

WORKERS VOICE

NEW
series

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20p

AS WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS PLAGUES RUSSIAN BLOC....

POLISH WORKERS STRIKE AGAINST CAPITALISM

in this issue:

1905

~ St. Petersburg
Soviet

PLUS

■ Mass Strikes in
South Africa

■ Brazil: End of
the 'Miracle'

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..and more

This summer the Polish working class have demonstrated their refusal to accept Government cuts in living standards. Gierek's announcement of a 40% increase in the price of meat at the beginning of July was the signal for a massive wave of strikes, more widespread even than in 1970. Since then events have snowballed far beyond merely an angry response to a rise in the cost of meat.

The strikes began in Warsaw when 17,000 workers at the engineering complex of ZM Ursus downed tools in protest over the price increases. They were immediately joined by other sectors (such as car and aircraft workers) and by the end of the first week 100,000 workers were on strike. The seriousness of the situation for Poland's leaders was so great that they attempted to get the strikers back to work by offering some concessions. On 9th July the Party boss, Gierek, went on T.V. promising wage increases and also a small increase in family allowances next year. Gierek's measures were not, however, sufficient to cool down the situation. On 10th July the workers at the Zeran car plant came out on strike and, on the same day, mass strikes broke out in the city of Lublin, beginning with lorry factory and agricultural machinery workers, but quickly spreading to other sectors.

The strikes spread to the militant ports of Gdansk and Szczecin, until by the end of August there were strikes on the

whole Baltic coast and in towns like Poznan, Lodz and Wroclaw in south-west Poland.

As the strikes spread they became more organised. In this respect the workers of Gdansk led the way by electing delegates from 280 different workplaces to form an "Inter-factory Strike Committee". The Government knew that this step had strengthened the workers' position and tried to weaken the movement by splitting the workers up to negotiate plant by plant. It is a sign of the political maturity of the working class that they were not fooled by this manoeuvre and refused the "invitation" to negotiate on this basis. The workers were not fooled either when Gierek dismissed the Party trade union boss and reshuffled his ministers - a favourite stunt in Poland to try and con the workers into going back to work, with the promise that the economy will be better "managed" in future.

Poland isn't Communist

The Western capitalist press, not usually known for its sympathetic reports of strikes at home, has given large scale and admiring coverage to the Polish strikes. According to these propagandists, strikes in the Russian bloc show that the workers there are unhappy with "communism". Any sign that the Eastern bloc also has "economic problems" is used as evidence that the "communist system" cannot work.

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paper
of the

COMMUNIST WORKERS ORGANISATION

WORKERS VOICE

EDITORIAL

Why Workers Voice?

This is the first of a new series of Workers' Voice. The old series was a free factory-gate bulletin to supplement our leaflets. The appearance of this second series, as a printed agitational paper, is another step in the strengthening of the Communist Workers' Organisation, which will continue to produce as well the theoretical journal Revolutionary Perspectives, and regular leaflets.

When the CWO was founded five years ago we said that the capitalists could find no solution to the economic crisis caused by their own vicious system of exploitation. This system condemns two thirds of the world to semi-starvation, is slowly destroying the natural resources of the planet and now threatens to destroy humanity itself. Five years ago we were regarded as lunatics but today it is obvious that the capitalists' "solutions" to their crisis, including wage cuts and dole queues, have failed - as we predicted they would. Today the prospect of a Third World War is closer.

What is even clearer today than it was five years ago is the fact that the only solution lies in the hands of the working class. It is no accident that this issue is full of reports of workers' strikes throughout the world. We are living at a time of world crisis. It can only be solved on a world level. There is only one class whose interests are the same the whole world over - the working class. Everywhere we are faced with a decaying and rotten system. Everywhere our fight is the same fight. The working class alone poses the civilised alternative: A system without national frontiers, without unemployment, without mass starvation, and where everyone's labour produces something useful for society.

But it will be a long and difficult road of struggle before we reach such a future. What revolutionaries have to do today is to fight for a communist perspective in every battle of the working class to the utmost of our strength. The working class is fighting against capitalism, but this fight will not lead automatically to communism. The most far-sighted workers must give a lead to this struggle by forming an international communist party across national frontiers. Workers' Voice is dedicated to help build this party.

KOREA BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Almost totally ignored by the Western Press, the early part of this summer saw a massive wave of strikes and riots by the Korean working class. For the Press and T.V. student riots took place in support of demands for democratic reforms: the truth was unnewsworthy and unpalatable for them. This article shows how the events of Korea were very much concerned with the working class, defending their own interests, and only later being sidetracked into student unrest.

Korea has been hit badly by the world economic crisis. For years Korea has been presented as the "ideal" booming economy. It had massive investment from the U.S. and Japan to exploit its low labour costs and "sensible" workers. Eventually it grew faster than Japan, with an "economic miracle" in the 60s and 70s. But that "miracle" has been shown as a house of straw built on massive borrowing which did not produce a more productive industry. Korea's growth has fallen from 7% to minus 4% and it is now in serious debt, owing \$20 billion. It cannot export enough, as its chief market is the U.S.A., now suffering its own crisis of profitability so it can't buy Korean goods, even at dumping prices. Inflation has risen in Korea from 24% to well over 30%; unemployment is steadily rising. These twin attacks of inflation and unemployment are the response the bosses are making in all countries to make the workers pay for capitalism's crisis.

