

October 3 Memo

IBT on Moscow Coup

The following are excerpts from an internal communication circulated by the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) leadership in the midst of the 3 October 1993 attempt by the supporters of the Russian parliament to seize the Moscow television center and topple Boris Yeltsin. An earlier (24 September) internal IBT memo noted: "We take no side. Neither [Yeltsin nor Rutskoi/Khasbulatov] is qualitatively more democratic. And Rutskoi does not represent the prospect of restoring a workers' state, deformed or otherwise."

Marxists adamantly oppose the bonapartist measures pushed through by Yeltsin in the aftermath of his victory. His dissolution of elected councils, imposition of a media monopoly, suspension of freedom of assembly, etc., are entirely reactionary. Yet had the Rutskoi/Khasbulatov forces triumphed, which for a few hours appeared to be a real possibility, similar measures would inevitably have been enacted.

* * *

As in the case of Solidarnosc, there is a large element of false consciousness among Rutskoi's base, and a nostalgia for the good old days under Brezhnev. But that is not on offer. The split is between two rival sections of capitalist restorationists, who were united against the August 1991 coup and the Stalinist bureaucracy, but have since fallen out over how their common objective of counterrevolution should be implemented. At the same time as we oppose Rutskoi, we of course continue to oppose the privatization of Russian enterprises. If we had a base, this could obviously put us in a bloc with Rutskoites on some questions at certain points.

* * *

We need to watch the situation carefully. Yeltsin has (according to CNN) called for mass support, but so far received little, if any. The Rutskoites, whose popular support has been dramatically underreported by the imperialist media all along have, at least for the moment, been able to mobilize far more. Apparently they broke the blockade of the White House by rushing the troops who had [been] cordoning it off....Now some thousands of them [Rutskoites] with small arms are laying siege to the TV center. So far the military or security services have not intervened.

In general on the political level we should treat this conflict as we [i.e., the international Spartacist tendency

of 1978-79] treated the struggle between the Khomeinities and the Shah. At that time we were in favor of a victory for neither, warned the left of the danger of throwing in their lot with the "lesser" evil and called instead for a perspective of independent proletarian intervention. As in Iran, a decisive question [is] what will the army do? Unlike the situation in Iran, the insurgents do not seem to have the active support of the overwhelming mass of the population.

The situation is clearly very fluid and it is *possible* that developments might cause us to shift our position....[We would oppose] wholesale attacks by the armed forces on the (largely unarmed) populace....

This consideration would clearly not apply if what is involved is confrontations with the relatively small bands (10-20,000) of Rutskoi supporters who have been active to date, but only in the event of a truly *mass* outpouring of support for the parliamentarians, which seems an unlikely, if theoretically conceivable, scenario. Another, more optimistic, scenario would be the creation of some kind of proletarian councils based in the enterprises, perhaps initiated by the unions, which might seek to intervene in the power struggle by organizing demonstrations or strikes. While such formations could be expected to side with Rutskoi for the most part (because Yeltsin/Gaidar's program is to throw them onto the scrap heap), the emergence of such a factor, even if only semi-independent initially, could also change the configuration and our attitude toward it. It would present an arena in which revolutionaries would seek to intervene to change the course of the activity from support to Rutskoi to a struggle for the independent interests of the workers.

For the moment a first approximation of our program could be something like the following:

- ***Neither Yeltsin nor Rutskoi—
Russian Workers Must Rule!***
- ***Capitalist Restoration is Strangling
the Working Class!***
- ***Down with the New Exploiters! Down
with the New Black Hundreds!***
- ***For Workers' Soviets from Vladivostok to
Leningrad!***