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**BULLETIN MATTERS**

Observant readers will see the beginning of the DB’s outward renovation on page two. Curtis Price retyped "About the Discussion Bulletin" and printed it out on a shaded background with a laser
printer. Curtis also sent a new masthead, the present version being
the reason, according to some correspondents, that DB's circulation
remains consistently below that of Uitre Reader. Actually I am
attatched to the present masthead for historical and sentimental
reasons. I lifted it from a dissident SLP publication, the SJU
Discussion Bulletin, seventeen issues of which were published in 1969-
72. Comrade Price is right about DB needing a new masthead, and
eventually we will get a face lift.

The magazine from which the two articles on privatization in Russia
were taken was reviewed in DB80. Both are written from what we can
only call a "market socialist" perspective, which is all that remains
for state capitalist ideologues after the collapse of the Soviet
(Cont'd on p.12)

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

The Discussion Bulletin is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE). It serves as the
financially and politically independent forum of a relatively unknown sector of political thought that places the
great divide in the "left," not between Anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism's statist leftwing of
vanguardists and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist,
libertarian socialists. They are organized in small groups of syndicalists, communist anarchists, libertarian
municipalists, world socialists, socialist industrial unionists, council communists, and left communists. The
perspective of these groups with their rejection of capitalism's wage, market, and money system as well as
capitalist politics and unionism constitutes the only real alternative to capitalism in both its market and statist
phases.

In the DB the often antagonistic groups that make up this sector can debate and discuss the issues that divide
them, gain some understanding of their history and future possibilities and begin a process, we hope, of at least
limited cooperation.

The pages of the DB are open to anyone in this political sector, the only limitation being that submissions be
typewritten, single-spaced, and copier ready. We do no editing here. As to content, we assume that
submissions will be relevant to the purpose of the DB and will avoid personal attacks.

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our extended mailing list.
PRIVATIZATION IN RUSSIA: AN ALTERNATIVE VARIANT

[This and the article that immediately follows it, "Privatization in Russia: The Position of the Trade Unions," are taken from RUSSIAN LABOUR REVIEW NO. 1, 1993; 47 Pages, $30 from Credit Lyonnais, 739 88HA, Agence Paris - Duamesnil, 456, 2 Plac Felix -Ebove, 75012 Paris, France. Published by KAS-KOR, P.O. Box 16, Moscow 129842, Russia.]

In a recent round table discussion, organised by the journal "Russian Labour Review" and devoted to the problems of privatization in Russia, the following people took part: Alexander Buzgolin and Andrei Kolganov, both economists teaching at Moscow State University; Galina Radetskaya, an activist in the movement of councils of labour collectives; and Kirill Buketov, an editor of the Labour Information Centre "KAS-KOR". The discussion touched on many questions of contemporary developments in Russia, but centred on the role of the labour collectives in the process of "de-statising" the property of state enterprises.

Kirill Buketov. Our centre has now been operating for more than two years. During this time we've received many letters from workers and from activists in the trade unions and other labour movement organisations. Often they appeal to us to help them with some particular matter in a specific workplace. The further we get from the times of totalitarian socialism, the more often we hear requests for advice on how to help enterprises overcome crises that threaten to result in wage cuts, reductions in the work week, and in some cases mass sackings.

It's no secret that in Russia today huge numbers of enterprises are running at a loss. At the same time, one of the most important questions preoccupying the labour collectives - and the Russian population in general - is what to do with the privatization cheques, the "vouchers", which the Russian government is now distributing. In particular, can workers use them to improve the economic position of their own workplaces? I'd like to put this question to Alexander Buzgolin. How can the labor collectives use their vouchers to try to get their enterprises out of the crisis?

Alexander Buzgolin. Unfortunately, the privatization cheques won't save us from what's happening. They'll simply increase the quantity of so-called "hot money" - that is, paper money in the hands of the population. All the same, there are some things that might be done. For example, it's possible to try to drag our economy out of its troubles, at least partially, through such practical steps as transferring control of enterprises to their labour collectives. In some cases this could be done using the vouchers. On the broad scale the privatization cheques won't be of much help in solving this problem, but since they exist, we should make use of them.

Andrei Kolganov. Ideally, workers should invest their vouchers in shares in the enterprise whose subsequent fate they're able to control - that is, use their vouchers to take out a controlling packet of shares in their own enterprise. In a case like this, workers might use their vouchers to buy part of the shares, and their personal funds to buy the rest. In a case where the labour collective doesn't have the opportunity to buy a controlling packet of shares in its enterprise, the problem is more difficult.

Alexander Buzgolin. In fact, it becomes insoluble!

Andrei Kolganov. When someone exchanges their voucher for shares in an enterprise where they don't work, they're completely without information on what the economic prospects of the enterprise really are. In this case, the chances are very high that the shares will soon be useful only as wrapping paper.:

Galina Radetskaya. In enterprises where the movement of councils of labour collectives is strong, the attitude to the vouchers is usually very contradictory. People are on the look-out for the next con-trick. This is particularly the case since the concept of the privatization cheque hasn't been widely explained. In our plant we ran a survey of what workers intended to do with their vouchers. By no means all of them were ready to invest their vouchers in their own enterprise. I repeat, the general attitude to privatization in the workers' collectives is that
Alexander Buzganin. We don't use the expression "nomenclature privatization" for nothing. People expect that for all the vouchers and issuing of shares, for all the decrees that come out several times a year and totally transform privatization policy, real economic power and real control of property will remain in the hands of the nomenclature. I'm not talking only about representatives of management here - managements can sometimes reach compromises with the labour collectives. But on the whole, the social layer that used to wield power, and which did a swift change of costume after August 1991, still controls the property just as it used to. This is now the main problem.

Kirill Buketov. Just in the last month in Moscow there have been three conferences devoted to privatization, and this shows the fascination the topic has for economists, trade union officials and political scientists. We've seen the International Conference on Problems of Privatization, the international seminar "Socio-Economic Problems of Democratization in Contemporary Society"; and the conference on "Alternatives to Nomenclature Privatization" organised by the Moscow State University Social Self-Management Laboratory, headed by Alexander Buzganin. What would you see as the most acute problem now confronting the labour collectives? Can you say something concrete about how it might be solved?

Andrei Kolganov. When we speak about the problems of the privatization occurring in Russia, we can use an expression of ex-President Gorbachev which has become part of our political slang: "The process has run its course!" And once the process has run its course, we somehow have to exist in the new context. I don't think anyone could now turn this process around 180 degrees. We have to operate within the new framework.

The variant of privatization in Russia today which best corresponds to the interests of the labour collectives is the one in which the labour collective receives no less than 30 per cent of the shares on a basis of closed subscription. But even this variant is far from being suitable in all cases. In the first instance, the workers in enterprises where the value of the productive assets is particularly high may simply not have enough money to buy the shares.

Galina Radetskaya. Yes, I'm afraid that in our huge metallurgical enterprise in the city of Voskresensk, for example, the labour collective won't have the money to buy up the major productive assets. According to the latest decisions of the Ginder government, the nominal value of these assets has increased by 46 times, in line with inflation. Even if the enterprise makes a certain profit - and in the present conditions in Russia this is practically impossible - we won't be able to pay the necessary sum within 90 days as the decree on privatization requires.

Andrei Kolganov. On the other hand, if we're talking about small and middle-sized enterprises where the cost of the capital assets is relatively low, this variant is quite realistic. Even here, though, there are still problems. Even if the collective decided to purchase the capital assets, it would have to observe the necessary procedures. It would have to put the proposal to a meeting of the labour collective, where it wouldn't necessarily be adopted - often, the enterprise managers are opposed to such an outcome. We're starting to see cases in which voting tallies are falsified, and various dirty tricks are played in the election of delegates to conferences of the labour collectives.

Even if the labour collective were to go into a conference with the firm intention of buying a controlling packet of shares, and actually did so, that wouldn't be the end of the story. Holding a controlling packet of shares still isn't the same thing as being the owner. For that, the labour collective really has to control the enterprise. So it's essential that the charter of the joint stock company which is set up on the basis of the state firm should guarantee the labor collective the right to take part in managing the enterprise, and naturally, allow it to control the actions of the hired managers.

Kirill Buketov. Another international conference on the problems of privatization was held in Moscow from October 10 to 12. Those who took part - trade union representatives from various regions of Russia, plus delegates from the trade union movements of France, Spain, the USA and Turkey - agreed that privatization is now a world-wide process. In almost all countries of the world, the state is
being forced out of the spheres of industrial production and consumer services. The conference was the first international meeting on such a level to take place in Moscow, and of course it was not without shortcomings. In the view of many participants, it suffered from one-sidedness in the way it examined the problems connected with the privatization process, and concentrated mainly on the negative consequences. What do you think - can we expect any positive results from privatization?

Alexander Bugazlin. It’s absolutely essential for us to break down the bureaucratic alienation of people from property. If we understand privatization as the transfer of property to the labour collectives to a degree this contradicts the meaning of the term “privatization”, but we don’t have any other word to describe it - then it’s possible to see some positive effects. If on the other hand we understand privatization in its strict sense, as the transfer of property into private hands, then I don’t think this course will be fruitful. In the first place this is because the main property-owners will be the very people who led our country into an economic dead-end. The rest of us aren’t going to gain from the fact that these people are exchanging power, which they used to have, for property, which they’ll have tomorrow. The gigantic crisis in which our country now finds itself is proof of that.

The plans of the International Monetary Fund, and the right-wing liberal concept of economic development that’s being followed in Russia, don’t really amount to a concept of development but to a concept of crisis. The collapse has been catastrophic, just as it has been throughout all of Eastern Europe. Most of our country’s population is threatened with poverty, and for large numbers of Russians poverty is already a fact.