The Korean workers' struggle developed in April, as miners rejected the union settlement of 20% when their pay demand was for 42%. They then demanded the resignation of the union leader who negotiated the "settlement". This was only the first step, however, as they thrust aside the unions' attempts to confine their struggle and took to the streets.

Rallies and demonstrations turned into battles with the riot police, involving 3,500 miners, and police posts were overrun. Further, when the police tried to break up occupations, the miners fought back, killing one policeman and injuring 100 more, and arming themselves with police weapons.

Events escalated. The mining company's offices were attacked in Changson and the miners and their families, in response to the economic attacks of the bosses and the physical attacks of the state, proceeded to challenge the state directly by taking over the city and controlling all key posts, such as the railway station.

Solidarity action broke out and the miners were joined by another key group in the Korean economy, the steel workers. These demanded pay increases of up to 100% - which their bosses refused to discuss. 1,000 steel workers set fire to their bosses' offices and battled with the riot police.

By early May the direction of the struggle started to change. The workers were joined by students who had different aims. The students hoped to channel the fight towards

demands for a democratic type of government and for an end to martial law. They ignored the fact that in democratic countries like Britain and Italy, the crisis is just as bad, with as much inflation and unemployment as in Korea.

By late May the uprising was spreading, despite the confusing contribution of the students, with the workers seizing the important city of Kwangju. The army immediately tried to crush the working class with bayonets and bullets. Responding to the killings of the city workers, miners flocked in from the countryside, armed with explosives and swelling the workers' numbers to 200,000. They then raided the city's armouries, equipping themselves with guns and army vehicles. A well organised workers' militia controlled access to the city, and workers at the barricades exchanged fire with army helicopters. The workers distributed free groceries and milk from the shops.

The Korean state tried to cool the situation by offering to appoint a new government, in the hope that this would fool the workers into believing that a new set of faces in the government might suddenly make their grievances and hardships vanish.

This trick didn't work. The rebellion spread to 15 other cities. The government saw that the leading city was Kwangju and reinforced the military attack there. In the face of overwhelming odds the workers conceded defeat, and by the time the city fell to the army resistance was down to a handful of students. Such dramatic sieges and demands for democratic reforms are understandable and palatable to journalists - this period of the struggles was splashed in the newspapers of the West. The real movement - that of the working class, was largely ignored.

THE PRESENT DEFEAT

The Korean rising failed for many reasons. In the first place, South Korea is predominantly an agricultural country and the urban workers' revolt was largely isolated in a sea of rural apathy. This will have to be overcome by the Korean workers in future struggles.

Secondly, the ruling class was not divided. Despite the faction fight which led to the murder of dictator Park the military regained control from the "liberals". In this way the rising was crushed by troops who remained loyal to the State.

On the other hand, the two groups who fought the state, the students and the workers, had very different aims. While the students wanted the replacement of military rule by a liberal, democratic variety of capitalism, the working class were fighting for a decent standard of living, a fight which could not be won by replacing one capitalist faction in the Government with another.

But lacking at the moment a communist minority in the Korean working class, the workers' political battle with the state was directionless. A revolutionary leadership

would have attempted to change the struggle into a conscious struggle for state power. The first stage in this would have been to unify the various strikes and centres of revolt. The sad fact is, however, that despite the ever increasing burden of propping up bankrupt economies, the Western block as a whole is still able to advance loans to countries like Korea.

THE FUTURE - ?

Now that the army has, for the moment brought South Korea back to so-called "political stability" - that is no opposition is tolerated and political meetings and strikes are once more illegal - the new President (General Chon) is preparing to borrow from the coffers of the West. (Already two British banks - Lloyds and Barclays - have supplied loans for the Korean steel industry.) He is certain that the USA and her allies will continue to bail out Korea without any demands by Carter for the protection of "human rights". This is the army's reward for quelling the working class rising and anyway South Korea is in too important a strategic position for the US to allow it to fall into the hands of Russia.

But this won't always be the case. The economic crisis is not going to go away and the ruling class in the advanced countries of the West will find themselves with even worse economic and political problems of their own and therefore hardly in a position to bail out their weaker allies. In such a situation it will be up to the working class in the stronger countries to support the struggle of their comrades in the underdeveloped areas in the best way possible - by rising against their own ruling class.

Meanwhile in Korea, the workers have had the valuable experience of shaking the capitalist state. As the economy weakens over the coming years the unrest of the workers will not vanish. It will increase as the bosses continue to make the working class pay for the crisis. In future struggles, workers who have been so close to toppling the state this year must start to consider what sort of state they should build to replace it. Out of such questions a communist minority emerges, and armed with this clarity in addition to explosives and guns, the Korean workers will be armed for the final battle, for a workers' state and a communist society.

LEAFLET:

The following leaflet is being given out at factories throughout Britain by members and sympathisers of the C.W.O.

FIGHT THE LAYOFFS!

The threat of unemployment hangs over nearly every worker today. Who can say that their job is really safe? Fords recently sacked 4,000 workers, BL 5,500, Bowaters (the paper firm) are closing down on Merseyside, British Steel is finished at Consett. In all, unemployment now tops 2 million in Britain. Things are much the same in every country. Germany has 1½ million unemployed, the US has over 8 million, with 300,000 car workers laid off. China is said to have 20 million unemployed. The whole world economy is in crisis, and the working class is being made to pay for that crisis with their jobs.

