fewer hands), while the mass of society would like to see it eradicated, entirely. The article below, from issue No. 2 of our December '98 journal, examines Zeman's "clean hands" policy.

Whatever happened to Zeman's "clean hands policy"? As everyone expected, from the very beginning it hasn't been much more than a paper tiger. At every step, state officials, company managers of big enterprises and the like are blocking his "endeavours." But why are the blockages, the underlying sources and history of the problem not being discussed?

The impression being created is that the hydra is a mixture of the continuation of "communist thinking" and the "bad character" of the Czech population. But if "bad character" is the case, then more widely it means around 400-million people of Eastern and Central Europe have an historical and essentially incurable problem of "bad character". Nonsense.

The real purpose of the smoke screen, however, is merely to obscure the real sources and to semi-legitimise the corrupters and their recipients at the top, from where it is all generated and maintained in the first place. So, what's the real source.

WHO ARE THE CORRUPTERS AND WHERE EXACTLY DO THEY COME FROM?

As the statistic says, 70% + of top management and directors are former enterprise managers, past members of the State Planning Commission, state export firms and so on. More or less, this also includes top officials in ministries and state institutions. These are the selfsame people who in the past made half or more of their "living" from creating, maintaining and seeking the "means of corruption", and who now also seek to own and control the means of production. Few of these people lost the positions they held, notwithstanding some reshuffling and displacements here and there for cosmetic purposes. They are the new "capitalist class" and its administrators, and whose outlook has had to be reshaped accordingly. As Kočárník* said in 1994 (when quoting from the British Economist magazine) — "The Czech government of Václav Klaus is faced with a Leninist task: To create a bourgeoisie." They certainly have the class now, but as yet have been unable to fully educate the "proper" culture into them.

THE ROLE OF IMPERIALISM

When the uprisings came in 1989-90 it was essential for imperialism to ensure that workers didn't take up their own demands, to overthrow the regime and to strike out to take the power themselves, this time in their own name, i.e to go far beyond the reformist measures of the 1968 type and mere "Dubčekism". To do so, imperialism had to canalise and quell the situation fast, which meant accommodating the Stalinist apparatus as fast as possible. This, as we know, they managed remarkably well.

Required, though, was to gather the most ardent capitalist restorationists, that is, among enterprise managers, State planners, central state bureaucrats and so on. The leading elements of this huge coterie—well prepared and encouraged by Gorbachevism and Perestroika for 4-5 years—were not slow in coming forward. However, a fear of leading bureaucrats was one of possible "show trials" for crimes against humanity. All such fears were assuaged, however, imperialism assuring them of no such eventuality.

This as we know is precisely what happened in the Philippines after "people's power", in Chile with Pinoche and friends after 1980 or so, in South Africa, and now Indonesia. At all costs the oppressed populations must not be allowed their justice. The old regime must be transformed into the "new regime", for workers and the people to be subordinated to it, that they get accustomed to the fact, and to feel that it is hopeless to expect an end to political abuse and oppression. In other words, "people's power" of any kind must be seen as futile, in particular revolutionary overthrows of rotten regimes.

The need of imperialism to create a new capitalist class could only be achieved by utilising and enrolling in the process the only human material available to them—personnel from the existing apparatus, all of whom for decades had attempted to introduce market mechanisms into the economy, i.e. a variety of forms of basic economic competition (freedom of management to choose suppliers, which workers to hire, removal of the right to work, reduction of subsidies to rents, food and utility prices, etc.).

It was these attempts at "reforms", from the mid-50s in East Germany and Hungary right through to Solidarnosc and beyond, that just about in every instance stimulated reactions to the various regimes from workers. In each instance they meant for workers speed-up, job insecurity, price rises and so on. But despite the mass revolts, still the Stalinist bureaucracy persevered in their attempts. Thus, in the end, the throwing up of Gorbachev and Gorbachevism (of whom Thatcher said: "This is a man I can do business with").

It was this array of would-be "reformers" that imperialism needed to enlist in their vital drive to restore capitalism.

However, their entire history, culture and way of life was one of comprehensive corruption, based on cliques and groupings that, as they didn't own the means of production and thus the ability to buy, sell, and pass them on to their children, instead sought the "means of corruption". Now, all saw the main chance and took up the offer and assurances of imperialism.

ALL-OUT RESTORATION DRIVE — AND NO CHANCE TO THE WORKERS

Things, though, had to be done fast; the workers had to be mesmerised into believing in the vaunted capitalist paradise, their limited independent leadership had to be moralised and demoralised, and then at least half co-opted, and for the uprisings to be quickly demobilised (thus, as we remember, why all the street gatherings and speeches came to a sudden and virtual end by around mid-February 1990). We can also recall that the state violence against the uprisings hardly compared with 1956, 1968, or Solidarnosc of 1980-81. The regimes just threw in the towel and went all out for restoration—within just 3-4 weeks!

But to be co-opted the apparatus personnel had to be allowed to maintain their access to the means of corruption, as at best it would be several years before any tangible financial benefits might begin to work through, and then only for a small number of big "winners". Few members of company management or state officials etc. could be able to expect much for quite some time ahead, if anything at all.

Parliaments and parliamentary elections were rapidly established and organised before anyone had even time to catch their breath. Not long after, the privatisation programmes and restitutions schemes were drawn up and implemented, also equally rapidly—and shoddily (the idea was never mind any regulatory legislation, just get the whole lot launched!). All had to be done faster than fast. The necessary impulse being to make it "worthwhile" for the state bureaucrats, enterprise managers and the rest. Inevitably, acceptability and viability required expanding the old corruption machine and to add zeros on to anything that went on before. The method of the run-away express train depended, no less, on making the restoration process seem a fait accompli—before the working class might put a halt to it.

In parallel, imperialism was looking for rich pickings—cheaply. The essential experience here is no different than all privatisation schemes throughout the world when they became a mass phenomenon from the early 80s onwards—whether in Britain with Thatcher, or Latin America, throughout the EU countries, or Asia. Over 9000 major privatisation projects have been prepared and executed in that period of 15 years or so. In each, state production property and services worth literally $100s' of billions have been sold off. All for a song. The biggest discount sales have been witnessed in the ex-Stalinist countries. The sale of the century, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), was the Russian oil and gas fields being sold off for.....1000th of their real value!

MASS PRIVATISATION = MASS CORRUPTION

Naturally, mass privatisation can only be accompanied by mass corruption. Privatisation on the basis of pure "merit" of submitted plans is a fairy-tale. To facilitate their aims (and for parallel purposes) all multinational companies have what is known in the business world as "slush funds". These are costed into annual expenditures and can amount to 5% of total outlays—bribery of politicians, state bureaucrats, company management, judges etc. The tendency of the centralisation of capital and monopolisation could hardly proceed otherwise.