Instead of smashing the power of the bureaucrats, we’re handing it over to the private owners, who will act just as they’ve always acted, because they’ve never been effective managers and aren’t going to learn now. Instead of getting a few crumbs in the near future we won’t be getting anything at all. On the wages we’re now getting we can’t even buy crumbs, and I’m speaking as a professor at Moscow University.

Galina Radetskaya. I should add that the collapse of the economy extends to the industrial sphere as well. Child care centres and polyclinics are now being shut because the enterprises can’t afford to maintain them. We’re seeing the collapse of the whole social infrastructure. This is the result of the policies being followed by the present government, including in the field of privatization.

Kirill Buketov. Don’t get me wrong, but isn’t this also the view of the so-called “red-browns” - the alliance of Stalinists and nationalists?

Galina Radetskaya. I can’t see much point in talking about the colors of the spectrum. I’m talking about the things we now face in our daily lives, irrespective of our political views. Everything that keeps people alive here is now being destroyed.

Alexander Bugazlin. The “red-browns”, who call themselves the “left-right opposition”, are using demagogic and chauvinist slogans to try to return us to the previous system. If they have their way there’ll once again be a strong state power, and once again the nomenclature will decide what we ought to receive. They’ll re-create the old sickness. A return to the past is absolutely inadmissible. We have to destroy the totalitarian system, but this destruction needs to proceed simultaneously with the creation of new social relations.

The collective ownership of enterprises isn’t a fantasy - it’s something which exists in many places throughout the world. What’s involved is the experience of overcoming bureaucracy, the experience of overcoming the alienation of property from the worker.

Kirill Buketov. I can conclude, then, that we all see the solution to the present situation in the transfer of property to the labour collectives?

Andrei Kolganov. That’s not quite correct. Personally, I consider this is only one of the elements needed for the democratic reform of property relations in our country. I wouldn’t exclude the kind of privatization that transfers ownership of various assets in the areas of trade, personal services and small-scale manufacturing to private hands. That’s perfectly possible. In China, for example, this sector of production has proven its effectiveness. Ten per cent of private property, along with 30 per cent of cooperative
property and the pre-eminence of state ownership adds up to a genuine mixed economy which has proven its right to exist. We don't rule privatization out of the process, but we don't see it as a cure for all evils, just as we don't see collective property in this light either. We consider that the social or state sector of the economy can also be subjected to the process of democratization. Within this sector as well, the workers should have the right to self-management and to participate in solving economic problems.

PRIVATIZATION IN RUSSIA: THE POSITION OF THE TRADES UNIONS

Privatization in Russia is only now becoming an actual part of social and economic life. But the Russian trade union movement had begun to determine its attitude towards the process long before the official beginning of "voucherization of the whole country", which is now being carried out as the first stage of privatization of the Russian national economy. The Independent Miners' Trade Union of Russia (NPGR) for instance, acquainted the public with the main statements of its privatization programme as long ago as December 1991. The Russian Labour Collectives Union (RSTK), the largest of the so-called "organizations of trade-union action" (1) in Russia did the same in March 1992.

The overwhelming majority of the Russian trade unions have a positive attitude towards the idea of privatization in general. The only exception is the trade union "Defence", which considers its social and economic effects to be negative. In their opinion, de-nationalization of property in any society leads to a growth in unemployment, a fall in production, and the lowering of the standard of life of the majority of the population. (2)

The leadership of the Federation of Air Traffic Controllers Trade Unions (FPAD) also manifests a certain distrust of privatization. It fears that in the field of air transport privatization may lead to a dangerous splitting of the single system of air traffic control which is still operative on the territory of the former USSR. (3)

A similar unanimity, though in an opposite sense, is manifested by Russian trade unions concerning the privatization policy carried out at present by the Russian government. Most of them evaluate it rather critically, believing that the government is pursing a course of "nomenclature privatization"; or "pri-fattization", which is profitable only to the administrators and dealers in the shadow economy, but infringes on the "basic interests of the labour collectives" and signifies the beginning of an assault on the rights of the labourers. (4)

The sharp criticism of the government in the relation to the privatization policy is, however, a starting point for very different kinds of practice. For some trade unions (such as the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Russia, KSPR) this criticism is inseparably connected to a strict opposition to the whole reformation course of the government, which the KSPR considers anti-popular and in reality serving only the government's selfish interests. (5) Others (for example, the Russian Labour Collectives Union (RSTK) the trade union "Defence") are determined to resist the government's course of privatization by any means without raising their behaviour to a grade of global opposition to the "government of reforms".

"It is necessary," - stipulates the Russian Labour Collectives Union, - to stop the pillaging of the national property by the nomenclature, and the best way to do it is to carry out a series of actions on an all-Russia scale: beginning with collecting signatures against the government's policy and ending by organizing general strikes." (6) "Defence" is acting in the same way. "All power to labour collectives and Soviets of labourers" - says one of "Defence's" proclamations. - "No more of Yeltsin's incantations, no more waiting. The war on the labour collectives is declared and in response to war - war!" (7)

After the beginning of "voucherization", "Defence" tried to vary the means offered to the labourers for opposing the government's policy of privatization. At present it suggests using all forms of protest permitted by the Russian Federation's working legislation: preventative "anti-privatization" strikes at the enterprises and offices meant for privatization (a method which may prove especially effective in small towns).
workers' meetings and rallies, rejecting the variant of privatization offered by the government; making up "Committees of privatization control" and, at last, the tactics of procrastination in making up decisions concerning privatization. The latter is a quite effective method in the opinion of "Defence" leader Yuri Leonov, taking into consideration the bureaucratic style of carrying out the reforms which is so characteristic of the present Russian government. (8)

In the event that the labour collective gives its consent to privatization, "Defence" recommends choosing its most acceptable variant (in fact, variant 2) according to which the labour collective receives 51% of shares, and to get prepared to the privatization process in a most serious way, that is, to form a privatization committee, which will be able to feasibly protect the interests of the workers and the engineering staff, to carefully work out a "normal charter" of the future joint-stock company in such a way that it could protect first of all not the administration, but the labour collective's interests; to achieve the conclusion of a new collective agreement until the plan of privatization is confirmed by the State Property Committee, an agreement which must specially underline that it will work at the given enterprise after the privatization as well; and, at last, when the privatization process is completed, to look for gaps in the legislation in order to strengthen the position of the labour collective at the privatized enterprise by founding special privatization funds and opening many personal accounts for the workers so that they can redeem the control share holding. (9)

Another oppositional organization, the Free General Workers' Union (SMOT) also offers radical methods of influencing the government. Its leaders suggest acting through the "structures of labourers' mass opposition": "Changing the form of property at any enterprise," says member of the SMOT Council of Representatives Anatoly Matveyenko, "must take place as a consequence of solving the conflict concerning the problem of profit distribution between the state and the labour collective... The earlier the workers and engineers achieve an extreme sharpening of relations with the administration, working in the style of the former economic policy, the quicker will come the changes in the forms of management and property... Only in this case will privatization have the necessary conditions for being carried out and to take place as a consequence of a natural evolution of economic relations." (10)

The positions of trade unions constantly cooperating with the government's privatization policy is more moderate. Such trade unions as Sotsprof and the independent Miners' Trade Union of Russia (NPGR) try to correct the government's policy mainly, as the NPGR puts it, "with the help of peaceful means of influencing the existing power and management structures", a strike being an extreme remedy. (11)

But there are serious disagreements among these trade unions concerning the privatization policy. The Sotsprof, for instance, does not share the confidence of a certain section of the NPGR activists who are hoping to considerably better the financial position of the labourers by drawing them into participation in enterprise management and property possession. In the opinion of the Sotsprof Coordinating Council Chairman Sergey Khramov, it is better and more profitable for a labourer to sell his manpower as soon as possible. That is why it is preferable for the labourers not to cherish the hope of a quick enrichment with the help of privatization, but to achieve their goals by uniting into free trade unions and with the help of these concluding acceptable collective agreements and contracts with the enterprises. (12)

This sceptical attitude towards the hope of some groups of labourers to considerably better their financial position with the help of privatization cheques turned into shares, gave the Sotsprof grounds for actually rejecting any definite position concerning privatization. But after a time, as the campaign of preparations for the beginning of "voucherization" was developed, the Sotsprof leaders took a more and more definite position concerning privatization in general and the government's programme in particular. As a result, the scepticism of Sotsprof leaders began to quickly transform into a policy of active support of the government's privatization programme. One of the latest proofs of this fact was Sergey Khramov's letter to the Chairman of the State Property
Committee Anatoly Chubais written on October 24, 1992. It contained an offer to sign a joint protocol "On the principles of co-operation between the State Property Committee of the Russian Federation and Sotsprof" in pursuit of the "quickest realization of the privatization measures according to the privatization and labour legislation" (the protocol was signed on December 22). Sotsprof also manifested its readiness to take up "explanatory work concerning the state privatization programme and the President's decrees about wide-scale stock-holding and privatization cheques". It plans to carry this out, on the one hand, by drawing Sotsprof experts into the work of home agencies and privatization committees on corresponding levels, and, on the other hand, by using the "public consultative centres on the participation of corresponding local property managing committees", which were set up by Sotsprof specially for this purpose in several Russian towns.

The position of Sotsprof as regards a concrete variant of privatization is not clear. At first the leaders of the trade union association came out against variant 2 of the government's privatization programme. "Privatization in favour of a labour collective, said Sergey Khramov in one of his interviews, is sheer bolshevism. If part of the shares is to be given gratuitously, two conditions should be observed: a gratuitous share does not belong to the holder and can be sold gratis too."