Both Labour and Tory governments have tried their 'solutions'.

■ The Tories say that "greedy workers" are grabbing too much money in pay rises. This is a lie. Countries such as Korea and Brazil have built their growth on the backs of their workers' low wages and today that boom is crumbling, despite low pay rises. (Korea's economy is shrinking 4% per year after last year's 7% growth; Brazil has a staggering \$50 billion debt!)

■ And Labour have no solution. From 1974 to 1979, under the last Labour Government, unemployment increased from 600,000 to 1½ million.

■ The Left's programme of "Nationalise Everything" is no solution either. Nationalised industry has the same need to make a profit as ALL capitalist industry has, and if it doesn't do that, it is shut down or forced to cut back on production. **NO PROFIT, NO WORK!**

For the moment capitalism's sickness is being treated by savage cuts in jobs and living standards. Sooner or later the two imperialist blocs, based on Russia and America, will be forced to impose a 'Final Solution' to the crisis. Today's world trade war will become World War Three tomorrow, as rival states fight for markets and profits. The working class will be made to pay the cost of this war, in money and blood. Capitalism has **NOTHING** to offer the working class except economic ruin and war.

HOW TO FIGHT BACK

It is easy to take redundancy money and hope that you can find another job. This is why the bosses pay out - once everyone is out of the factory and isolated on the dole, then it is too late to fight. This is what happened in the Thirties when the working class was defeated and demoralised.

Today's workers aren't defeated, as the recent strikes in Britain have shown us, but the bosses still have the upper hand. The fight against the dole is not as advanced as the fight for a living wage and unemployed workers will be used as a pool of spare labour to keep wages down.

It is important that, whatever the odds, workers fight for their jobs. If they don't then the bosses will assume they can do what they like with us. This year the dockers in Holland and, more recently workers in Poland, without unions, defeated threats against their living standards in a series of militant struggles. These threats have only been withdrawn temporarily (because the crisis will not go away), but the workers have shown that they cannot be pushed around and are ready to meet the next threat.

Compare this with the fate of the steel workers in Britain. They waited quietly because the unions promised that they would defend their jobs. This led to the closure of Shotton. The bosses now had a good con trick, as the unions put up a sham fight against redundancies and the workers watched from the sidelines. In fact, the unions simply negotiated away jobs and the workers had lost their chance to fight back. Despite protest marches, Corby and Consett soon followed and Warrington will be next, followed closely by South Wales.

The lesson of all this is quite clear. Workers must organise themselves and not leave the fight in the hands of the union.

• If your workplace is due to be closed, the only effective way to fight back is to join together with workers in other factories and other industries, to persuade them to take strike action in solidarity with you. You can't fight closure alone, but if other workers join your struggle you can hit the bosses where it hurts - their profits.

• If you are asked to help workers to fight redundancies give them full support by blacking goods and sympathy strikes. Their fight is your fight. It will be your turn next.

• When you strike, get the **WHOLE** of the workforce to hold mass meetings. Ignore trade union divisions and organise your action at these mass meetings. Send delegates to other workplaces to enlist more support. Keep the strike under the control of **ALL** the workers involved - don't leave it to the shop stewards. Organise mass pickets **EVERYWHERE** they are needed, not just at your own workplace.

• Don't accept management ballots asking if you "agree" to workers being made redundant. Someone with a pistol at their head will "agree" to anything. Burn the ballot papers and ballot boxes.

• Persuade unemployed workers to join the struggle, for example, by manning mass pickets. The needs of **ALL** workers, with or without jobs, are **THE SAME**. **United**, the working class is strong; **divided**, we are weak. Mass unemployment won't go away now that capitalism has taken a nose-dive into crisis. So any success in a struggle for jobs is temporary. Capitalism can only offer to workers of every country more inflation (to cut real wages), more unemployment, and more cuts in social services. So the short-term struggle for jobs and wages is only a part of the answer for the working class. In the long run workers must struggle against capitalism itself. Only when workers control their own state can we end the misery of inflation and unemployment. A workers' state, based on mass assemblies and councils, will be able to organise production for the **NEEDS** of the many and not the **PROFITS** of the few.

in the next
WORKERS
VOICE

TRADE
UNIONS
enemies
of the
working
class

Robinson claim to have halted BL strikes

From Our Correspondent
Birmingham

Mr Derek Robinson, the shop steward convenor dismissed by British Leyland as a threat to industrial peace, told a Birmingham industrial tribunal yesterday that "on countless occasions" BL shop stewards and workers had wanted to walk out "and I have played a part in avoiding this".

He added: "It was my job to make sure that agreements were carried out both by the management and men. I always adopted the attitude that agreements should be honoured, whether they are good or bad".

Mr Robinson was dismissed last November for distributing leaflets attacking plans.

POLISH STRIKES (cont'd)

But strikes in Poland don't show us that the workers there are unhappy with communism, because the WHOLE of the Eastern bloc is CAPITALIST, not communist. No country in the world is communist. Those countries which claim to be so are in reality only a more centralised form of the state capitalism which we know in the West. Instead of having only a limited number of nationalised industries, in the Eastern bloc the greater part of industrial production is under state control. But this does not mean that capitalism has been abolished. On the contrary, all the essential features of capitalism remain: industries which have to compete on the world market and produce for profit, not for human needs; a working class, forced to earn its living by wage labour and whose labour power produces that profit.