In the CR, a classic example is the "breweries for banks scandals" where a clear and telling statistic is that the top 6 breweries—fully or partly foreign owned—now command 72% of beer sales, and the small breweries a mere 9%; thus, it can't be long before big price increases arrive, which is half the aim of the monopolisation. Mass corruption has been the case with 99.9% of all these brewery privatisations. The bureaucrats and brewery mangers involved became positively intoxicated on liquid assets of the undeclared ready cash variety. But for some reason we heard no anti-corruption complaints from British, Dutch or Japanese firms when they siphoned off the breweries from state ownership. Strange.

Imperialism has used these "slush funds" to the limit in picking up for a song many of the juiciest bits of state property in the ex-Stalinist countries—car factories, tobacco, food processing, state dairies, telecoms, banks, chocolate manufactures....

Obviously, there is no other way it can be done. However, a multi-headed corruption monster was quickly created, one in fact that has gone beyond state bureaucrats, enterprise managers, and the hundreds of rapidly created "investment funds" of the Kožený* type. Judges, tax and health inspectors etc. had to follow. And the new capitalist political parties.

Of necessity, these parties were in fact top of the list. None had the initial and necessary "start-up finance", thus that the main among them, i.e those that imperialism had the greatest confidence in, soon received large heaps of undeclared "donations". ODS* for example, as revealed in 1993, somehow found themselves as lucky recipients of no less than $1.3 million through a circuit of West European bank accounts (like just about all the corruption scandals, that issue has been conveniently buried by the "investigation teams" and media—will Zeman inspect ODS books, i.e. the books of his "pact" partners?). The same has been the case throughout all the ex-Stalinist countries. It is interesting now, though, that imperialism has rejected poor old Klaus and have switched interest to Zeman and his "clean hands." Ever since the election, imperialist publications have been full of diatribes about captain Klaus and his "crony capitalism"; he's served his purpose and has to be dumped. How the mighty are fallen.

IMPERIALISM "THE VICTIM" CHANGES ITS TUNE

But now imperialism is whining about the corruption machine. It's all gone too far for them. In their own countries they have "rules of the game" for corruption which, despite episodic "abuses", capitalists there more or less abide by. But here there exist hardly any "rules of the game"; it's "every man and clique for theirself." But the new capitalists and capitalist bureaucrats born of the old Stalinist apparatuses can hardly be expected to change their spots, not when imperialism has all those bulging brown envelopes on hand (or when political parties are prepared to give "preferential consideration" to local tennis stars & Co. willing to "donate" $220,000 to party funds in exchange for quarter-price purchase of steel companies).

At all times, however, imperialism ensures its fundamental past and present role is kept out of the picture. Quite the reverse. They—through combination of both the imperialist and local media—parade themselves as "victims" "forced to submit" to the so-called still existing "semi-communist regimes". Indeed, it is vital for imperialism, local capitalism, capitalists and bourgeois politicians to obscure and veil the central role played by imperialism in the systematised corruption and perfidy. For the public to be at least half-aware of this crucial reality would hardly be a good advertisement for imperialism and its "moral, democratic capitalism".

Vital in the hoodwinking is to blame the local populations in general, as if it is ordinary people themselves that of their own accord are at least half responsible. In the process the real starting point and sustainers of the corruption, and their role, are at least half-obscured— thus legitimised and protected. As for the "clean-ups", the whole thing has to be presented as a Gordian knot that the "honest" politicians and imperialism are doing their best to unravel.

FAT CAT SALARIES FOR OFFICIALS — THE ONLY "SOLUTION"

However, if viewed in capitalist terms, the fundamental solution can only lie in massive salary increases for state officials, judges, top police officers, tax officials, and even such likes as university rectors and professors who for $3-6000 are more than prepared to hand over university entry exam questions to the sons and daughters of those willing to fork out the ready cash.

But what kind of salaries would be required? Well, a top ministerial official in say, France, receives around $8000 a month, a university rector in Germany the same or more, a top tax inspector in Britain around $6000! No chance in Poland, the CR, or Russia! A top civil servant here, for example, receives a pathetic $1000-1500. For the state to afford such salaries, massive growth of GDP would be required.

Current forecasts—the most optimistic ones—are that sustained GDP growth of at least 5% a year (every year) for.....25 years would be required to bring, e.g., the CR up to the level of Ireland! (the 3rd poorest EU country).

DO AS WE SAY, NOT AS WE DO

Meanwhile, imperialism is complaining like hell about the corruption syndrome and are applying increasing pressure on local politicians to eradicate it (except, that is, when one or other multinational decides to toss some politicians and bureaucrats $250,000 or so to sell off to them this or that telecom, chemical plant....). As well as pumping out their hypocritical propaganda about the "inherent" corrupt nature of the local populations and the "still existing communist practices" in order to shame and demoralise the local populations and to humble them before the "democratic" Western capitalists (whose only wish is to benefit humanity of course), this very same ideology is pumped out in their own countries for purposes to show workers and the publics there "how hard" they are trying to modernise and "help" the "backward" people and cultures of the ex-Stalinist countries.

This, however, is the same ideology they pump out about the "assistance" they give to dependent or semi-colonial countries like Indonesia, Brazil, India, Mexico, or Kenya, all of which are systematically corrupted and superexploited.

A main tool or weapon they are using to achieve their ends and to force the local bourgeois politicians to clean up the problem is to threaten them with the EU, WTO, NATO etc. With the EU and NATO, for example, the stick they use is that non-compliance with the multinationals' demands will mean refusal of entry to the "club", or prolonged delay. With the WTO., e.g., it is the threat of sanctions. Just like the semi-colonies, the ex-Stalinist countries—and their increasingly impoverished and hard-pressed populations—are all but helpless before these imperialist institutions. And now that imperialism has succeeded in its essential task of capitalist restoration, there is less and less need for them to be so tactical and "lenient" towards local populations as in the first few years of the rapid restoration process. Thus, their economic penetration, political grip, and hypocritical diatribes about corruption webs, are set to increase at an ever greater rate.

For us here, all we can say is that as long as capitalism is here, for as long as it further entrenches itself, for as long as the multinationals and big banks continue to penetrate and gain ever greater political and economic control, and as long as the imperialist institutions do their bidding for them, then the corruption syndrome is here to stay and at best can only be modified.

ZEMAN! YOU KNOW THE "INVESTIGATION" IS A MEANINGLESS FARCE — "COME CLEAN" TO THE PUBLIC!

Instead of Zeman's farce, we need a real investigation body, composed of representative organisations of the ultimate victims—community groups, trade unions, tenants associations, consumer groups, youth and student organisations. All existing corruption findings must be made freely accessible to it with the right to demand investigation into all suspect areas and persons—and to publish the revelations. It must have the power to demand court trials and full enforcement of the law. Guilty parties should have their personal assets confiscated—especially where privatisation is concerned, with the property taken back into state ownership, but under workers control, part of which as the only means of preventing further corruption.