But later Sotsprof leaders seemed to tend towards supporting variant 2 of the government's privatization programme. At any rate, lately the Sotsprof leader Sergey Khramov has more than once spoken about it to the author of the present paper. As for the NPGR, it believes that the struggle should be conducted simultaneously in two directions and supports both the interests of the labourers who do not want to become share-holders and prefer to retain their status of wages labourers, and of those who "strive to take part in the mines management, to become real proprietors of the enterprises". The only important thing, declares the NPGR, is that the difference of positions must not become "a ground for opposition" of the labourers and an obstacle for coordinating and unifying the actions of the NPGR members in concrete situations. (4)

Guided by such speculations the NPGR formulates its position concerning the future privatization of the economy in the following way. As it is said in one of the main resolutions of the NPGR's constituent congress, the Independent Miners' Trade Union of Russia "puts forward as the principal task the upholding of the wage labourers' social and economic interests, taking into consideration the fact that the bulk of the mining industry enterprises will remain state property. But as far as a transition to market relations involves changing the forms of property and management at separate enterprises, and as far as de-nationalization and privatization are carried out in the interests of the old and new nomenclatura, the NPGR of Russia will insist on the labourers having an opportunity of a voluntary and conscious choice in the course of these reforms. At the first stage of such reforms it is necessary to ensure the possibility of taking the state enterprises under the full economic authority of the labour collectives, including their right to hire the administration and to distribute the income by themselves. A further change in the forms of property should be carried out only on the grounds of the labour collective's resolution."

The NPGR of Russia will try to make the government carry out de-nationalization and privatization in favour of the miners who intend to take part in these reforms only under the following conditions:

- the labourers and trade unions must receive exhaustive information on all problems connected with the reforms;

- an independent examination of the prospects for the enterprise's development under the control of trade union and labour collectives must be made;

- the availability of social state funds for allaying the difficulties of privatization;

- securing the rights of all labourers working at privatized enterprises. (5)

An intermediate position between the trend supporting the government's policy on the whole (shall we say, a "constructive opposition") to which belong the Sotsprof and the NPGR, and the trend whose attitude towards the government's reform course may be defined as a "strict opposition" is occupied by the
Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR). The FNPR does not reject the idea of privatization in itself and manifests its readiness to support the reforms "as a form of property reformation" on the condition that it is carried out in the interests of the labour collectives according to the latter's decisions and the degree of their readiness for it. (16) But the present privatization policy of the government does not suit the FNPR, because it is based on normative principles which cancel "most of the social achievements of the labourers; the sphere of trade union influence is limited, and, (in the opinion of the Federation, it is a matter of primary importance), it does not pursue the goal of retaining jobs and expanding production". Besides, says the FNPR, the policy is conducted not thoughtfully enough, in a hurry, with numerous infringements on the existing legislation; it is accompanied by corruption and arbitrary rule of local administration. Thus the FNPR comes out against such kinds of property reform which it calls "nomenclatura privatization". In its opinion, its strategic task in the course of privatization, which it considers to be a long process, is to effectively defend the interests of the labour collectives from the pressure and tyranny of the State Property Committee officials and administration, as well as from corruption, and by legitimate measures to organize an explanatory campaign, and to provide methodical help to the labour collectives. In other words, stipulates the FNPR, the aim is to lead the process of privatization by means of trade union participation in it. (17)

Having defined its strategic task, the FNPR puts forward tactical purposes as well. The main one is "to make the people's deputies and the government correct the privatization programme taking into consideration the interests of labourers". (18) The basis of the correction suggested by the FNPR is the following:

- to cancel the rigid terms of compulsory stock-holding;
- to cancel limitation on the use of vouchers in the privatization of municipal property according to the second privilege variant;
- to index the cost of vouchers in accordance with the growth of prices and to re-estimate the cost of the principal funds;
- to provide state guarantees for the voucher being used as a security, to implement in 1993 inscribed accounts and investments in compliance with the law of the Russian Federation "On inscribed privatization accounts and investments of the RSFSR";
- to speed up the process of creating a funds market and a regional network of investment funds, to ensure state control in order to prevent speculation and concentration of vouchers in the commercial sector of the economy;
- to provide equal rights for all population groups in using vouchers. Together with trade unions to work out a mechanism of additional measures in order to facilitate the participation in the privatization process of labourers from budgetary branches and from collectives of enterprises not liable to stock-holding. To provide effective control over social support for badly protected layers of the population at the expense of privatization income;
- in accordance with legislation to grant the labour collectives the right of choosing the form of property and methods of privatization. To allow all kinds of property (the collective form and others);
- to give the labour collectives privileges in stock-holding according to variant 2;
- to give the labour collectives the right of redeeming the enterprises by paying off in instalments;
- to entitle the labour collectives with proprietary rights for the property acquired at the expense of the profit from self-supporting activities since the enterprises' transition to self-financing;
- to work out a mechanism of complete stock-holding of production complexes connected by a single technological chain;
- to bring the state programme of privatization of state and municipal property into accordance with legislative norms. (19)

Some representatives of "tough opposition" to the government have worked out alternative privatization programmes. For instance, the SMOT considers its main objective to be the development of struggle for the "democratization of the privatization process". As is clear from one of the SMOT's
proclamations, this objective can be achieved by taking the following measures:
- providing trade-unions with exhaustive information concerning all problems connected with privatization;
- entitling them to the right of "equal participation in privatization";
- making "social funds for alleviating the difficulties of privatization";
- ensuring labourers' rights at private enterprises (20).

An even more detailed programme of the labour collectives' concrete activities in the process of privatization is presented by the Russian Labour Collectives Union (RSTK). It consists of two principal parts:

1. A complex of measures which should be taken by labour collectives in order to meet the privatization of state property in fully armed. In order to achieve this goal it is proposed:
- to check the financial activities of the enterprise and to work out a privatization plan considering the labour collectives' interests;
- while concluding labour agreements to provide for concrete duties on the part of the administration as regards the employment and full use of the existing working places, as well as playing part of the enterprise property, made up at the expense of the profit, in the fund of the enterprise and in the personal accounts of the labourers. Thus the property acquired since the beginning of self-supporting activities of the enterprise (since 1967) should be allotted to the labourers;
- to elect at conferences representatives for privatization committees without waiting for an official notice about the beginning of privatization at the enterprise;
- to make up an association consisting of members of labour collectives, to register it as a juridical person and to insist that part of the enterprise acquired since the introduction of self-financing (or redeemed during the lease period) being handed over to the association gratis. The association must independently solve the problem of distributing its property among its members.

2. A series of demands with which the labour collectives must address the government with the purpose of changing the existing legislation concerning privatization. Here the RSTK demands:

- to legislatively entitle enterprise labour collectives to proprietary rights for the property acquired from the profit from the self-supporting activities or redeemed during the lease period;
- to introduce a rule that no less than 50% of privatized property must be paid by the inscribed privatization accounts of the citizens. Before introducing such accounts it is possible to do with state guarantees for the right of using them;
- to grant to the labour collectives the right of buying their enterprises on an instalment plan of not less than three years and making up independent decisions about drawing in an association people who do not work at the enterprise;
- if the enterprise is privatized by means of stock-holding, all the shares handed over to the labour collectives must have voting rights;
- the labour collectives must be entitled with the right to forbid the participation of foreign investors in privatization;
- all mentions of special rights of managerial staff of the enterprises, corporations, ministries, departments in the process of privatization must be expelled from legislative acts;
- for the transitional period the property belonging to state enterprises must be handed over to the labour collectives for management;
- to immediately consider the law about labour collectives a draft of which was handed by Moscow Labour Collectives Union to the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR Rusan Khasbulatov. (21).

The programme statements and concrete suggestions of different representatives of the Russian trade union movement show that nowadays there exist noticeable disagreements between the privatization programme of the Russian government and the position of the trade unions. It concerns first of all the essence of the property reformation process, as well as the methods of carrying out privatization. The government's programme, especially its practice of "voucherization", has brought forth sharp criticism on the part of the majority of Russian trade unions.

The difference in understanding concerning
the strategic goal of privatization also becomes more and more obvious. The government seems to speak about privatization establishing a market economy which works according to the principles of economic liberalism, but essentially altered by the presence of an influential bloc of mafia-like economic structures which have their own norms for carrying out “business”. As for the trade unions, they obviously have a bent to a market economy with well-developed structures of a legal state and social protection system. Some of them reject any form of privatization in principle, others, on the contrary, dream that by way of energetic reforms of the property structures the country will be able to pass as soon as possible to the phase of developed capitalism of the Western type, firmly rejecting any other variant of social development, including market ones. As Anatoly Matveyenko put it once, reflecting such views, “if we strive towards a market economy, it must be a “good market”. Otherwise there is no sense to exchange the “stagnation era” of Brezhnev’s socialism for a hungry life in the exotic conditions of capitalism characteristic of such countries as Bolivia, Bangladesh and the like”. (22)

All this contains a serious potential menace to the stability of the Russian social situation. Acquaintance with the positions of various trends of the Russian trade-union movement concerning privatization makes one think also that the Russian trade-unions are on the whole not well enough prepared to meet the privatization fully armed. And this is not only due to the fact that they do not have deeply worked out programmes which present as an alternative to the government’s variant of privatization. Much sadder is the fact that they are ideologically split, disconnected and possess no definite political programme. All this leads to the conclusion that the privatization taking place at present may become a severe test for the Russian trade union movement, perhaps even the beginning of its end.

NOTES

1. The term “organizations of trade union action” means the social and political organizations of hired labourers (workers’ unions, labourers’ unions, strike committees, councils of labour collectives, organizations of the type of the “Labour Confederation”) which in their everyday activities take up the functions of social protection which are usually characteristic of trade unions and carry them out more or less regularly. (V.R.)