As capitalist states, the Russian bloc countries have been ravaged by the same world crisis in profitability as the West. And, just as in the West, East European capitalism is attacking the living standards and working conditions of the workers who create the wealth, although this is sometimes less obvious from the outside. Massive armies disguise extensive unemployment and inflation is relatively low because the state tries to avoid price rises by the simple solution of providing subsidies for basic goods. The only problem is that it can't afford the necessary subsidies to supply enough goods at the official prices. For the working class in the Russian bloc shortages, queuing and the black market have become a way of life. The Polish strikes therefore are a reaction by the workers to the effects of the economic crisis. The USSR itself has not been without militant strikes this year. In May 370,000 workers in the car plants at Togliatti and Gorky struck for higher wages.

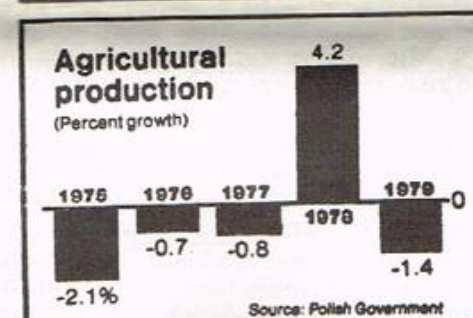
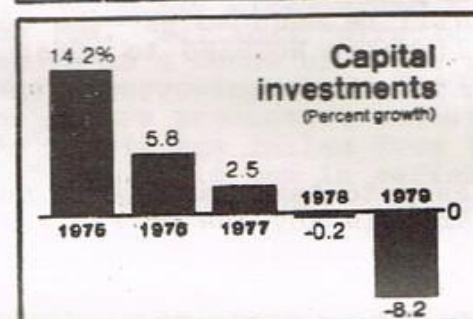
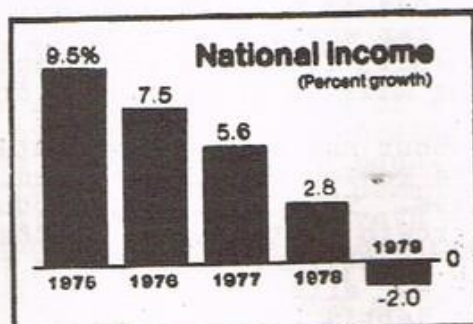
A DECADE OF PROBLEMS

The end of the 60s saw the collapse of the post-war boom for the world economy. 1968 brought a strike wave to the western world - notably the mass strikes in France - as the bosses tried to make the working class pay for the decline in profitability. In the Soviet bloc there were economic problems too. On their own generous figures, economic growth fell from 10% in the 1950s, to 7% in the 60s and to 5% in the 70s. The Polish government's reaction to its economic plight at the start of the 70s was to raise food prices, to provide more capital for investment. This was an open attack on the workers' standard of living, which they resisted. A strike wave erupted, centred on Gdansk. Demonstrations grew into bloody street battles with the police (officially 300 workers were killed), and Communist Party offices were burned down. In the face of the class' open fury, the Government withdrew the price rises.

Having failed to raise meat prices in 1970 the Government tried again in July 1976. More strikes broke out in which workers at the Ursus tractor factory ripped up railway lines, whilst in Radom there were attacks on shops and the Communist Party Headquarters. These strikes forced the Government to only raise prices by 35% (instead of 70%), but this was a further blow to the ailing Polish economy which was already heavily in debt. To bail Gierk out the Russians gave the biggest aid package to any of its

colonies. This included a 1 billion rouble (\$1.4bn.) loan to help Poland pay its debts to the West.

This did not, however, solve the economic crisis in Poland. Much of Poland's exports are now mortgaged to the West in return for loans and at the moment Poland owes the West \$20 billion. Poland now requires a fresh injection of economic aid to meet the demands of the working class and ease the political crisis.



The Polish leaders have been no more successful than Western governments in finding an answer to the crisis of capitalism. The price rises announced in July were an attempt to solve the problem by cutting public spending. Meat subsidies, which cost the Polish State \$2½ billion a year, were withdrawn and this led to sudden price rises. Thus Gierk's solution to the problems facing Polish capitalism is not unlike the measures being taken by Thatcher to try and solve the problems of British capitalism. (For example, cuts in government aid to industry; cuts in spending on hospitals, education, etc.)

THE WORKERS' GAINS

The Polish working class has shown that it is the most class conscious in the world today. The way in which they linked up strike committees in Gdansk to form one unifying body representing over 200 factories, and their refusal to go on accepting the costs of the capitalist crisis makes the Polish workers the vanguard of the world working class. The great economic gains which they have won; the 300% increase in family allowance (to match that of the army); the increases in pay, pensions, disablement benefit, and better medicines will soon be taken away by the crisis. (A pay rise isn't much good anyway if

the Government can't afford to stock the shops with meat.)

But the Polish workers' gains in these battles go beyond economics. Their greatest gains have been in experience and organisation. They know that they can count on the unselfish solidarity of wide sections of their own class. They have seen that solidarity force the government to concede without a fight. This will not always be the case, but the present struggles and their apparent success will ensure that when the next attack is made by the State, the Polish workers will have the confidence to once again fight back.