NOTES:

** Kočárník, right-wing Minister of the Economy up till 1995*

*** Viktor Kožený, establisher of the huge Harvard Investment Fund. Quickly vanished to the Bahamas in 1994.....with millions of dollars of investors' cash (almost all small investors). The mass media parade him as half villain, half role model*

*** ODS, right-wing Civic Democratic Party (main bourgeois party), led by Václav Klaus, prime minister 1990-97. ODS signed a June '98 pact with the minority social democratic government to abstain on any no-confidence vote, and in exchange for support of a number of ODS policies*

BUILD A FIGHTING, DEMOCRATIC UNION!

We reprint here an SOP leaflet given to the Jan. '99 teachers' pre-conference in Prague. The leaflet mentions a strike of school teachers in "Vrapice", part of a medium-sized town near Prague called Kladno. The teachers were condemned by not just the media and the ČSSD social democratic government, but also CP MPs and all TU leaders. The school is for disabled and special needs children. The director was sacked on trumped up charges, the real purpose of which was to eliminate opposition to the school's amalgamation and to save money on subsequent severance pay of the director. *Note: the education minister shares the same name as the ČSSD prime minister, Zeman. If readers in Western Europe wish to get in touch with rank-and-file teachers in the CR, please make initial contact via the e-mail address: pv.sop@post.cz

Today's conference should be one where union members can have a real discussion to create effective union policy, to move towards creating a fighting leadership, to democratise the union, and to put the rank-and-file in control. But instead, that won't be the case; the union leadership have made sure of that. However, that is what must be fought for between now and the full conference. The chronic situation with class sizes, abysmal pay, the real prospect of seriously falling education standards, and continued government attacks on schools demands these changes in the union.

Currently the union is at best semi-functioning. Many branches only nominally exist, elections for leaders take place with little or no knowledge among the members on who they are voting for, the ranks have hardly any say in formulation of union and education policies, and the full-time leadership is a law onto itself.

WORSENING SITUATION IN THE SCHOOLS— THE NEW "EDUCATION" POLICY

Meanwhile, the situation in schools deteriorates year by year, if not term by term. Teachers' pay is now at an all time low, with no prospect of real improvement. The new "education" policy on pay could hardly be worse— only promises of minor increases if teachers gain more qualifications. The starting pay for new teachers is so low now that few school students want to take up a career in teaching. Thus, the promise of pay increments for more qualifications is hardly inspiring for young people to decide on a career in teaching— not to mention that nobody knows if the budget will actually be able to afford the increments in 4-5 years time!

That's the "positive" side of the new policy. The remainder of the policy, i.e. its central content, puts the blame on declining education standards fully on teachers. However, as teachers well know (as well as a sizeable portion of the less than well informed public) constant cuts and bad organisation from the central and local state can do nothing but worsen the ever deteriorating situation, and not least do nothing but increase workloads on teachers and lower the already bad morale. Rather, the whole blame lies squarely with the government and the education authorities, who neither know how to manage the budget nor education itself.

"INDEPENDENT" SCHOOLS, AMALGAMATIONS, AND THE BUDGET SIPHON

A clear case is that of many schools having opted out of local government control to become "independent". In almost all cases this has been done in order to get full access to their official budget allocation which, in fact, local authorities were (and are) dipping into an rerouting to completely different areas of spending. And both the past governments and now Zeman's know and knew all about this de facto misappropriation— but say nothing to the public. But nor either does the union leadership do much to inform the public (or school employees either). In any case, the opting out has not helped the situation at all, and in fact many schools that have opted out have sought returning to local authority control.

As well as real cuts in pay, a major means of saving cash over the past couple of years has been school amalgamations and increases in class sizes. In a large number of cases this has also meant the sacking of school directors. As an extra money saver, many of the directors have been sacked on trumped up charges of malpractice. Thus, millions of crowns have been saved on severance pay and pension benefits. No less than 500 schools and school directors have been affected in this way so far.

ZEMAN SACKS STRIKING TEACHERS— AND GETS FULL SUPPORT FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY!

The most scandalous case was the recent Vrapice strike where teachers went on strike in solidarity with the director—paní Topinková—who was summarily sacked by the education authority in September— and replaced with a yes man. Even more scandalously, 17 of the strikers were sacked! which was completely backed by the Education Minister, Zeman. Moreover, CP MPs gave their support to the treachery (not to mention all the bosses' parties). If that was not enough, the union boss stuck the boot in by giving his full support to the Minister, and condemned the strikers while he was at it! Meanwhile, the "objective" media pumped out nothing but negative and falsified reportage on the strike. The 17 are still out of a job with no prospects of employment in teaching. This is the kind of "leadership" the union is stuck with at present. The warning is clear: if you take strike action in defence of sacked colleagues, for pay increases or defence of your school, the authorities and the Ministry have a big stick ready—with no support whatsoever to union members from the union hierarchy.

This treachery from the union bosses should be met with a resounding reply from the Conference today: Sack the union boss! New elections for general secretary! Demand protest strike action in support of the 17 and full reinstatement. Likewise, the "Education" Minister should go, and be replaced with a minister under a public mandate to defend education and teachers' living standards.

STILL MORE CYNICISM AHEAD

As well as the drive to reduce the education budget to save government money and to cut taxes (mostly for the rich of course), a perhaps more cynical reason for some of the downgrading of education is that the government sees no need for ensuring all-round education for all children. Mass unemployment (over 7% and set to reach 12% by year's end) means it is "pointless" to provide proper education for all. As well, the economy is being increasingly occupied by low and zero skilled jobs, where there is no necessity for the workers concerned to have more than rudimentary education (this is a growing phenomenon right across Europe).

As part of this, plans are afoot to make more schools' curricula purely vocationally oriented. Employers associations, chambers of commerce and key local companies are participating in the plan and are modelling it accordingly to suit their particular interests. This too is beginning to become a pan-European reality.

ILLITERACY ON THE INCREASE RIGHT ACROSS EUROPE

Also part of the pan-European reality is generally declining education standards, especially for the children of poorer families and in economically depressed areas. Literacy rates have been declining everywhere for well over a decade now, for example, 3-million adult Germans are now illiterate, 20% of the French population are either completely illiterate or seriously subliterate, with similar figures in numerous other Western countries. In addition, truancy rates are at an all time high, with the rates set to go on rising, especially as the conditions and sources behind it are becoming worse by the year.

The problem, however, reaches right up to university level, where lecturers and professors now state there is a massive phenomenon of what

they call "paragrammar" among large sections of students, i.e. such students are unable to write with correct grammar and in a standard idiom. That problem has now begun to be noticed in Czech universities. If this isn't enough, governments throughout the European Union are pooling their "knowledge" on how to cut education budgets, how to create and extend two-tier education (i.e. real education for the better off, but vocational education for millions of others), and to bring employers into direct control of selected schools. Undoubtedly, it is these same trends that we face here, with no (official) alternative on the horizon.