2. See: Workers Movement (Rabotcheye dvizhenie) supplement to the newspaper “Worker” (Rabotchyi), 1992, N 3.

3. Concerning this problem the Russian government is still sticking to the positions formulated as long ago as November 1990 at the Congress of the FPAD of the USSR. See: Proceedings of the 2nd Special Congress of the Air Controllers Association of the Soviet-Union - Air Controllers Trade Union Federation of the USSR. M.,1990. The Appeal of the Air Controllers Association of the Soviet Union and the Air Controllers Trade Union Federation to President M.S. Gorbachev, p. 3.


5. A. Alexeyev, Soviet power as the last bulwark of totalitarianism. M.,1992, p. 3.


9. Ibid.

11. The main trends of activities and organizational principles of the Independent Miners' Trade Union of Russia (NPGR). p.3, 4-6.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
20. SMOT. Privatization and Trade-Unions.
22. SMOT. Information bulletin, 1992, N.95, p.3.

(Cont'd from p.2)

Empire. The articles, however, provide a good deal of information helpful in understanding current events in Russia.

Next David Perrin's takes on the ideas in Robin Cox's "The Problem of Reformism" in DB82. In his letter replying to Laurens Otter, Mike Lepore tangles with several ideas that have bedeviled non-market socialists over the years, the most interesting to me being his handling of the matter of electoral politics.

The centerfold on pages 16 and 17 is a first for the DB. We swiped it from the centerfold of the Wage Slave News insert that has been appearing lately in the Industrial Worker, much to the displeasure of some of the more puritanical IWW members who view revolutionary unionism as a serious business. I hope this excursion into humor and irony doesn't offend anyone. While it's true that more enlightening material is available, historically the message of the winter solstice celebration has been, "Lighten up!" - for at least the next six months.

(Cont'd on p.14)
Dear Comrades,

Robin Cox raises many interesting questions in his article 'The Problem of Reformism' (DB62). SPGB members will be familiar with Robin's views on revolution and the spread of the 'gift economy' within capitalism, and judging by past reactions, most will wholeheartedly disagree with them, as I do.

Robin starts by dismissing a previous point by Ted Edge, and suggests that a "deterioration in the living standards of workers" will not have the effect of assisting the socialist movement. Robin claims that such a view is fatalistic and can lead to passivity. I think this is a misconception on Robin's part which leads him towards dangerous conclusions.

Socialist consciousness is primarily dependent on two factors - firstly, the growing inadequacies and contradictions of the capitalist system such as crises of overproduction, poverty amidst plenty, wars, etc. and secondly, the political intervention of socialists. If it is the case that capitalism's contradictions are lessening, as Bernstein claimed and certain ex-members of the SPGB now seem to believe, the case against capitalism still remains (at least for a time) but the material imperative for revolution is clearly diminished. If capitalism's contradictions are increasing, as they surely are, then socialism is not dependent on the "mysterious unfolding of History" as Robin claims, but on the active intervention of socialists in the class struggle.

Moreover, let us be clear about one thing - it is certainly not a case of socialists 'wanting' crises and wars and so on to get worse. That is an irrelevant and misplaced notion, having no actual bearing on whether they do get worse or not, and it imputes motives in a rather distasteful way. It is more a case of socialists having studied the development of capitalism and of having a fair idea of what is in store if socialism isn't achieved. Socialists want socialism with as little suffering for the working class as possible and to that end work on the economic front to mitigate the encroachments of capital whenever they can and on the political front to achieve socialism as quickly as possible.

In attempting to demonstrate that the materialist approach of socialists is flawed, Robin betrays his unusual, if not peculiar, conception of what constitutes the "material circumstances" of the working class, stating "Our material circumstances could improve but we could still feel increasingly dissatisfied, alienated and insecure". But don't such factors enter into the realm of material circumstances? If not, what was Marx writing of when he commented in Capital that the misery of the working class increases under capitalism whether their payment be high or low?

Surely the overwhelming evidence from the history of the working class movement is that attempts at changing the system usually come about a) when the overall material conditions of the working class appear to deteriorate and b) when there are purportedly 'anti-system' groups putting their alternative and actively organising for change. This was the story of the 1917 Bolshevik coup, the German wave of discontent in 1919-23 and the recent collapse of the Kremlin's empire, among others.

The abandonment of the view that the contradictions of capitalism and the material interests of the working class are
the significant factors in raising socialist consciousness would be a dangerous one indeed. It can lead to precisely the type of gradualism outlined in the rest of Robin's piece, most typically his unsubstantiated but familiar remark that "the circle of capitalist influence within present day society will progressively contract," a statement completely at variance with Marxian analysis and the development of capitalism so far. According to this view, it would not be the capitalist system itself which creates its own gravediggers, but socialistic "abstentionism" in the economy which fatally undermines the system through a collective act of economic will.

Finally, one other thing in Robin's piece deserves comment. In discussing the preconditions for socialist revolution he puts forward the view that "political reform almost by definition is not reformist", suggesting that reformism is reform activity orientated at the economy. He also states that "there is a powerful case for supporting political reforms", citing eastern Europe as an example. I think most socialists, and certainly members of the SPGB, would agree with this latter remark, but would have difficulty with the first. This is because the advocacy of a political reform programme certainly is reformist, as are organisations who do this like Charter 88 in the UK.

The distinction must always be made between being supportive of the pro-democracy efforts of the working class, as a class, and being supportive of expressly reformist pro-democracy organisations which workers might group in. That is why the SPGB did not support reformist political movements in the former Eastern Bloc, only the anti-authoritarian efforts of the working class and the trade union struggle.

Fraternally,

Dave Perrin

39 Francis Ave., Little Acton, Wrexham, Clwyd LL12 8BL U.K.

(Cont'd from p.12)

John Zerzan's letter takes off from the Echanges article "Is Direct Democracy Really Possible?", reprinted in DB62, to advance his primitivist position. He argues--convincingly I would think to anyone who subscribes to his basic thesis--that the councilism Echanges favors will itself help perpetuate the condition of workers from which Echanges hopes to see humankind emancipate itself. Monroe Prussack's letter suggests that Robin Cox's DB62 article missed the possibility of a religious dimension to the problem of reformism. John Zerzan's "Worse and Worse" carries the argument that work--and "civilization"--kills [some people] to a new dimension: "...the fact that work kills virtually everyone."

Steve Coleman's article should have been labeled a leaflet, for that is what it is. Several of us distributed it in Chicago. The article "When Radicals and Revolutionaries Confer" explains the circumstances and discusses the possibilities for intervention for libertarian socialists at these conferences.

Next is a debate between Kamunist Kranti and Echanges--or to put it another way, between councilists--Marxists who oppose party and union

(Cont'd on p.20)
your participants have assumed that the growth of socialist consciousness will be constant, unilinear & unidimensional. I don't think anyone at all has made that assertion - which would have been undialectical if anyone had said it. Let me clarify my own premise.

An increase in socialist consciousness, whether its progress takes on a exponential, sinusoidal, or any other imaginable wave shape, must, in any case, obey a basic theorem of mathematics which applies to all continuous functions in the universe. If a function has value A at time t1, and value B at time t2, then, for ANY selected value BETWEEN A and B, there must exist AT LEAST ONE point in time when the function has that selected value. Socialist support is approximately zero today; therefore, if it someday turns into a majority support, then there MUST be points in time when it passes through ALL intermediate values - 19 percent, 37 percent, 51 percent, etc. If the change occurs slowly enough, then the approximate 51 percent phase is likely to coincide with at least one Election Day. I believe that socialists who speak of someday attaining VAST majority support, but who do not also discuss the matter of what should be done at the inevitable time of NARROW majority support, are neglecting an event which the laws of mathematics themselves must certainly impose.

All seem agreed that such growth will certainly take decades and possible centuries to pass from the 51% to the 80% mark.

I was misunderstood here; I don't make any assertion about how long it might take to get from 51% to the 80% mark (nor do I think it matters much, since I consider 51 percent to be the only prerequisite for abolishing class divided society.) My intention was to refer only to the movement from 0 to 51 percent. Socialist support has been near zero ever since capitalism became obsolete (approximately a century ago) and there is no way to predict how long the present Dark Age will continue.

Unlike most Marxists, I think the perpetual prediction of capitalism's pending collapse are nonsense. I can easily imagine humanity reaching the 23rd century with capitalism still in existence, with people flying about the solar system in spaceships, and the workers on those spaceships, by then receiving a 0.00001 fraction of their product and robbed of the rest, rebelling periodically for a bare living wage. I'm completely serious about this. There is no indication that capitalism will go away, unless and until we find a way to educate the working class about the need, and a viable method, to make it go away. Historical materialism ITSELF doesn't disprove my statement; only some of historical materialism's possible and unproven corollaries would seem to discount it. I think any Marxists who deny this possibility without offering specific reasons are being as teleological as religion.

(Cont'd on p. 18)
BELIEVERS say it will cure all our economic ills!

PRESIDENT CLINTON, who prayed for divine roof that the NAFTA would a good for American wage slaves, woke up the morning of November 18th with a startling sign from God: The face of Labor vividly splattered on the sole of his shoe!

The image of Labor was so perfect that the shoe has now been preserved as a relic in the National Museum - and millions of true believers swear it can actually cure the country’s economic ills.

“We've had requests from thousands of people who want to see the shoe,” said one thrilled White House aide. “They believe that their economic prayers will be answered if they could just see the photo.”

“Me, the shoe is living proof that the NAFTA is everything that America stands for,” said an undisturbed President.

“Since the morning when I awoke to see it sitting by my bed, I knew that America’s economic life would be changed forever.”