Despite all this, there are two dangers to overcome when drawing out the lessons of these latest struggles of the Polish workers. The first is to blind ourselves to the obvious weaknesses of the demand for "free" trade unions, and to ignore the strong influence of reactionary forces such as the Catholic Church and the "dissidents" within the struggle. The second is to suggest what the Polish workers OUGHT to have been doing without taking account of the real difficulties which the Polish workers face at the moment.

"FREE" TRADE UNIONS

The chief demand finally made by the Polish workers was for "free" trade unions. This is actually a step backward.

The workers in western Europe have such unions and their plight is similar to their counterparts in Poland. In Britain and in France the steel unions, for example, have negotiated away thousands of jobs. In Poland the official unions are obviously a part of the state machine and don't pretend to fight the state for the interests of the workers. Their role is to direct labour as befits the plans of government. In the West the unions are not so obviously bound up with the state, (they even occasionally make the pretence of militancy by calling a strike) but the role they play is ultimately little different. They negotiate rates of exploitation and are especially useful to the government at the moment in getting workers to accept redundancies. What the Polish workers have really asked for by calling for "free" trade unions is the right to call a strike without it provoking a political crisis.

Already the strike leader, Walesa (now full-time free trade union official) is making the same mealy-mouthed speeches to the Polish working class as Bill Sirs did to the steel workers in Britain last winter. He said that the agreement was "the best that could be obtained in the circumstances" and he has joined Gierk and the Catholic Church in appealing to workers to go back to work "in the nation's interest".

THE DISSIDENTS' ROLE

The more farsighted members of the Polish ruling class have already seen the usefulness of "free" trade unions for containing the class struggle. In 1976, both inside the Polish Communist Party (PCP) and within the ranks of the "dissidents", there was a demand for such unions for the purpose of bringing to the workers the arguments of the bosses (such as, "there is no more money in the kitty!") While the "liberal" faction in the PCP lost the power struggle (until this wave of strikes proved the usefulness of "free" trade unions for the Polish state), the "dissidents" were able to gain some influence within the working class by organising Workers Defence Committees.

These committees enjoyed an early success in September 1976 when they got the sentences of workers convicted of "hooliganism" withdrawn. Since then their influence within the working class has grown. This has enabled them to insert some of their own political demands (such as the publication of the Helsinki Accords and the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights) into the list of workers' demands.

The main danger facing the Polish working class is that their struggle will be used in future (as it has been done already) by these dissidents who seek a solution to the economic crisis by means of a "freer" economy. They are hoping that in return for freedom of speech and press, the Polish workers will be persuaded to accept the austerity measures which they feel will be necessary to solve the crisis. Jacek Kuron, one of Poland's leading "dissidents" sees decentralisation as a means of getting the working class to accept austerity:

"Economists, sociologists and technicians close to the establishment have called for years for a fundamental economic reform, for decentralisation, for a reinforcement of the market mechanism. In the current state of affairs such reforms would certainly lower the standard of living of many social groups. (CWO emphasis) To obtain their consent it is essential that they accept the reforms. The technocrats are aware of this necessity, and have been calling for a national discussion. But such debate demands ... democratic reforms such as freedom of speech and freedom to organise - if only for the sole reason of permitting debate." (Guardian 21.8.80)

It is important that the Polish working class is aware that their struggle has nothing in common with the struggle of Kuron and other anti-working class "dissidents".

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Another element which hopes to gain from a "democratic" Poland is the Catholic Church. This was placed in a difficult position since the election of a Polish Pope has given it more prestige. Gierek had been trying to give it more power so that it would act in the interests of the Polish state. For instance, in January 1978 he is quoted as saying:

"What can be done so that the Church gains more influence in society, because we cannot deal with some of the current demoralisation?"

(Financial Times 17.1.78)

The Polish Primate, Wysinski responded by promising to use the Church's influence to help avoid "small revolutions". Wysinski faced with a real "small revolution", tried to have it both ways by calling for "prudence and restraint" in the workers' demands but holding Mass in the shipyards and collections for strikers after Church every Sunday. The workers at both Szczecin and Gdansk responded by displaying posters of the Pope and demanding more access to the media for the Church. Clearly, the Church's interest in the working class is aimed at CONTROLLING the class struggle and channelling it away from the workers' own aims.

This is an aspect of the struggle which communist minorities must fight against. It is dangerous to overestimate the positive aspects of a strike wave and ignore these aspects which are an expression of a confused understanding by the working class.

POLAND - The main strike centres



WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The strikes in Gdansk, where the movement became most highly organised, were sparked off - like all mass movements - by a relatively small incident: the dismissal of a "free trade union" supporter called Anna Walentinowicz. This led to 16,000 workers electing an inter-factory strike committee, under the advice of "free trade union" activists whose spokesman, Walesa was the focus of a Western press anxious to prove that it is great men and not the great masses who make history. Walesa's political friends controlled the struggle until its "victory" because they had the confidence and support of the workers - a confidence which had been built up in ten years of sacrifice and struggle. This minority achieved a presence in the working class. In its actions (though clearly NOT in its politics) there are lessons for communists to follow.