Ultimately, this situation is due to become more chronic here as the economy, after joining the EU, will never rise even to the level of the poorest EU countries (Ireland, Spain, Greece, Portugal), i.e. quite literally we are set to become a semi-colonial country based to a great extent on cheap labour, low- and medium-tech industries, foreign assembly plants, and massive profit repatriation by European, US, and Japanese multinational companies, paying wage rates at 1/6-1/10th the rates of Western Europe (but which in return will also exert downward wage pressures in Western Europe).

OUR ALTERNATIVE

As concerns the union, the only means of stopping the rot is to transform the union into a fighting union. The union must be democratised and the rotten leadership replaced with leaders who will actually fully inform and fight resolutely for the members, and to whom they must be fully accountable. The union structure and rules are extremely undemocratic. That was the cynical act agreed and carried out in 1990-91 by and between the former Stalinist bureaucrats (now capitalists), Western governments and the big employers they represent.

The objective was to hamstring workers by creating bureaucratic unions, thus to make struggle against the employers and the state a truly frustrating and uphill task (all the lessons and practice the bosses and the state had gained in the previous 10 years in Western Europe in this goal were implemented to the full, all in one go). That must be changed— radically.

Trade unionists in Western Europe are themselves more and more beginning to organise and fight on this critical issue. So must trade unionists here. The teachers and students in France and Greece, for example, have been clear examples of this over the past year or so. Being fought for is internally democratic unions under the control of the members, and a fighting leadership that doesn't capitulate to the capitalists and the state.

Central issues with the leadership need to be changing union rules so that all leaders are open to automatic recall where they betray or are just plain incompetent, and that no term of office is longer than two years. For example, rule changes need to be made so that any turncoat leader must face re-election if 20% of members demand it. Furthermore, no leader must receive a salary higher than the average skilled wage— no special existence! A three-month campaign period— through every region— must precede all elections for full-time positions so that members know exactly who they are voting for and what policies the candidates stand on.

Maximum provision must be made for branch resolutions to be produced and for them not to get lost in a bureaucratic mill. The present state of half or more union branches officially existing but not operating must be changed. A big campaign must be mounted to bring life into them, all members should be able to attend, and with annual elections for branch officials.

Union policy must be created by the members, with maximum literature sent to all branches and fully distributed. A clear and open discussion, consultation and decision-making period must be established, which must be at least three months. Special regional and national policy conferences should ensue. Likewise so with all rule changes— no semi-secret changes brought in by the apparatus behind the backs of members! Other changes of the type will also be needed.

To bring this about, a powerful rank-and-file movement needs to be built, i.e. where the ranks can meet in independent forums to freely discuss rule changes, select leaders from the forums as candidates, to discuss and organise industrial action—including suddenly needed solidarity action in cases like Vrapice—and to formulate education policies and pay claims. As well, for the furtherance of effective strike action a big strike fund must be built up in the union. That critical issue needs also to be discussed.

Such a rank-and-file movement can operate both in its own right and also take its policies, decisions etc. into the heart of the union. Only in this way can the union be made a real union of the members and for them to have the means to fight effectively against the education authorities and the government.

These are the issues that will be discussed at Today's meeting, all are welcome to attend— come to put your view and hear what everyone else has to say!

★ Democratise the union!

★ For an accountable and fighting leadership!

★ Build a rank-and-file movement in the union!

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continuation from page 16

To enhance this process revolutionaries must openly polemicise against centrists and their policies but while at the same time engaging in discussions and practical collaboration in a comradely way with those leftward moving centrists who are prepared to rethink their policies and ideas.

In line with these organisations constituting an obstacle before the working class, and of the need to build a revolutionary International, required is that as far as is practically possible these organisations be reduced to inconsequential components of the workers movement.

On the part of an international revolutionary nucleus, achievement of this revolutionary task requires and essentially two-pronged strategy. The first side is to progressively act upon these organisations in the course of the class struggle so as to intensify their contradictions thus that the longer term process of their ongoing disintegration is both accelerated and shortened. On the second side there is the need to work onand assist the genuine revolutionary fighters in these organisations to see the need, ultimately, to break from their bankrupt organisations. This latter will involve gaining one by one recruits from these organisations and also, as time goes on, whole components engaged in serious and meaningful factional struggles. In such way the effective elimination of these organisations will proceed in tandem with the preservation of and incorporation of these respective revolutionary fighters into the International revolutionary nucleus.

For all these reasons the building of an authentic revolutionary International is the foremost urgent task of the present period. We are revolutionary internationalists who do not delay the formation of a democratic-centralist, international communist organisation to a later day or "better time", whereof on the basis of economistic and national-centred arguments (like the Cliffites and the French LO who say one must "first" have deep roots in the working class, better pre-conditions etc., but while in reality they run a bureaucratically controlled hidden "International").

Rather, we seek to build an international democratic-centralist tendency in the here and now on the basis of an agreed programme and methods of practical work. The SOP and LRCI will therefore do all possible to clarify our few remaining differences and to clear the path for the fusing of our forces. This is of particular urgency given the opening of a new phase in world politics in the recent past where the crisis and instability of capitalism internationally and the class struggle have been rising — despite episodic lows and lulls as in the preceding period in Europe — and which poses favourable conditions for revolutionary struggle.

The SOP and LRCI will focus their resources on discussing and overcoming our remaining differences and open questions. These remaining differences are the strategy for a rank-and-file movement and the workers party tactic. Furthermore, discussions will be undertaken on the specific character of the various Cliffite organisations (centrist, ultraleft), such as in the Czech Republic.

Questions which are open and that should be discussed are the transition process in Eastern Europe from degenerated workers states to capitalist where the experience of SOP comrades in the Czech Republic could be incorporated into the methodological work of the LRCI and lead to a synthesis of view (while we both agree about the already capitalist character of the Czech Republic and other Visegrad countries, the class nature of Russia and the precise character of the programme today needs further discussions, i.e. as to social or political revolution, or combination of both). Also, the transformation of Eastern European states into degenerated workers states by Stalinist forces in the late 1940s will be discussed.

To overcome and clarify these questions the SOP and LRCI will undertake an intense discussion and collaboration process over the coming six months (the organisational details of this process shall be clarified in a special tasks resolution). In summer 1999 a balance sheet will be drawn up and it is hoped that fusion will be the result. The SOP and the LRCI will publish this declaration in their press in order to present the public and the workers movement with our perspective for the building of a revolutionary Trotskyist International.

WHAT IS THE ANTI-DRUG LAW AND HOW TO FIGHT IT!