The President says that he came into the White House tormented by the question of whether or not he should walk all over working people. For months he roamed the corridors of the White House but could not resolve his doubts.

“One night I awoke in the middle of the night unable to sleep,” Mr. Clinton recalled. “At first I thought it was a Big Mac attack, but then I began to cry and realized that I was in anguish.”

“I prayed aloud to God, asking Him to help me end my doubts. I asked Him to give me a sign.”

On November 18th, the morning after the House of Representatives voted 234 to 202 in favor of the NAFTA, his eyes were drawn to the floor where his shoes were resting on the rug. Although he had placed them there the night before, he saw that the left shoe was overturned.

Incredibly, he realized that the face of Labor was grimacing up at him from the bottom of the shoe. The image was perfectly clear, squashed flat against the sole.

“From the moment I saw it, a feeling of awe flooded over me,” President Clinton said. “My doubts vanished. When I showed it to my fellow Democrats, it had the same miraculous effect on them. We, as a party, recognized at once that this was a special gift from God.”

Scores of leading economic experts, including many Nobel Prize winning economists, have examined the shoe and can vouch for its authenticity.

“This is divine proof that crushing the rights of North American workers is the best hope for the U.S. ruling class,” said one elated economic genius.

MIRACLE SHOE! President Clinton had doubts about stomping on Labor, his party’s electoral base - until he saw a divine message on the bottom of his shoe.

(From the December, 1993 Industrial Worker, 1095 Market St., #204 San Francisco, CA 94103)

DECEMBER, 1993 - WAGE SLAVE WORLD NEWS - PAGE 3
Capitalism can continue to grant us a few concessions, wait a generation, blame the current social problems on the "liberals" and thereby take back whatever it has previously given us, wait another generation, respond to rebellion by granting a few concessions, and begin the cycle again. The workers, as nearsighted as we are, are most likely to respond indefinitely in our same cyclical way: elect a conservative ... still have the same social problems ... elect a liberal ... still have the same social problems ... elect a conservative.... This punishment of Sisyphus can go on for centuries, unless socialists can find a way to combine our strength, place a revolutionary analysis before the workers of the world, and make the case convincingly.

> none of the participants have touched on the control of the
> Capitalist Press, the role played by the capitalist
> domination of the educational system

There's very little to debate regarding the fact itself. All Marxists already agree that -

"The ideas of the ruling class are, in every epoch, the ruling ideas; i.e., the class which is the ruling _material_ force of society, is, at the same time, its ruling _intellectual_ force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control, at the same time, over the means of mental production, so that, thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it."

-- Marx and Engels [1]

If we all agree on that much, then perhaps we should be brainstorming to find possible ways to break out of the situation.

> the "Secret State", the way that through dirty tricks
> governmental bodies can distort information

I recognize that problem - I admit that I don't know what to do about it - but I would caution that WHATEVER the degree of distortion of the democratic process through right-wing trickery, it in NO WAY changes the assertion I made in O.T. #5. My assertion is that: If the workers ever attempt to take possession of the means of production, while the offices of the state (which control the military and police) are still under the control of capitalist political parties, then there will occur one of the bloodiest ruling class reactions ever seen in history. This is my message to those anarchists and syndicalists who advise that the workers' economic revolution should "ignore the state". It's very difficult to "ignore" someone who will be firing a machine gun into your face. There is only one way to get rid of the state (as anarchists and Marxists similarly desire to) - and that is to first win control of the state, and then, from that position of control, dissolve it. It will be difficult, but saying that it will be difficult doesn't make it any less necessary.

> Presidential polls as far as I can gather seldom attract 50%
> of the real electorate; 26% of the population is therefore
> enough to win
Well, that's a good point. That would tend to shift the numerical value at which a socialist political victory takes place, but leaves us with the same basic question regarding what should be done in the event of it.

> Some De Leonists would say abstain until such time as they have the overwhelming majority necessary.

I think the common De Leonist answer is the one given in De Leon's pamphlet _Berger's Hit and Misses_. [2]. The basic message seems to be that, if the degree of working class organization is not yet sufficient for social transformation to occur, then any socialists elected to the legislature should primarily use their office as a rostrum. They should use the podium to the maximum extent, use the press interviews and the free letter-mailing privileges, to work on the matter of working class education. As a secondary task - yes, I believe it to be secondary - there would be opportunities to use the voting power which that political office brings, to resist repressive legislation, defend civil liberties, and so forth.

It's unclear how often the minority socialists in the legislature should even bother to vote on reform proposals, because so many reforms which are intended to help working people actually backfire on us. For example, after the "pro-labor" Sherman Anti-Trust Act was passed, one of the first things achieved under it was the imposition of fines on a labor union for calling a boycott. To cite a more recent example, the "jobs versus environment" debate: when regulations cut into profits, the ruling class these days typically responds with layoffs.

> That means leaving power in the hands of a minority, _by definition only an anti-democratic minority would agree to exercise such power_, which could open up all sorts of dangers.

I agree with your observation. For this reason, working class delegates elected to political office should not make a "principle" out of abstaining from parliamentary action, but should accomplish whatever they can in that field, within the narrow limitations, and loudly announce to all what those limitations are. Then, like a meditating monk who acknowledges a distraction and quickly returns to chanting the mantra, the socialists should, without delay, get right back to the matter of educating and organizing the working class for a complete overthrow of all existing economic and political institutions.

References:

[2] De Leon, _Berger's Hit and Misses_, New York Labor News Co., 1912 (More recently reprinted under the title _A Socialist In Congress: His Conduct and Responsibilities_)
Dear DBers,

There are so many ways to run the world. This journal, in fact, fairly teems with schemes of governance. And yet don't we all know, on some level or other, that running the world is not the challenge that will heal us and the planet? A world that doesn't need running offers the only qualitative difference from today's hyper-alienated one.

In the spirit of the excellent critique of democracy from Chances (DB 62), I submit the following very brief objections to the direct democracy of workers' councils.

(a) The Adorno-type objection to ideological imposition on the future, which says the shape of freedom is not concretely theorizable because that blue-printing closes off other (possibly more radical) departures.

(b) As a definition of anarchy, councilism is rejected: if emancipation consists of no rule, rule by councils is not emancipatory. (Anarchy is not democracy insofar as it disallows any form of government.)

(c) The critique of technological civilization and division of labor seeks to dissolve production; councilism is a means of directing industrial production. A world in which technology is absent has obviously no need of such coordination of specialization and economy.

(d) If the condition of worker is to be abolished, as it is already being refused in partial ways, workers' councils are backward because they perpetuate it in their fundamental workerism.

(e) If representation is a negative value, councilism fails on a strictly "organizational" level. To be represented is a humiliation. Further, delegates and recall have always been, in practice, direct routes to bureaucratization and the rule of experts (consult all trade union history).

John Zerzan
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(Cont'd from p.14)

organization--and Marxists who favor such organization. The introduction explains the circumstances of the debate.

We reprint the article "Strike Wave Sweeps Russia" with apologies to the journal Independent Politics, which we can't identify, and to the DB reader who sent us the article, whose letter we lost and whom we also can't identify. We are simply going to have to get a better filing system here. Last month I lost a $20 check for a subscription. But back to the article: I suspect that the 65-million-member Independent Trades Unions mentioned in the intro are the same trades unions with the same leaders who assisted the CP masters of the USSR in controlling the exploitation of Soviet workers. I am sure their services are for sale to the Yeltsinites. If they are having trouble

(Cont'd on p.21)
Dear readers,

The article in D.B.62 by Robin Cox about the problem of reformism was intended to get Marxists into the mainstream but falls short of its purpose. People use various methods to escape distasteful affects of capitalism including alcohol, drugs, escapist entertainment and even untried socialist tactics. It takes time for those people to realize that capitalism confronts them at every turn. Their choices are: to surrender to oppression, to rebel for a better social system for all people or continue to drift with no resolution.

While reading Mr. Cox's article I was disappointed that he did not mention religion as a major activity outside of the capitalist economy. The church harnesses the resources of people to help the needy, give the discouraged a lift and confront destructive thoughts and acts with decency and loving kindness. However, Mr. Cox mentioned unions and co-operative enterprises as activities he bases his hope upon for a successful socialist future. It so happens that the membership of unions and co-ops have decreased over recent decades. Of course the future holds surprises but if today's unions and co-ops can create a large socialist movement it would surprise me.

We live in revolutionary times and people like Mr. Cox crave to get involved. They fear that the revolution could be achieved and they did not mastermind it. The final years of Frederick Engels' life were spent compiling the hard to read works of Karl Marx and publishing them so they would not be lost to humanity. These two great teachers of scientific socialism upheld their findings all their lives. It was an extention of religion for them to explain the purpose of capitalism in human development and the bright future it prepares for us in Socialism. We participate better in the struggle for socialism by learning to be patient and more dependent upon the collective wisdom and experience of fellow socialists. We should learn from our mistakes so nothing is wasted.

Fraternally yours,

(Cont'd from p. 20)

closing a deal, I suggest they contact the leadership of the AFL-CIO for advice.

As usual, we close with a few short reviews.

FINANCES:

Well, we can't report a profit this time as we did in DB62, but there are two reasons: Receipts were down sharply, and we paid a $75 annual bulk mailing fee. Nonetheless we are still in the black, an unusual condition for the DB.

CONTRIBUTIONS: John Crump $14.48; Robert Blau $7.00; Anonymous IL $1.00; Harry Dion $10. Total $32.48. Thank you, comrades.
The atrocities typical of advanced capitalism/advanced civilization seem as pronounced here in Eugene, Oregon as elsewhere. "Teen-age Suicides Rocket" proclaimed the local front page in September (1993), explaining that the rate of teen self-destruction in Oregon has increased 600 percent over the past 30 years. November found a man in the adjacent town of Springfield suffocating his toddler daughter, then burning himself to death with gasoline. He'd had a history of violence, but neighbors considered theirs a "quiet, church-going family."