The fact that there was no communist minority to lead the struggle away from the dead ends of "free trade unions", Catholic nationalism and dissident reformism shows just how difficult it is going to be for the working class to win the class war. If these present struggles are not to be followed by demoralisation and defeat it is essential that a revolutionary minority does emerge to lead the working class towards communist political aims.

However, we should not conclude that because elements of reaction are present in these struggles they must gain the upper hand. All real struggles have contradictory movements. For example, the metalworkers in Bolshevik Russia in 1918 were both the most communist section of the working class and the most jealous of their trade separateness. Such contradictions will always exist and it is only the actual struggle itself which decides which of the two forces will win. Whilst there was not a communist minority present in these strikes it is still no excuse for communists elsewhere avoiding the question of what they would have done in the Polish situation.

The first task would have to have been to take a realistic look at the balance of class forces at the time. A brief glance would have been enough to tell them that nearly all the cards lay, for the moment, with the world ruling class.

To begin with, there was no hope of the Polish workers overthrowing the state, since to do so would have been to invite massacre at the hands of Russian invaders. Russia cannot afford to lose its link through Poland to East Germany where it keeps

most of its army. There can be no Warsaw Pact without Warsaw! To do so would be to see the rest of its empire collapse. The only chance the Polish workers might have had to take their struggle further would have been to take advantage of the rivalry between the two imperialist blocs. But, despite Afghanistan, the war of words over the Olympics, etc., the West has made it quite plain that it would not only NOT intervene to help the Polish workers fight the state, but also sent £700 millions via a West German bank to help bail out the Polish ruling class. This was a reversal of roles, since in 1974 the Polish Government sent coal to Britain to sabotage the miners' strike.

Whilst the world's rulers are leading us towards a war as the only solution to the crisis, they are still clearly aware that their main enemy is the working class. The West is overjoyed at the prospect of upheavals in Poland - led by the "dissidents" and the Catholic Church. It is not prepared to sanction the workers' revolt. Such international class solidarity will soon have to be imitated by the world's workers.

Unable to take advantage of the growing tension between the blocs, the only thing the Polish workers could have done to carry their struggle forward was to call upon Russian workers to strike and paralyse the Russian war machine. The strikes at Togliattigrad and Gorki need only to have come at the same time as the Polish strikes and need to have been spread through Russia to have achieved this. Then the Polish workers need not have accepted the shoddy deal worked out by the State and its new servants, the "free trade union" activists.

In such a situation there is a thin line between success and failure. All it needed was for the movement for unification of the strike committees in the different centres to be carried further to the point of the formation of workers' councils. These could then have co-ordinated the strikes in Warsaw, Gdansk and Silesia so that they all took place at the same time. Without aid from its imperialist master, the Polish state could not have resisted such an attack and the workers' seizure of power would have followed. In this situation, for communists everywhere, the cry of "international solidarity with the Polish workers" turns "Workers of the World, Unite" from being a mere slogan into the only realistic programme of action.

1905 THE ST. PETERSBURG SOVIET

75th Anniversary

This edition of *Workers Voice* coincides with the 75th anniversary of one of the most important working class events of this century - the founding of the St. Petersburg Soviet (or workers' council) which occurred on October 13th 1905. For the next fifty days this organisation grew to represent 200,000 of the half million workers in St. Petersburg. It was imitated in other Russian cities, particularly in Moscow. The workers' council organised the Russian workers in their struggles, it led the political strikes and demonstrations, armed the working class and unified the strike committees of different factories.

NEW FORM OF STATE POWER

The chief significance of the workers' council was that it presented for the first time a new form of power - workers' power. Its differences with parliaments were listed by Trotsky:

"It constitutes authentic democracy, without a lower and an upper chamber, without a professional bureaucracy but with the voters' rights to recall their deputies at any moment. Through its members - deputies directly elected by the workers - the soviet exercises direct leadership of social manifestations of the proletariat as a whole ..."
(1905 p.268)

There is no doubt that the most important difference with capitalist democracy is the idea of "delegation". This idea was first used by the class in the Paris Commune in 1871 and allows workers to recall their representatives at any time. (Instead of waiting 5 years before the next election.) Also, the delegate is not a free agent as M.P.s are. When a workers' delegate speaks and votes on any issue he cannot say just what he feels like at that time. He votes on the basis of the orders of the workers who elected him. If he fails to carry out their wishes he can be instantly removed. Of course, such really democratic features are always derided as "idealistic" by capitalist commentators. They assume that the conditions under which a delegate is elected are the same as that for an M.P. Nothing could be farther from reality. In capitalist society an M.P. is elected to represent a constituency - a geographical area containing people from different classes and therefore with different interests which can never be reconciled. In a revolutionary situation a delegate is elected by members of the same class - the working class, usually from one workplace and so he/she will actually represent the real wishes of a single class. This will make sure that the delegate does not have to be recalled every time an issue is to be decided by the Soviet. This worked in both 1905 and 1917 and proved in practice to all doubters that workers can rule for themselves.

SOVIETS MUST DESTROY OLD STATE

The Soviet therefore showed that it was the real form of a workers' state but no two rival state powers can exist for long side by side. In a situation of "dual power" the capitalists will fight for their lives. There is no question of the working class being allowed to peacefully establish their own power. The only way a workers' state can survive is by destroying the capitalist state apparatus and replacing it with its own power. In 1905 the Russian workers lost this battle but in 1917 they finally succeeded in overthrowing the Provisional Government and fully establishing Soviet power. Even so, in 1905 the workers' council briefly seemed to be the real power in St. Petersburg and Moscow since nothing moved without an order from the Soviet.