Reprinted here is part of our current pamphlet on the government's recently enacted "anti-drugs" law. The law bans the possession of anything more than "a small quantity" of illegal narcotics. The "small" quantity is not specified, therefore the police have complete discretion to use the law to stop any youth they wish to, whenever they like, to search them and to verbally abuse them—if they react they can be beaten up and taken to the police station, for 48 hours without a lawyer, and there is no requirement to charge them with any offence. The law (proposed by the social democrats) was given eventual full support by would-be liberal President Havel (who is now the main central European war-horse for NATO in the Balkans).

There are a range of penalties for contravention of the law, from small fines along to imprisonment. Illegal narcotics includes cannabis, amphetamines, LSD, heroine, cocaine, and others.

A demo was "organised" in October on legalisation of cannabis and a second, January, against the new law. The first was organised by right-wing liberals and various anarchist organisations. The first was attended by 2500 youth, and the second about 600. The latter was organised by the Czech affiliate of the Cliffite International Socialists. Neither demo intended to set up an organised campaign. In fact, in each case the organisers were powerfully opposed to any organised campaigns. Total opposition to the organising of any and whatever kind of campaign—on any issue— has in fact been a typical syndrome among the liberals, anarchists, and centrists ever since 1990 or so.

The essential source behind this extreme antipathy is the legacy of the Stalinist period of "herding" people together in any way. In tandem, both the restorationist Stalinists and now capitalist class, and imperialism have super-utilised and manipulated this sentiment (concentrated in the middle class) to systematically oppose and calumny any kind of organised activity in politics among the general public, that is, wherever there is any kind of direct or indirect anti-capitalist content. This includes not just overtly left-wing activity, but also the women's movement (hysterical condemnation), anti-racism (despite systematic murder of Romanies by fascists), and even ecology movements, who in fact are often slandered as "terrorists"! by not just the media and the like, but even social democratic ministers (such as Jan Kavan, Minister of Foreign Affairs).

Unfortunately, all sections and components of the left have substantially or even thoroughly capitulated to this moralisation; indeed, they even reproduce the moralisation in "left" form— many in the extreme. The anarchists and Cliffites have time and again shown themselves to be the worst offenders in this reactionary pursuit. Therefore the extreme difficulty had in building any kind of organised movement among youth, trade unionists, the unemployed, women, and so on.

To seriously and genuinely combat the anti-drugs law, the SOP called for a permanently organised campaign. Despite constant condemnation of the proposal from the above organisations and forces, the SOP finally managed to succeed in founding this much needed campaign. This was managed after eventually succeeding in organising a demo and march of 400-500 youth on April 10th (condemned by the anarchists, by production of an overtly anti-communist, anti-Trotskyist speech—from the platform! which the SOP invited them to speak on).

Nevertheless, the week later, an official campaign was launched by 25 youth activists, on a united front basis involving the SOP itself, "REVO"(an independent revolutionary youth movement supported by the SOP), the Czech CWI organisation, and the youth section of the CP (Komsomol). Its first conference is to be held in the near future, including decision on policies and a constitution, and also the necessary means of boosting the campaign nationally.

The campaign has also managed to organise a videoed debate with left-wing youth, the Prague leadership and members of Komsomol, and members of the CP leadership and some of its MPs (unfortunately almost all of whom give powerful support to the law).

Due to lack of space we are unable to print here the Action Programme presented to the youth at the first demo. However, the pamphlet's analysis of the drugs law and its real purpose, what type of campaign would be needed, and what reactionary pressures it would come up against are reprinted here. The campaign is keen to come into contact with similar campaigns in Western Europe. Thus, all respective activists in such campaigns would be welcomed to contact the campaign in the CR (e-mail: pv.sop@post.cz).

WHAT IS THE DRUGS LAW REALLY ABOUT?

A lot of people ask: Why did the politicians design and enact this law? It can't stop the youth taking drugs, that's impossible. It will have no effect on the drug barons, especially when they ensure their existence by mass bribery of police, and even politicians. The police make one or two big raids on the traffickers, mostly the small and medium size ones, to make it "look like" they're doing something, but do nothing meaningful to stop the thing at the top and at the heart. In any case, there aren't enough police to stop and search every likely teenage "suspect" 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.

In the meantime, have the police run out of things to do? Are there no burglars to catch these days? Have the organised gangs of car thieves all gone away? No rapists on the streets at night any more? Have the multi-million-dollar collective of enterprise embezzlers ("tunnelers"), corrupt "investment funds", company managers and politicians stopped operating? The authorities say they want to protect the youth against "vice", but meanwhile the Czech Republic is now the centre of the European paedophilia "trade"—run by gangsters who bribe the police (and some politicians and state officials) as the only way of staying in operation, a "trade" which in fact is getting bigger all the time.

Obviously, the "law" is hypocritical nonsense. What we see instead of crime "prevention" is constant, arbitrary harassment of the youth by the police—stop and search, wilful brutality, detention in police cells. Thus, the "law" is not about stopping the drugs trade and drugs use: it is about repressing the youth, and nothing else.

THE DRUGS LAW — ONLY HERE BECAUSE OF "SUBJECTIVE" HATRED OF THE YOUTH?

But why do the authorities and the state want to harass the youth? Why the "vendetta"? Some like to give subjective reasons for it, i.e. "subjective" conservatism in society against punks and young people with funny clothes and haircuts, or just because the police "enjoy" harassing the youth. But skinheads have funny haircuts and clothes as well, and the police do nothing about them, in fact they protect them.

This subjectivism certainly exists, but it isn't the source of the law. Rather, the "subjectivism" is a symptom.

MORE HARASSMENT AND "CRIMINALISATION" OF THE YOUTH ALL ACROSS EUROPE

All across Europe we see more and more laws being enacted that one way or another permit the police to harass the youth. But to achieve it, to legitimise it, they first need to criminalise the youth. If you criminalise the youth, you make them the "enemy of society". And what could be a better way, a better start than a drugs law? It's perfect.

But what are the youth doing across Europe to "deserve" this classification and treatment? More and more over the past few years we have seen the youth at the centre of mass demos and protests on all kinds of issues—against state repression, against fascists, against unemployment, against low pay, against the progressive rot and even active destruction of education, against repression of lesbians and gays, for free birth control and for free abortion on demand, mass action against international institutions like the IMF or the reactionary European Union and its anti-youth, anti-working class, anti-foreigner policies of social cuts, enforcement of low pay, police militarisation, and anti-immigration laws.

The rage of the youth has even penetrated into the schools, the biggest manifestation of which being the 500,000-strong school student's strike in France in October (school strikes are beginning to take place all across Europe now).

THE YOUTH — THE VANGUARD IN THE STRUGGLE

Not least, in every big demo and mass strike of workers and trade unionists, it is the youth who are at the forefront, who are the most determined and hostile to the capitalists and their state machine.

The capitalists and their state therefore have the need to repress those youth; for which laws are needed, laws that criminalise the youth and legitimise the repression.