Freud's prediction that in time everyone will be made neurotic by civilization's power to deny fulfillment is beginning to look like too rosy a take on the future. In society at large a breakdown can be seen unfolding in every area of life. The federal Education Department in September unveiled a study depicting almost half of all adults as functionally illiterate. As in cannot read or write, cannot cope with the minimum requirements of industrial life. This kind of fundamental turn-off makes the fact that now no-one puts any stock in politicians seem trivial.

Soon, apparently, a majority will be dependent on Prozac ("the hottest psychiatric drug in history") or other anti-depressants, not to mention how widespread is the use of heroin and cocaine. River Phoenix died of too much of the latter drugs on Halloween, prompting his publicist to muse, "It leaves you to question why are young people compelled to do this."

Meanwhile, as if rehearsing for the growing mayhem at large, the video games to which pre-teen boys are addicted embody noticeably escalating violence. At the end of October a score of devastating Southern California fires--mostly the work of arsonists--grabbed national headlines for several days. Two weeks later, Clinton decried the "great crisis of the spirit" in America, in lamenting the war-zone nature of inner cities.

Science News for September 25 disclosed two studies linking workplace stress and cancer. There were 6,000 on-the-job fatalities in 1992, but the word is getting out that in fact work kills virtually everyone. An existence defined by working and paying has never produced such a sense of barrenness and even fear, for which the numbing sterility and homogeneity of consumer malls stand as perfect landmarks.

The generalized culture we label postmodern, with its trademark refusal to look at the whole of this horror show, reaches its appropriate level with the moronism of Beavis and Butthead. A cynical, know-nothing stance only prompts new levels of stupidity and denial. In this way the crisis of the education system and what stands behind it can be better understood: it is not so much the function of the totality to instill conformist convictions as it is to destroy the capacity to form any.

Can everyday life really be enacted on this basis much longer? Support for such a ghastly, immiserating setup is eroding, but not nearly fast enough.

John Zerzan
MARXIST SOCIALISM — DON'T BUY IT

The attempt to give intellectual credibility to an essentially meaningless term, 'Market Socialism', is about as useful as a project to promote meat-eating vegetarianism. As a political objective 'Market Socialism' is both foolish and dangerous. We urge you to reject it for the following reasons:

COMMUTABILITY PRODUCTION IS CAPITALISM
It is precisely the buying and selling of commodities — everything from the food we eat to the prostituted lives of wage and salary workers — which defines the world capitalist system. The purpose of socialism is to replace commodity production with production solely for use. Either we allow everything we need in life to be bought and sold, with the capital-owning minority as the sellers and the wealth-producing majority as buyers, or we rid ourselves of this wasteful, wretched market system. But to endorse the continuation of commodity production (the market) in the name of socialism is to hijack a social alternative in order to support the status quo. Let those who want to maintain commodity production cease to call themselves socialists — if words are to have any meaning.

'SOCIALIST' MARKETS HAVE BEEN TRIED — AND FAILED
There is nothing new about aiming to run the market and calling it socialism. From Lenin’s New Economic policy to modern China, where 'socialist banks' are just as capitalist as any other ones and 'socialist prisons' incarcerate those who dare to interfere with the making of 'socialist profits', there has been a pretense that governments are somehow controlling the markets. In reality the opposite is manifestly the case: THESE STATES ARE GOVERNED BY THE LAWS OF THE MARKET. Every so-called socialist government, from British Labour governments which have committed no end of crimes against workers (from the introduction of the British atomic bomb to the 1960s' statutory incomes policy which made it for the first time ever illegal for bosses to give pay increases) to the recent miserable experiences in New Zealand, Australia, Spain and Greece, there has never been a government of the market which has not been forced to bow to the tyranny of the market. Are we really being told that a U.S. 'market socialist government' would succeed where every other one has totally failed?

IF YOU WANT THE CAKE, WHY GO FOR CRUMBS?
Our main objection to this academic wordplaying is that it strips socialism of its really radical content. We are not socialists because we want a 'new deal' for workers to be exploited as commodities in the market, but because we stand for a society where all resources belong to all of us — and what we all own in common we don't need to buy back from ourselves. Under no circumstances should the exciting and revolutionary case for production for use be debased by those who think that markets and socialism could ever be compatible beyond the unreal world of academia.

Steve Coleman - London, England
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Since 1988 the Midwest Radical Scholars and Activists Conference has been an annual event held at Loyola University in Chicago, usually the last weekend in October. From the beginning a small number of non-SLP DeLeonists have attended the conference and rented a table where we sold literature and handed out material of various libertarian socialist groups. We also tried to intervene in other ways. In 1989 when the conference theme was "Challenging the New World Order," we sponsored a not-very-well attended panel on "Revolutionary Socialism: The Only Effective Challenge to the New World Order."

The principal problem for us is that although we have supporters on the conference organizing committee the cards have been stacked against our having any major impact. The major sponsors of the conference as well as the audiences--are academic or "secular" reformists with political loyalties to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the Committees of Correspondence split from the Communist Party, or one or another of the Trotskyist groups. Their radicalism was muted even before the collapse of the USSR; now many of them sing the praises of "market socialism," which someone has described as the ultimate political oxymoron.

This year the realization that Steve Coleman, a most articulate British champion of libertarian socialism, a prominent speaker for the Socialist Party (of Great Britain) and writer for the Socialist Standard, who happens to have the academic credentials of a "scholar," would be visiting the U.S. during this period led us to schedule two events in which he could participate. One was a panel, "The Radical Alternative: Non-Market Economic Democracy," with panel members Steve Coleman, Jeff Miller, Bertell Ollman, and Perry Sanders. The other was a debate, "Market Socialism vs. Non-Market Socialism," between Steve Coleman and David Schweikart of the Loyola University Philosophy Department, author of Capitalism Vs Workers' Control. Rado Mijanovich moderated both events.

Although they were both scheduled for Sunday afternoon, the last day of the conference, audiences were large compared to other meetings held at that time. We can't describe the audience as sympathetic with non-market socialism, but those attending the panel appeared to be interested in the ideas expressed there--new, I suspect, to most of them. At the debate that immediately followed the panel, a rather larger audience watched Steve Coleman demolish the ideas of market socialism advanced by David Schweikart. Most signed a sheet requesting additional material from non-market socialists.

Besides this panel and the debate, Steve Coleman, after reading the conference program loaded with "market socialist" panels and plenum presentations, wrote a leaflet, "Market Socialism -- Don't Buy It," which we distributed and which DB is publishing in this issue. The libertarian socialist presence at the conference was completed by Gerry Maher of South Bend, who participated in a panel on "Nationalism and Patriotism."

Clearly the effort was worthwhile. Attendance at the conference according to the "Report to Sustainers of the 1983 Conference" was
700, down from the first two years but larger than 1992. The Report gives the demographics as follows:

Who were the 1993 participants and where did they come from? According to our best estimates, 60% came from Chicago and suburbs; another 20% came from the Midwest outside Illinois, mostly five or six nearby states plus the province of Ontario; 15% from downstate Illinois; and 5% from outside the Midwest.

About 20% of registrants were faculty members; about 35% were students; the remaining 45% are mostly a mixture of white-collar professionals, nonprofit staff members and community-based organizers and activists. The students and faculty represented 67 colleges & universities, mainly from the Midwestern states. This was an increase from 50 campuses in 1992.

As to the value of this effort, the simple revelation to this many radical scholars and activists that socialism means more than a kinder nicer wage slavery can’t help but have a salutary effect on their thinking. It could be the beginning of wisdom, even among Marxologists.

We would like to point out to DB readers east of the mountains that a similar conference is scheduled for New York City, April 8-10 at Boro of Manhattan Community College. Unfortunately to get information on the conference we have only the address given to readers of the Radical Philosophy Newsletter who would like to submit papers, but I should think these two persons could get you in touch: Gail Presbey, Division of Humanities, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 and Betsy Bowman, 20-3 Mt. Archer Road, Lyne, CT 06371. It would probably be a good idea to enclose a SASE. If you will let DB know about your interest, we will take the initial step of getting you in touch with each other. At the very least some of you might get together to man a literature table.

Readers west of the mountains who are interested in being on the conference mailing list for next October’s Midwest RS&A Conference can write any time to Carl Davidson, Networking for Democracy, 3411 W. Diversey, Suite 5, Chicago, IL 60647. If you would like to participate with other libertarian socialists there, please let us know here at the DB.

--Frank Girard
Workers jam railways

Thirty-five thousand workers in Kanpur jammed railways on the 22nd February 1989. Every day after working their shifts in the textile mills, ten thousand workers used to squat on the rail tracks. Only after the arrival of one shift would workers from another shift leave the rail tracks. Only after the government had accepted the workers' demands did they vacate the rail tracks on the 27th February. For five days the workers did not allow any train to pass through Kanpur. During this period the government had to cancel 100 trains that pass through Kanpur every day.

Take a look at a news item in a national daily, "The Indian Express", on the 27th February:

'...The rail roko (stopping of trains) by textile workers is unique in many respects. The workers have become leaders and the leaders of the established trade unions have been playing second fiddle...'.

This magnificent movement of the workers in Kanpur has many valuable lessons for us. Here we will discuss some of its aspects and we hope to give some more material about it in the next issue.

Kanpur workers have shown us clearly that the whole of capital's machinery is 'one thing' and at the time of struggle workers should strike at this machinery's vulnerable and important parts. The railway ministry's propaganda was that the textile workers' struggle was against the textile mill management - they should not drag the railways into their conflict. But the workers refused to listen to this capitalist nonsense and the result was a workers' victory. This whole machinery - police, military, courts, parliament, local bodies - is the workers' enemy.

