

# SYNDICALIST BULLETIN

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## COUPS CONSPIRACIES AND CAREER MOVES

The serious business starts now. The fact that the coup leaders did not arrest Yeltsin at the beginning shows that they must have thought they could have done a deal with him. Possibly he negotiated with them and then double-crossed them when it came to the crunch, or may even have set them up, suggesting that they act, promising that there would be no effective opposition and that his liberty would appear as a guarantee that it wasn't to be total Stalinism.

Anyway, he's managed to make Gorbachov look a ninny, and by knocking down one of the props of the balancing act assured himself -- for the moment -- of an unchallengeable position.

He will be the real threat for our Russian comrades.

Gorbachov will hold a residual, nominal, authority, but totally lacks any significant power base; Yeltsin -- though Gorbachov was arrested and he was not -- has managed to spread the rumour that Gorbachov was in some sense in the plot. Yeltsin is in a position to take what would amount to dictatorial power, and there is no reason to suppose that he does not want it. It will be several months before one can pose an effective challenge to him, and it is possible that no-one will do so in time. The one area that his power seems to be slight may be among factory workers. Though the miners responded to his call for a general strike -- if press reports were correct -- the factory workers did not and were going to ask their factory managers whether they should. That means that independent union organisation has not reached most Moscow workers.

### ONE REALISTIC SOLUTION--REVOLUTION

Yeltsin, Gorbachov, the CP hardliners ... all offer the working class nothing but a

western-style capitalism, none can ensure proper food supplies, all support a ban on strikes, while under Gorbachov persecution of trade unionists and the left (and the real left in the USSR means anarcho-syndicalists) continues, not on the scale of the Stalinists but still involving blacklisting, sackings and the occasional murder.

A minority of soviet workers showed that they were willing to take direct action against the coup. What is needed is for the most active sectors of the soviet working class -- the independent trade unions and groups trying to reform the official union machine -- to set their own agenda. They must understand that while there is a KGB and a Soviet Army all gains they make can be blown away at a moment's notice. Since all the governing factions can offer is unemployment, rapacious profit-chasing and a future promise of consumer goodies, they must ask themselves, "Shouldn't we be fighting for something better than this?" A year after the people of East Germany came out on to the streets, they realized they'd merely swapped one misery for another. The same will be true of those now cheering for the West's man Yeltsin.

The only way out for the Soviet working class is to use their strength to get rid of ALL the demagogues who would "save" them. To Russian workers, no doubt the blandishments of those "unemployed Bolsheviks" the Trotskyists are highly resistible: Marxism had its chance in the USSR and it created a horror

The choice is between a second revolution and a total capitulation to capitalism. The best chance for workable revolutionary ideas is the comparatively numerous anarcho-syndicalist movement in the USSR. After all, the ultimate glasnost is an anarchist society

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SYNDICALISM IN THE 1990s?

We invite suggestions from readers, in the form of material which could be edited to make up such a leaflet, ie a simple up-to-date outline of our ideas, as soon as possible. The editors of Sb have decided that we need a simple, clear and concise introduction to syndicalism, that we could recommend to people who are new to the idea. We will be producing a first version of this as a supplement to SB, and subsequently it will take the form of a leaflet, incorporating any improvements that may be necessary. This should be a useful propaganda tool.

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## THE CITIZENS' CHARTER

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At long last the government have introduced a social reform that will really solve our everyday problems. The advent of the Citizens' Charter means that, although things may still go wrong, you can now get the immense satisfaction of bringing people to account. Train late? Not to worry, BR can be fined. Civil Servants - those wicked and vicious clerical workers who rake in huge salaries (sometimes in five figures) for doing no work, will be identified by name tags, so that they can be punished for upsetting Joe Citizen. What's more, they won't be able to hide behind the ludicrous excuse of claiming that they are only trying to carry out an unrewarding job within the limitations of an unworkable system, administered from above by incompetent management.

OK, enough bitter irony! Though the idea of a Citizens' Charter has obvious populist appeal, the reality of it is that it represents another instrument of **divide and rule** - another stick to beat working people with. It is a cosmetic exercise to cover up for the more deep-seated failings of the social and economic system of this country. When BR get fined for their ineptitude, the extra cost to them will simply be passed on to ordinary people through increased fares, higher prices for their vile food and lower wages for their workers. The workers will also get much of the flak for whatever grievances people have against the organisation. It's sad but true that people would often rather see some poor scapegoat sacked, than see the drastic re-organisation of a fundamentally non-beneficial system.

The reality of a Citizens' Charter is nicely reflected by the fact that if you want a copy it will set you back £8.50. You see, in order to qualify as a citizen and thus benefit from the charter, you really need to be earning £25,000+ a year - in other words, enough to enjoy the sort of comfortable life where you have the time and energy to get worked up about late trains and missed rubbish collections to the point of pursuing a complaint through the official channels. The rest of us will be on the receiving end of the punishment, in one way or another.

MAGNUS CARTER

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## RACE RIOTS IN RURAL HADLEY

Ian Gordon was shot by police in the early hours of the morning of Monday August 12th. This took place in Wellington, a couple of miles away from Hadley, home to much of Telford's black community, where he was well-known.

After several years of police harassment and racism, the area exploded in a spontaneous expression of outrage over this shooting to kill by officers who remained on duty. Rioting, bottle-throwing and an attempt to burn down the local police house persisted until early on Wednesday morning. Obtrusive and provocative police presence was maintained for days, including use of a helicopter low over the village.

A dignified march of 400 or so local people marched to Wellington on Saturday to demand a full public inquiry into the shooting, but so far this has been refused.

The circumstances of the shooting -- which bear all the hallmarks of police racism and incompetence-- must be established. What happened --and the police marksman shot to kill-- cannot be justified; this reaction to a disturbed individual, who was actually well-known to them, is a threat to us all, as Ian's mother made plain during the week.

The local community should not allow their anger to dissipate, but must learn to organise and form links with other groups so that they can put it to constructive use. Nor should it be wasted in pointless violence, which will only alienate support, disturb the community and provoke a police clampdown.

We must oppose racism, and especially from the police. We promote organisation locally across the so-called barriers of age, sex and race, across union, party and community lines. This must be done sensitively by local activists. Yet in response to the Ian Gordon shooting, councillors and the Trades Council have said little and done, if possible, less.

A.B.

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