Moreover, the strategy includes conditioning society to accept repression of "deviants", "destabilising elements", "chaos creators". Each repressive law as it is accepted or semi-accepted by substantial sections of society encourages the state to enact yet more repressive laws. Thus, the anti-youth anti-drugs laws must be seen in this light, as a key component in the state's need and strategy to expand its repressive powers more generally .

RISING OPPOSITION TO THE CAPITALIST AND IMPERIALIST MACHINE, NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY

Nationally and internationally the capitalists and their state are well aware that the situation will get worse, not better. What they see all around is revolutionary uprisings in Indonesia (led by students and youth), armed resistance in Chiapas (led mostly by young people), general strikes in Denmark, mass strikes in Greece, USA and South Korea, 500,000 striking school students in France, mass demos in the Czech Republic that bring down right-wing governments.

That it is the permanent scene now. All against mass unemployment, low pay, anti-trade union laws, against fascist gangs who murder blacks, Romanies, and immigrants, budget cuts, hospital closures, pension cuts, against imperialist super-exploitation in the third world (semi-colonial countries), military intervention and imperialist blockades that kill 1.5 million people through need of basic food and medicine (Iraq). And in all of them the it is the youth who are in the lead.

NO-HOPE FUTURE

Also meanwhile, not a single capitalist economist presents any bright futures any more. They finally gave up on that after the SE Asian economic collapse a year ago. There are now no more "dynamic" economic models for us all "to follow"—first Japan (early 1980s), then South Korea (late 80s to mid-90s), then the SE Asian "tigers" like Indonesia and Thailand. But they've all become stagnant or have even fallen like a house of cards.

The only perspective now from the politicians and economists is more belt-tightening, more unemployment, more low pay, more budget cuts, more destruction of education — and political and economic "discipline", national economic "defence" and "competition" against "competing" countries.....and crackdowns on the youth.

THE YOUTH MUST DEFEND THEMSELVES! THE NEED FOR A SERIOUS CAMPAIGN TO SMASH THE ANTI-DRUGS LAW

The state has been able to succeed in introducing all these kinds of laws because no organised opposition exists. Even opinion polls now show the majority of people to be opposed to these kinds of anti-democratic laws, and increasingly that a majority of people have no belief in the police being a publicly accountable institution. But they have had no means to exercise their opposition. Obviously then, enough hostility exists—especially among the youth—to get a get a real campaign going, a campaign that seriously fights the state and denies it any legitimacy to implement and enforce this repressive law against the youth. The "law" must be organised against, fought, and scrapped. That is now the task.

ANY SERIOUS CAMPAIGN WILL MEET WITH STRONG OPPOSITION

However, any serious campaign that is started will inevitably come up against all kinds of opposition. That opposition will be highly varied, including "liberal humanitarian sympathisers" but who oppose serious action, direct hostility from the parties of the right, tactical sympathy from (some) social democratic and "communist" politicians but accompanied by moralistic condemnation of serious action, tame human rights committees formed by the government (full of unelected appointees certain not to cause the state a problem) who will occasionally whinge about a human rights infringement but who are guaranteed not to do anything serious—in practice they will act just as a "democratic" safety valve that, in the end, dissipates social and political opposition and thus will help strengthen the law, not abolish it.

Further to the left—much further—will be organisations that condemn propagandistically the law and the cops in strong terms, but who will be hostile to non-individualist, non-propagandistic action, i.e. a powerful, permanently organised campaign that not just produces propaganda against the law, the state and the cops (which is necessary) but which also sets out to organise systematised mass mobilisation against the regime and its "law". Propagandist idealists can think of no greater "evil". Instead, they prefer the easy thing: an occasional semi-demo every 2-3 months, sitting down in front of their computer producing their latest piece of propagandist condemnation of the repressive state, and complaining among each other about the "terrible" regime, the "terrible" cops, and the "nasty" capitalists..... But never will they propose or build a mass campaign.

Instead, just like the media, but in their own left-wing way, they will scream and cry against a solidly organised mass campaign that really intends to take ongoing powerful action, and where everyone has to present their position—clearly—and propose concretely what to do. In practice, they will line up with the impotent, liberal humanitarians who propose passivity and "dialogue" with the state (the same state which has the strategic interest to repress the youth, and which systematically does so).

No! Mere propagandism , however left wing, will not succeed. Likewise, just a semi-demo every 2-3 months will achieve nothing, the politicians and the media will just laugh at these half-hearted affairs and their impotency. Moreover, the (unorganised) youth who come along to the ad hoc semi-demos will soon realise the same. After just two or three such demos they'll stop coming altogether. Then the media can laugh all the more and show how "action" "cannot succeed". Then the apathetic, manic depressive propagandists can say the same thing, then propose.....more whining propaganda! But much more than just propaganda is, and will be needed.

THE CHAIN OF HOSTILE OPPOSITION, LIBERAL "SYMPATHY", TACTICAL SEMI-SUPPORT AND DE FACTO ACTION BLOCKING, AND IMPOTENT LEFT-WING PROPAGANDISM

Together, all these forces act as a chain mechanism to prevent serious, organised opposition. The state itself—the designers and implementers of all the repressive laws—realises the growing lack of confidence and belief among the public in the democratic content of the state and the police (including secret police). Along with all the corruption involved, they see and realise the growing dissatisfaction taking place and the increasing calls from wide sectors of society for something to be done, for things to be cleaned up.

Consequently, as a tactic and just like in many other countries, it has created a "human rights" committee. The history of these kinds of committees is to make a few semi-complaints, to prevaricate, to discuss and discuss, to "investigate" (but never to find), to have endless (unpublished) dialogue with the "democratic" state, for all its members to have pleasant diplomatic relations with each other (and with the state and enactors of repressive laws), and to all agree to do.....just about nothing.....except to reinforce the integrity of the state, its reactionary politicians, and its repressive apparatus.

Meanwhile, as is standard for such committees, each member—from right to "left"—will speak and speak about their "respect" and "defence" of human rights. And for sure, they can be very convincing, especially when the media praises their "sincerity" seven days a week. For the state, however, the tactic involved is to create illusions in the committee and its "sincerity", and through them to fool the people—not least the youth and workers—that the state is truly democratic and respects the rights and interests of the vast numbers it seeks to dupe. Then they go on to abuse and repress them. Such committees are not much more than a fiction, a democratic rubber stamp for the state and its strategic interests.

REATEN THE INTEGRITY OF THE STATE? OR ACT AS A DEMOCRATIC SAFETY VALVE?

Unquestionably, there are some people on such committees—dissenters— that do indeed wish to see at least a reduction of this or that type of police repression, this or that abusive law, etc. However, this opposition of theirs comes (very quickly) into conflict with their deeper and wider interest: their complete support of the capitalist state per se. And when that state (and members of the committee—"colleagues" of the dissenter) places pressure, when it warns the potentially dissenting member of the committee that the integrity of the state is at stake, that serious exposure of the state's repressive measures threatens that integrity—then that potential, or would-be dissenter is faced with a simple choice: fight and expose the state, and risk its integrity, or back down and preserve that integrity. Almost invariably, the would-be dissenter makes the easy

choice; he backs down, he releases the social pressure with some fine words, and preserves the integrity of the state.