This time Kanpur textile workers also chose a good time for their movement. On the 6th of December 1977, the Janata Party government slaughtered more than 150 workers through indiscriminate police firing on workers inside the Kanpur Swadeshi Cotton Mill - at that time the Janata Party was popular and the slaughter of hundreds of workers didn't create much stir. But this time the government didn't implement its contingency plan to clear the rail tracks. The Congress Party government also has no qualm in shedding workers' blood, but this is election year - bloodshed at this time would cost the ruling party dearly in the voters' game. Instead of becoming cheerboys in the capitalist election circus, the workers should accelerate struggles for their demands. This alone is the workers' correct path at the time of capitalist elections.

The Indian Express news item that said that the workers themselves became leaders and pushed the trade union leaders to the sidelines, also said that the trade unions made repeated appeals to clear the rail tracks and let the trains pass, but the workers did not pay any heed to them. And we repeat: the result is a workers' victory. So workers, lead yourselves in marching forwards, don't follow middlemen.

Struggle, struggle with leadership in their own hands, blows against the enemy's vulnerable parts, and becoming disrupters in capitalist electoral dramas - these lessons of the Kanpur textile workers successful railway jamming workers are lessons for all workers.
The brave textile workers of Kanpur have pushed back one capitalist attack through the jamming of the railways movement. But capitalist attacks on the workers will certainly increase, because they are a product of the capitalist system's crisis, and these crisis will increase. Will the Kanpur workers alone be able to deal with these attacks? Even otherwise, the basic problems of Kanpur's textile workers remain. Proletarian revolution alone can solve these problems of the workers. For the working class unity which is necessary for this, will the brave workers of Kanpur come forward?

(+ ) The unions had agreed to the constitution of a tribunal and its award; that meant increased workloads and retrenchment of 10-12 thousand workers in the ten textile mills in Kanpur (nine government owned). The workers demand was: Scrap the tribunal award.

Letter to Komunist Kranti from a Dutch comrade:
Dear friends,
As one being in close contact with 'Echanges', I've been able to note the contents of the article 'Workers jam railways'. I was, like all of us, interested in the struggle in question. What struck me most in the account was the quotation from 'The Indian Express' in which it was told that the textile workers 'have become the leaders, and the leaders of established trade unions have been playing second fiddle'. Further on there is said more on this aspect, informing the reader that the trade union 'made repeated appeals to clear the rail tracks' and that 'the workers did not pay any heed to them', resulting in a workers' victory.

To me, and to many others who think like me - the collaborators of 'Echanges' among them - all this is very familiar. For many years the reality of class struggle in modern capitalist society has taught us that workers, defending their interests in opposition to the interests of the ruling class(es), from a certain level of capitalist development onward, are inevitably forced to fight for themselves and by themselves. The same reality has shown clearly enough that trade unions are an institution of capitalist society as regulators of the labour market. It's for this reason that we ceaselessly point out the meaning and importance of autonomous and spontaneous workers' struggles, i.e. that very sort of struggles in which workers take the lead and the union leadership plays a subordinate role or no role at all.

Seeing things like this, I'm convinced that socially vanguard groups, which in this way or another want to take the lead, want to tell (always as outsiders) what workers should do, who hold themselves ready for 'instruction', aren't anachronism, not to say an obstruction to successful struggle. And what counts for vanguard groups, counts for trade unions and political parties, whatever their character and ideology.

The questions I want to ask you rise from the above point of view.
1. Why, twice in the text I'm dealing with, do you emphatically point out what the workers should do, instead of explaining and analysing how their attitude and the very forms of their struggle are directly related to the present form of capitalist conditions and production relations?
2. Why are you working for the 'formation of a world communist party'?

In my (or our) view (be it hierarchical or non-hierarchical) is a form of organisation which is linked to bourgeois society and as such completely unfit for the overthrow of capitalism. Maybe you take the view that such a party is an appropriate tool for stimulating 'class consciousness'. However, we don't think that this so-called 'class consciousness' is the precondition of a revolutionary behaviour or of any action of the working class. Practice has taught us that 'class consciousness' far from being such a precondition, on the contrary always is a consequence of the class struggle. So we would appreciate your answers on these questions and any comment from you on my remarks.
Answer to the Dutch comrade from Kamunist Kranti:

We do not know whether we have correctly understood what CB is saying. So, our reply should be taken more as a step towards understanding each others positions. We are not very well acquainted with the situation in Europe and what we have being able to know does not give rise to high hopes. So, we hope you will not give those meanings to our words that the European context has stuck to them. We hope that together we will be able to overcome these preliminary and irritating difficulties that are a product of circumstances.

Having said this, in our opinion the ideas underlying these words of CB, that “...workers, defending their interests in opposition to the interests of the ruling class(es), from a certain level of capitalist development onwards, are irrevocably forced to fight for themselves and by themselves”, are WRONG. When is or will this “certain level of capitalist development” be reached beyond (“onwards”) which workers in general will act as MARXISTS? The “importance of workers' spontaneous struggles” for Marxists is that workers' autonomous struggles force workers to bluntly face existing social reality and thus take steps that lead towards the communist revolution. The “importance of workers' spontaneous struggles” for Marxists is that at times they may give rise to “sparks of communist consciousness” (Paris Commune, Soviets) AND the indispensability of organised marxist work in capitalism that they bring to the fore. Recent workers' spontaneous struggles have shaken state-capitalist bastions AND given rise to obscurantist/chaunist aspirations. It is because of this that while we optimistically look forward to “sparks of communist consciousness” that the spontaneous movement of the working class may give rise to, we also work for organised marxist work on a global scale (“world communist party”).

In our opinion, marxist/communist/materialist interpretation of history for revolutionary practice of the working class and workers movement are NORMALLY not synonymous. Also, they are NOT “outside” one another. We consider ourselves marxist, a part of the working class movement.

It is materialist interpretation of history for the revolutionary practice of the working class that brings to the fore the global/internationalist dimension of the working class movement and NOT the workers movement in POLAND. It is materialist interpretation of history for revolutionary practice of the working class that brings to the fore the importance of abolishing standing armies and universally arming of wage-workers. We TELL workers about the Paris Commune, Soviets, demobilization of nations/countries and formation of the global human community, events like Kampur AND what workers SHOULD and SHOULD NOT do. Marxists MUST TELL and without a standing army/Red army under their command, they can ONLY TELL the workers what they should do, ONLY EXPLAIN to them - the decisions, right or wrong, REMAIN IN THE HANDS OF UNIVERSALLY ARMED WORKERS.

Materialist interpretation of history for revolutionary practice of the working class thinks that the level that the productive forces have reached is such that the productive forces can be harnessed for human welfare on global basis alone AND if this is not done, humanity faces self destruction. It is for this reason that Marxists consider organised activity on a global scale to be of paramount importance. We do not know if comrades CB considers organised practice by marxists indispensable or not. We will assume that he is for organised practice (his participation in Echanges DD is a pointer), then the question of the FORM of this organised practice becomes a prominent question. We will also assume that CB is for globally organised practice (Echanges practice), then the experiences of past practice and their sum-up become our point of departure for present organised work. The word “party” seems to be too loaded for CB and he considers the adjective non-hierarchical to be mere word. We think otherwise. In our opinion, past practice only tells us to fight against the formation of “Red” army AND hierarchical organisations. New practice will certainly bring up new problems but then, is there any other way out.

We certainly consider propagating experiences of Paris Commune, Soviets, “Red” army etc...essential “for stimulating class-consciousness.” AND in our opinion, communist revolution (if it takes place) will be a conscious act of humanity.

ABOUT OUR DIFFERENCES - A short reply to the comrades of Kamunist Kranti

I think that one should always welcome any attempt to a better understanding of each other. For this reason I'm glad for KK's letter. As the comrades from India don't know if they have understood me correctly, I'll try to give an additional explanation. Doing so, I can only hope that in turn I have understood them well. It is not for nothing that I start my reply in this way. We know well how difficult it is to make the right interpretation of a view which is not exactly like your own. And as far as I can see, our differences are big and if a discussion will be of any use, we have to honestly admit this.

KK begin as follows:

"In our opinion the ideas underlying these words of CB: "...workers, defending their interests in opposition to the interests of the ruling class(es), from a certain level of capitalist development onwards, are irrevocably forced to fight for themselves and by themselves", are WRONG." "When", asks KK, "is or will this 'certain level of capitalist development' be reached beyond which workers in general will act as 'marxists'?

It's a very good beginning, because this brings us straight to the heart of the matter. The best I can do is to explain my view of a different way and with other words. Firstly, it's a misunderstanding if one believes that there are any kind of ideas underlying my views. What I've tried to describe is neither a view nor an opinion. It is a social reality which I've seen before my eyes during my lifetime. Of course this reality can't be seen everywhere. Where it can be observed, one can only share my opinion. Where not, something else is the truth.
That "certain level of capitalist development" is very difficult to define. Surely it will be different in different countries and of course it's related with the whole economical, social and historical scene. Nobody is able to say; it will be reached at this or that moment. But in the course of history the struggle of the working class takes on different forms. That this is caused by capitalist developments seems to me to be an undeniable fact.

As contrasted to your opinion, I don't think that workers "act as marxists". They don't and they will never do. They act in defending their own interests. As I see it, the class struggle is not an ideological fight. Workers don't fight because they want to make the communist revolution, but the communist revolution will be the inevitable outcome of their fight even if they're not aware of this result.