However, what really defines a state is its monopoly of arms and this the St. Petersburg Soviet did not have. Though arms were distributed to the working class and though "it was inevitably compelled

to use repressive measures against elements amongst the masses who brought anarchy into its united ranks" (1905 p.400), it did not destroy the Tsar's army. Once the working class was deserted by the middle class and the peasant risings had died down the Russian rulers were able to use their army to attack the workers in St. Petersburg and Moscow, resulting in hundreds of deaths. In 1917 it was only the disintegration of this same army and the active support of many soldiers and sailors that enabled the Soviets to finally establish a workers' state.

SOVIET REPRESENTS ALL WORKING CLASS

A third feature of the 1905 Soviet in both St. Petersburg and Moscow was the fact that, despite being the representative body of the whole working class, they in fact consisted of less than half the workers of those cities. (In the St. Petersburg Soviet there were 562 delegates representing 200,000 workers out of half a million in the city.) There is nothing surprising or disturbing in this fact. Not all workers will simultaneously realise the significance of the formation of a "class-wide" body like the Soviet. Others, either through timidity or the success of capitalist propaganda, will remain neutral or even hostile. It will be the task of the Soviets to attempt to accredit delegates to all sections of the working class (and this will not be confined to industrial workers but to white collar, unemployed and agricultural workers who identify with the Soviet).

Every section must be given the opportunity to escape from the orbit of the capitalist state. This does not necessarily mean that any hostile minority will automatically accept the authority of the Soviets and it will be against these "elements" that the threat of "repressive measures" by the rest of the working class will be necessary. This is certainly a matter of regret but the history of the Paris Commune and the revolutions in Russia show that any toleration of opposition to the workers' state power on the part of the working class is punished by the far greater horrors of a White Terror once the old order is restored.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

But if the "class-wide" body, the workers' council does not represent the entire working class in the period of upheaval, what of the revolutionary minority, the communist party? The events of 1905 (and their sequel in 1917) have taught revolutionaries many important lessons about the relationship between the workers' councils and the communist party. It is particularly important to re-emphasise those lessons since in the 60 years after the defeats of the European workers in the struggles which followed World War One, a large number of myths have grown concerning the reasons for the decline of the Russian Revolution into Stalinist state



Workers and soldiers' demonstration, summer 1905. Here they are joined by students, army officers and the middle class. These elements deserted the working class in October when the Tsar promised a parliament. The workers' answer was to form the Soviet.

capitalism.

For the CWO the isolation of the Russian workers and their decimation in a barbarous civil war (1918-20) destroyed the basis for the existence of a healthy workers' state and communist party. By the end of the civil war the Soviets were lifeless shells and it was no longer true to speak of "Soviet Russia". Moreover, by 1921 the working class movements throughout Europe had been crushed so there was no possibility of a working class revolution in Europe coming to the aid of the Russian workers. As a result the Communist Party could only maintain itself in power by shooting workers (at Kronstadt in 1921) and making trade deals with capitalist countries (like Britain, Germany and Sweden). In short, they were communists in name only and the great names of the past like Lenin, Trotsky and Bukharin, each using different excuses, rationalised the building of state capitalism in Russia. Stalin simply followed each of their ideas in turn before creating the modern barbarism of the present Russian state. For us no individual is to blame for the defeat which was a product of the balance of class forces at the time.

However, in the last 60 years two alternative explanations have grown up, centring on organisational forms, and both of these represent dangers for today's growing communist movement.

"PARTYISM"

The first danger is "partyism". This is the idea that all the revolution needs is a general to plan the campaign and the working class will follow the lead. This was the view of the German Social Democratic Party before World War One. It thought that the only worthwhile working class action was one organised by themselves. This error was repeated by the Bordighists after the defeat of the Italian workers' struggles in 1920. Trotsky, witnessing a real, live revolution in 1905, dispels the wooden and static nature of this idea.

"In revolution ... the subjective will of a party, even a 'dominant' party, is only one of the factors involved and not by any means the most important one."

(1905 p.279)

What Trotsky argues is that revolutions cannot be neatly organised just when and where the "partyists" wish it and first of all there must exist a political situation and living conditions which bring masses of people into open revolt.

Nothing better indicates Trotsky's decline into the counter-revolution after 1921 than his attempt to organise a revolution on November 7th 1923 in Germany to the accompaniment of a pamphlet entitled "Can the Counter-revolution or Revolution be Fixed for a Definite Date?" His answer in 1923 was "yes" (and he was proved wrong in practice) but in 1905, when he was still a revolutionary, it was emphatically "no".

"COUNCILISM"

All this will sound like music to the ears of those who represent the second danger to today's communist movement - the councilists. For them the defeat of the Russian Revolution was caused by the Bolshevik Party "substituting" itself for the workers' councils and so strangling the revolution. For them the one and only working class organisation is the workers' council

Background to 1905

In 1904 the Russian monarchy was faced with a series of crises. The young Russian working class was flexing its muscles for the first time in a wave of strikes which had begun in the 1890s. Riots broke out in the countryside as the peasants tried to reduce the heavy burden of taxes and increase their land holdings at the expense of the landlords. Even the feeble middle class had stepped up its demand for a constitution by forming a political party.