This is the state's tried and tested tactic. Thus the vital importance for the state of placing on the committee a few well-known human rights campaigners—but campaigners who have no stomach to carry things through to the end; just fine words and not much action.

These are the state's specially selected safety valves. They include social democrats (including one or two "lefts"), they include vociferous liberals (who's favourite phrase is "what we need is restraint and reason"), they include non-conformists (especially ones with a youthful image and long hair), they even sometimes include a few "communists" (tactical left Stalinists who have no problem with the capitalist state, especially if it gives them highly-paid places in parliament, or on "human rights" committees).

RIGHT-WING CONTROLLED "HUMAN RIGHTS" COMMITTEES

But just for safety, beside them must be placed some representatives of the right, to act as chaperones and to allow the liberals and "lefts" an excuse to say that the view (= repressive interests) of the right "must also be respected".

It is in fact the Rights who are intended to dominate such a committee; which they succeed in doing. Moreover, and as it is the rights who dominate, the culture and attitude within such committees is for all "to get along with each other" and not to upset one another. Not "upsetting" each other means not upsetting the right-wingers. Thus, the rights can dominate; which in fact is what the liberals and "lefts" hope for.

Besides on the one side acting as a more or less direct defender of the integrity of the state, the committee spends not a little of its energies in condemning mass mobilisation and powerful extraparliamentary action as "rash", "selfish", "destructive", "divisive", always also with those two most favourite words of this well-known breed of human rights eunuchs, i.e. "political" (as if the committee is not "political") and "extremist" (as if state repression is not extreme).

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS MUST NOT BE "POLITICAL", MUST NOT BE "EXTREME", AND MUST NOT SUCCEED!

In addition, they have the habit of forming "good relationships" with leaders of grassroots campaigns. From there, whenever the campaign starts to become "too political", and "too extreme" (i.e. successful) the liberal and "left" members of the committee (who have "good relationships" with the campaign leaders) place pressure on the leaders to "calm things down", to practice "restraint and reason", and to engage in "productive dialogue" with the politicians (and the committee). That is, to back down and protect the integrity of the state, just like the committee does. Campaign leaders who refuse to practice "restraint and reason" are then condemned by the politicians and the media as "political" and "extremist".

Next, the committee joins in with the moralising chorus of the "democratic" media and politicians. Their refrain has two verses, the one is direct condemnation (like the media and politicians), the other is a bit softer, something like "although I/we sympathise, this action is ill advised, divisive and, unfortunately, is being abused by people with a



hidden agenda....". If the softer refrain fails in its intention, i.e. to isolate the most serious and militant members of the campaign, then the refrain is dropped, leaving just screaming, whining condemnation. And when the police move in to beat up a demo, for example, the liberals and "lefts" more or less back up the inevitable media responses, i.e. the police were "protecting" themselves and the public against "violent extremists"....."although we sympathise with the 'reasonable' participants in the protest". Included is even simpler things like none of the committee members ever exposing and condemning such things as the secret police videoing demos, in open view even. Not a chance.

THE WEAK SPINES OF LEFT PROPAGANDISTS AND THEIR NATURAL AFFINITY FOR ACTION-BLOCKING LIBERALS

Unfortunately, all too often a large number of the left propagandists, i.e. the ones who oppose serious organisation in the first place, capitulate to the whole device. In doing so, although (usually) not consciously, they become another link in the chain. Most typical in their becoming a link—after first reaffirming their opposition to the repressive law concerned—is to lose focus (and courage) and to accept the tactical wailings of the committee (and media etc.) that the campaign is "divisive" and is "isolating" itself (except in actual fact it is becoming more successful, thus why the media & Co. are going berserk).

THE TERMS OF "UNITY" — PASSIVITY AND AN END TO OBJECTIVE CRITICISM

Thus, to prevent the "isolation" and "save" the campaign many of the left propagandists line up with the anti-action liberals (not just those in the campaign) and scream for "unity" with the liberals, with the "lefts" in the committee, and all others of the type. But the "unity" means unity on the terms of the liberals (the ones with no stomach to oppose the state) and the "sympathetic" members of the committee. Those terms are the same terms as usual, and as expectable—minimal, or even no criticism of their craven capitulation to and even defence of the state, and to accept their demand for passivity. That is, to accept the status quo, to protect the integrity of the state, and to expect the state to reform itself. A discussion club "campaign" and mere verbal, passive opposition is the maximum allowable.

BREAK THE CHAIN! BUILD A MASS CAMPAIGN!

That is how the chain works. But it is a chain we must be aware of in advance—and not to become a part of. Tactically, we can operate with the various "lefts", and even a few of the more serious liberals, but it cannot be unconditional. Rather, the clear principle must in advance be to work out and recognise whatever is necessary to achieve victory, i.e. complete scrapping of the "law", that is, of this law designed to repress the youth, to legitimise police harassment, and to condition society to the next round of repressive laws the state is preparing.

This includes the need for maximum mobilisation, definite ideas, honest, non-apologetic analysis, and clear criticism of all and anyone who attempt to demobilise the campaign, of whoever condemns the campaign, and pseudo semi-sympathisers who act as action blockers. That is the campaign we need, the only campaign that has chance of success. The state and its various forces are completely determined—and organised: so must we be. Thus the need for a powerful campaign. Only moralists, Rambo individualists, impotent propagandists, and those without a political stomach can oppose it.

- ★ ***Don't Just Get Angry! Get Organised!***
- ★ ***Build a permanent campaign!***
- ★ ***Mobilise against parliament!***
- ★ ***Expose every reactionary politician!***
- ★ ***Expose the police corruption and collusion with the drugs barons!***
- ★ ***Mass demos! Mass protests! Mass marches!***
- ★ ***Mass exposure of the drugs hypocrisy!***
- ★ ***Scrap the "law"! No repression of the youth!***

Build a revolutionary international!

The following Declaration was presented in early spring this year in the public organs of all sections of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International and the SOP

The Socialist Workers Organisation (SOP) of the Czech Republic and the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) recognise after several months of discussion, visits and common intervention that there has been a convergence of programme and perspective between the two organisations.

The two organisations consider each other as revolutionary and therefore draw the conclusion from this that fusion between them is both urgent and possible for building a common revolutionary International tendency which re-raises the banner of unfalsified Bolshevism-Leninism world-wide and particularly in Eastern Europe.

Both the SOP and the origins of the LRCI — Workers Power (Britain) and the Irish Workers Group — were built through a struggle against the centrist and sectarian policy of the Cliffite International Socialists (IS). While the SOP traces its origins from fighting as a faction inside the Czech Cliffitegroup (Socialistická Solidarita) in the first half of 1998 and eventual split in mid-June, the WP and IWG were founded in the mid-1970s and the LRCI itself was formed in 1989.