As I see it, class consciousness does not mean that the working class has a clear idea from what is usually called "it's task" or something like that. If one is conscious, one is always conscious about something, and this something can only be his real being, i.e. the social reality of one's life, the reality of one's place in capitalist society and in the process of production.

I think this makes it very clear that I don't agree with your interpretation of history. My materialist (marxist) interpretation is quite different. However, I think that it's useless to quarrel over the 'right interpretation' of Marx. Useful however, is a close examination of working class struggles in our different countries and exchange information about them for a better understanding.

Of course I could say a lot more about KK's letter and your opinions. But I don't want to deal with everything and every detail here and know. May I refer to the presentation pamphlet of Echanges. There you will find again in other words than those I've used here, the same opinions I have tried to develop. (See the pamphlet "Echanges et Mouvement.Presentation pamphlet.)

To conclude: In my opinion the best thing one can do is not to speak to workers about the Paris Commune or an event like that - however important it may have been - but to speak to them about their own deeds and struggles. I realise that this is an approach quite different from yours. We will have to discuss this in detail. Hope to read you again.

CB 790
The following article was written prior to Boris Yeltsin's September 21 presidential coup dissolving the parliament. The 65-million-member Independent Trade Unions of Russia condemned Yeltsin's power grab, and continues to organize against his regime.

MOSCOW—Since the end of July, the Russian government has been challenged by the largest wave of strikes since the coal industry struggles of 1989-1991. Even more impressive than the size of the actions has been the range of workers involved—the broadest since the 1917 revolution.

Once again, coal miners have been in the forefront of the labor movement offensive. But the groups that have moved into struggle include timber workers, defense industry workers, television and radio employees, public transportation workers, health workers—and even weather forecasters.

An important new feature has been the mounting of coordinated regional strike actions. In the Primorye Territory on the Pacific coast, a general stoppage on August 10 brought an estimated 600,000 workers out in protest against crippling increases in electricity charges.

Unions oppose government

Probably the most crucial new development, however, has been the shift by the leadership of Russia's mass trade union federation to direct, active opposition to the government. After lengthy efforts at collaboration with the Yeltsin regime resulted only in broken promises, leaders of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) several months ago began developing a "Plan of Collective Action." This is intended as a coordinated strategy for the defense of workers' rights, aimed at maximizing the labor movement's political and legal strengths and culminating, if necessary, in massive strike action later this year.

Since President Boris Yeltsin launched his campaign of pro-capitalist "reforms" in January 1992, workers in Russia have seen their secure and modestly comfortable living standards replaced, in many cases, by stark poverty and the threat of starvation should illness or unemployment strike. Until recently, however, protests were astonishingly muted. The government's argument that the pain of "shock therapy" would in time be followed by stabilization and recovery—an argument plugged relentlessly in the pro-Yeltsin mass media—was broadly accepted.

It is fair to say that this belief was shared by most trade union leaders—and not only in the small, outspokenly pro-government "free" union movement. Until well into 1993 the strategy of the FNPR, which covers a large majority of Russian wage workers, was concentrated on the Tripartite Commission set up by Yeltsin as a forum for consultation between the government and representatives of employers and labor.

Russian public loses patience

By early this summer, however, the willingness of the Russian public to give the government's strategies "time to work" was running out. The conviction was spreading that "shock therapy" could produce only catastrophe followed by stagnation. In a poll taken early in August, only 26 per cent of respondents indicated that they "approved of the policies of the president." Union leaders, meanwhile, were listening attentively to economists who used orthodox Western theory to produce damning criticisms of the government's "market fundamentalist" approach.

By this time as well, large numbers of union activists had come to see Yeltsin and his ministers as anti-worker and persistently treacherous. The president routinely ignored his pledge that major policy initiatives would be discussed in advance on the Tripartite Commission. As time went on, direct demands by the FNPR for talks with government leaders were increasingly snubbed. The regime also systematically violated legally binding wage agreements. In a practice clearly designed to bolster its "tight money" policies, the government provided finance for the payment of wages months late, often failing to provide the full sum.

Workers move

During the early summer, the FNPR leadership was forced rapidly to the left—as much as anything else, by the fear that unless the union movement mounted a coordinated campaign, workers would move spontaneously into struggle in a chaotic process that would lead to exhaustion and defeat.

The initial stages of the fight-back did, indeed, consist mainly of spontaneous sectoral struggles. In late June coal miners conducted spirited pickets of government offices in Moscow, demanding prompt fulfillment of the industry wage agreement. Timber workers, who had been in a state of "pre-strike readiness" since May 25, followed up with pickets early in July.

The first massive and coordinated action was a one-hour warning strike on July 29 by workers at more than 100 defense complex plants in the Urals region, demanding that the provisions of the law governing the conversion of military to civilian production be met in full. On August 9 coal miners in Rostov Province in southern Russia held a regional stoppage that shut down 38 pits for 24 hours. Workers at a number of coal enterprises in Western Siberia halted shipments in sympathy.

On the Pacific coast, the two-hour stoppage on August 10 shut down at least 360 enterprises in almost all the cities and towns of the Primorye Territory. Thousands of workers took part in angry public meetings. A coordinating council has now been set up to organize "united actions" by workers of the Russian Far East. On August 12, designated by the Agrarian Union and the Union of Agro-Indus-
trial Complex Workers as the “Day of Defense of the Peasants,” farm workers demonstrated in number of Russian cities.

Coal miners critical

As in previous years, the critical group of workers in the new round of struggles is likely to be the experienced, relatively well-organized coal miners. On August 12 a leadership plenum of the Independent Union of Coal Industry Workers declared a state of pre-strike readiness, promising a Russia-wide coal strike on September 6 unless the government met its obligations under the sectoral wage agreement.

The situation in the coal enterprises is complicated, however, by divisions within the work force. Most coal face workers are members of the Independent Union of Coal Industry Workers, which is affiliated to the FNPR, but of the Independent Union of Mine Workers (NPG). The NPG, which arose in 1990 out of disillusionment with the “official” union structures, has in the past given strong support to Yeltsin. In a recent interview, NPG Deputy Chairperson Sultan Mamedov declared his union’s “fundamental disagreement” with any attempt to force the resignation of the government.

Have the NPG ranks left their leaders behind in this respect? Russians are likely soon to find out. Yeltsin, to say the least, should not be confident.

Strike committees set up

Throughout August, unions have worked with encouragement from the FNPR to set up regional and sectoral strike committees. In close touch with the rank and file, these committees have been assigned a key role in the FNPR’s “Plan of Collective Action.”

As explained in an article in the newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta on August 11, the plan involves a vigorous drive to build an all-Russian conference of strike committees, to be held in Moscow in mid-September. Yeltsin, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin and parliamentary speaker Khasbulatov will be invited to attend, in order to defend their actions and bear the views of workers.

Simultaneously, a Supreme Court suit will be launched, calling high officials to book for their failure to implement wage agreements and for other breaches of labor legislation. Assuming that the government does not meet its obligations in the meantime, the union movement by mid-October will have in its hands both the political and legal weapons it needs for unleashing a concerted campaign of strikes.

The unions’ demands, needless to say, will not be purely economic. As FNPR Deputy Chairperson Vasily Romanov told journalists in mid-August, “if the government continues to ignore the demand of the trade unions that it sit down at the negotiating table, one of our slogans will be the call for the resignation of the present cabinet.”

Yeltsin, of course, has his own plans for the coming autumn—above all, a clash with the parliament that he hopes will sweep the legislature into oblivion along with the present constitution. But like most totalitarian fantasies, this leaves the population out of account, or assigns them the role only of applauding spectators.

The developments in the Russian trade union movement during the past months suggest a quite distinct scenario, in which the main obstacle to the president’s ambitions is not the “conservative, Soviet-era” parliament, but millions of angry, mobilized workers. That is an opposition of a very different caliper.

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SHORT REVIEWS


The central ideas of this pamphlet is that last October’s coup against Yeltsin by what were supposed to be Communist Party “hardliners” was basically a fraud and an attempt—aaided by western media—to fasten a new authoritarian regime on the Russians. The reference in the title to the three o’clock knock refers to the arrest by KGB Yeltsinists of parliamentary leaders at three o’clock in the morning instead of the traditional two o’clock.

Except for a four-page introduction, the pamphlet consists of three fixed articles by an unnamed correspondent, who writes as an eye-witness to events in Moscow. Much of his testimony involves assertions backed by examples that Yeltsinite police and army forces deliberately allowed the rebellion to gather steam so that it could be
reported as much more dangerous to political stability than it really was. Although the author of the faxed articles doesn't support the anti-Yeltsin rebels, he points out that they are no more hardline soviet CPers than Yeltsin and his supporters.

GREEN PERSPECTIVES, A Social Ecology Publication, Number 28, December 1993, 10 pages, $1.00 ($10 for ten issues) from PO Box 111, Burlington, VT 05402. After a nearly year and a half interruption occasioned by other projects, Murray Bookchin and company have resumed this publication “on an occasional basis.”

This issue carries the headline, “Social Ecology: International Reports” and contains articles about social ecology movements in Greece, Burlington VT, Germany, England, Italy, Uruguay, Canada, Russia, Plainfield VT, Syracuse NY, and Norway. The editors hasten to inform us that there are social ecologists and social ecologists, not all being the same article.

"On the horizon," we are told, “is the formation of an international Social Ecology Network...[and] an international social ecology conference, probably to be held in Montreal in May 1994." Notable for its absence is any reference to an earlier Social Ecology project, the Left Green Network, from which both social ecologists and leftists seem to have withdrawn their energy. We hope to have an article on its present status in an upcoming issue. Meanwhile we will try to keep readers informed about activities of the social ecologists and strongly recommend Green Perspectives to left greens.

--fg