The struggle against centrism made both organisations understand the danger and bankruptcy of opportunism and economism – particularly characteristic of the Cliffites, but also the other centrist tendencies (e.g. Militant/CWI, USEC, Lambertists). An essential part of revolutionary strategy are transitional demands — like the sliding scale of wages, workers control, or action councils — and intervention into the class struggle, which demand that Marxists strive to link the actual struggle of the workers and the youth with such demands.

Furthermore, Marxists fight in all class struggles in order to boost the self-organisation of the workers and the youth – through committees in factories, in schools etc., rank-and-file structures inside the trade unions, etc. This is the only way for the working class to create their own experience and to organise themselves independently of the reformist bureaucracy. Instead the centrists and ultralefts — as both our two organisations have experienced in the past — combine together, within the undialectical logic of a Minimum-Maximum programme, an uncritical adaptation to the already existing official slogans of a struggle and abstract propaganda for socialism (and joining their group).

This struggle against centrism also revealed their sectarian and opportunist distortion of a Marxist understanding of the united front tactic. Revolutionary communist policy is based on the method of the Comintern outlined in the United Front theses at the 4th. Congress (1922) and means, on the ~~one~~ hand, actively seeking opportunities for joint struggles both with non-revolutionary workers and youth and their leaders, and on the other hand to openly and sharply denounce the backsliding, tailending and betrayals of these leaders . This applies both to the reformist bureaucracy in the unions and social democratic and Stalinist parties, but also to the smaller centrist groups. As a component part of this included is the requirement to use the tactic to work simultaneously on, with and against these leaderships/organisations for purposes to both expose and break them up. This also includes the tactic of a critical vote for reformist mass parties at elections combined with sharp criticism of their reformist policies and warning of the coming sell-out, and in juxtaposition the presentation of a revolutionary alternative.

But the united front has its limits and it is also necessary to know when to break from it when the reformist and centrist leaders fail to mobilise their forces for action, when they only verbally commit themselves to the united front, and who utilise the UF as a means of left posturing in order to both polish their left image and to keep the masses in a state of passive or semi-passive expectation.

While we always strive to build a bridge to the actual consciousness of the workers and youth we will always openly spell out the objective tasks of a struggle, the necessary next steps to win it and warn the workers of the manoeuvres, machinations etc. of the bureaucratic traitors and misleading centrists. However, it is the hallmark of right-centrism to insist on strategic united fronts with the reformist and centrist leaders irrespective of the concrete conditions of the class struggle, to remain imbedded inside the mass reformist parties or to continue common campaigns at all costs even if this requires silence, subservience and the diplomatic agreement and prevention of stating what is.

These rightist errors are intimately connected to a false view of the revolutionary party. The party is not simply the sum of various ongoing united fronts, a meeting ground for class struggle activists, an organisation for connecting the spontaneous struggles of the working class, but while leaving the form and content of these struggles largely untouched by the party itself.

Revolutionary class consciousness cannot develop spontaneously simply through experience of limited struggles. The revolutionary party embodies all the lessons of the class struggle and scientifically lays out the needs of the class and the route to power. It codifies this in a revolutionary programme which is not merely a statement of aims but a manual of action to be fought for in all organisations of the working class.

The discussions on and interventions into the Euro March (which is strongly influenced by the right-centrist United Secretariat of the Fourth International — USEC) also evidenced a common approach to a burning issue of the class struggle at the present time. In our common leaflet distributed at the Euro March demonstration in Vienna on 12.12.1998 we argued against the reformist peoples-front character of the campaign, which has even on occasions involved elements of open bourgeois parties (such as the Tories at the Euro March demonstration in Cardiff 1998) but has also involved on an uncritical and undifferentiated, cross-class basis numerous petty-bourgeois forces like liberal journalists, Greens, "non-class" civil rights leaders etc.

More widely, within the campaign and among its activists and adherents much of this has included the active reinforcement and inculcation of all manner of petite-bourgeois illusions in bourgeois democracy and cross-class alliances, and the "need" to maintain the latter.

In this, the centrists have acted both consciously and unconsciously with (especially) the leading Stalinists involved in the campaign, e.g. the leadership of the Italian Rifondazione Communista. In contradistinction, a consistent fight for a working class orientation and for practical actions instead of impotent conferences, workshops etc. will draw the line and could transform the campaign into a real working class and youth campaign. We also both reject the reformist character of the propaganda for a "peoples Europe" or "a different Europe which is social, ecological, feminist and democratic".

Instead, we fight for a Europe of the workers — the Socialist United States of Europe. The reformist character of the campaign is also demonstrated by the rotten deal policy of acquiring the support of the reformist bureaucracy of the Italian Rifondazione Communista, which being on the basis of, among others, the campaign not saying a word against the support of Rifondazione Communista for several austerity budgets in parliament over the past couple of years.

It is also not accidental that the platform of the campaign raises a series of good and nice slogans but omits to explain and propagandise by which means this might be achieved, i.e. by means of the class struggle, such as for example organised strikes, mass demonstrations, rank-and-file organisation against the bureaucracy etc. Again not accidentally the Cliffites, the CWI or the Lambertists are offering no alternative strategy to the Euro March organisers.

Finally we also reject the opportunist method chosen by most centrists of adapting to sections of the bureaucracy and in taking sides in the conflict between the anti-EU and pro-EU sections of the bourgeoisie. This leads them to call for a vote in EU-entry referenda to leave the EU and in conjunction to vote for the sovereignty of the capitalist national state. Workers should give no credence whatsoever to these referenda, which are in actuality bosses' referenda.

Instead, we consider both options and camps as equally reactionary and would call upon workers to spoil the ballots when voting, as a conscious protest against both reactionary camps. Alongside, the urgent task for revolutionaries is to develop class struggle methods and proletarian internationalism among workers — independently of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois forces — and to fight for a workers Europe.

The SOP and LRCI both come to the conclusion that none of the self-proclaimed "Fourth Internationals" or "revolutionary" tendencies can be considered as revolutionary (i.e. Cliffites, Militant/CWI, USEC — inclusive of its various "left wings" — Lambertists, Morenoists). Quite to the contrary, the revolutionary Fourth International degenerated into centrism in 1951-53. While it is possible that parts of one or another of these tendencies can be won to Bolshevism this can only be the result of an open and conscious break from centrist methods, but certainly not through self-reform.

No such thing exists as a "Trotskyist family" which merely has "certain" disagreements but where all of whom somehow belong to the same camp. Centrism and ultraleftism certainly have many followers who are subjectively revolutionaries and often make many self-sacrifices; however, the vacillating policy of these organisations represents an important and reactionary obstacle on the road to construction of a revolutionary party — nationally and internationally — which must be overcome.

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