The "Imperial dimwit", as Trotsky called Tsar Nicholas II, had only one answer to make. Advised by one of his reactionary cronies that what Russia needed was a "short, victorious war", he picked a fight with "the little brown monkeys" in Japan, only to see two fleets and an entire army lost in a few months.

It was in the middle of this that the St. Petersburg workers decided they had had enough. Agitation for a strike began in the Putilov arms factory in St. Petersburg. This agitation was quickly taken over by the police unions whose aim - like our trade unions today - was to head off any serious unrest. The police unions (again like the trade unions today) were forced to call a strike against rising prices and low wages. This began on January 3rd 1905. By January 7th 140,000 workers were on strike. On January 9th the workers forced the police trade union leaders to call a demonstration. This was peaceful and was designed to fool the workers into believing that the Tsar was capable of helping them. Nicholas II left St. Petersburg in charge of the brutal General Trepov who ordered the troops to fire. The peaceful nature of the demonstration did not persuade the troops not to shoot and hundreds of workers were massacred.

This "Bloody Sunday" led to mass strikes which petered out into sectional strikes during the summer. The continuing crisis, however, caused the workers to begin to unify their strike committees. The first place to do this was Ivanovo-Voznesensk but it was the St. Petersburg workers' council which gave unity and leadership to all the other 'soviets'.

The importance of 1905 is that it showed to the world working class what power it could hold if it acted collectively. By deciding that "it is better to die than to continue suffering intolerable torment", the Russian working class put itself at the head of the world's workers. It led Lenin to make the following prophetic speech in January 1917:

"... the Russian Revolution (of 1905) precisely because of its proletarian character ... was the prologue to the coming European revolution ..."

The present grave-like stillness in Europe must not deceive us. Europe is charged with revolution. The monstrous horrors of the imperialist war, the suffering caused by the high cost of living, engender everywhere a revolutionary spirit; and the ruling classes ... are more and more moving into a blind alley from which they can never extricate themselves without tremendous upheavals."

There is no "grave-like" stillness in the world today and it is to contribute to the inevitable coming revolution that this attempt to understand the lessons of 1905 has been made.

and all political parties are simply "bourgeois". This view is totally alien to the communist movement. Since the days of Marx no-one has doubted the necessity of the working class forming an organisation to represent the opposite of the government and bosses' views and to carry out propaganda and lead the struggle away from capitalist aims to working class aims. This is also shown in the lessons of 1905 as written by Trotsky and, perhaps surprisingly, by Rosa Luxemburg.

The 1905 Soviet itself did not emerge, as councilist mythology relates, "spontaneously" but was in fact a product of the existing divisions in the Social Democratic Party, between Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. As Trotsky tells us in 1905, the Party produced the Soviet.

"What was the Soviet of Workers' Deputies? The Soviet came into being as a response to an objective need - a need born of the course of events. It was an organisation which was authoritative and yet had no traditions ... Internal friction between the two equally powerful factions of the social democrats on the

one hand, and the struggle of both factions with the socialist revolutionaries on the other, rendered the creation of a NON-PARTY organisation absolutely essential." (1905 p.122-3)

And he goes on to explain that the Mensheviks took the initiative to call the Soviet which began with only 30 or 40 delegates representing no more than a few thousand workers. However, the "objective need" which Trotsky speaks about was the need to unite the large number of strikes which were taking place at that time and to give them a political focus. It was this task that the Party tried to carry out.

From the Party's initiative the Soviet grew to represent 147 different factories. Though well over half the delegates were metal workers there were large delegations from the textile factories, the printing and paper industries and even delegations of shop workers, office workers and the pharmaceutical trade. What is clear for both Trotsky and Luxemburg is that neither of them see a division of interests between the organisation which represents the whole working class - the workers' council - and the minority in the political party.

Foreign debt now over \$50 BILLION ~ the world's largest

BRAZIL~WHAT ECONOMIC MIRACLE?

For years economists have been looking for a shining example to prove that, despite appearances, capitalism is still healthy somewhere on the planet. In the early Seventies they told us that Iran and Brazil had achieved "an economic miracle" and that they were immune to the world crisis. 1979 exploded the myths about Iran, 1980 has destroyed the fantasies about Brazil. In the face of mounting inflation and unemployment the Brazilian working class, particularly the metalworkers and dockers, shattered their image as a docile labour force and took to the streets in a violent struggle to defend their meagre living standards. The cry "Economic miracle - what economic miracle?" threw back in the face of the ruling class their promises of a better future. These struggles have shown that the Brazilian bosses who have lived for so long on borrowed money are now living on borrowed time.

MONEY FLOWS IN...

Brazil's boom years were based on large loans from the USA and IMF, as well as low labour costs, which for the working class means only one thing - high exploitation. Without the latter the generals who seized power in 1964 would have found that Western capital would not have been so forthcoming. As profitability fell in Europe and the USA the bosses there searched for areas of lower costs in order to remain both competitive and profitable. Brazil seemed an easy answer for the likes of Fiat and Volkswagen. The contribution of labour costs to a factory-made item in Brazil is less than 20%, sometimes even half this amount. So money flowed into Brazil based on the need for profits - profits to be made on the backs of the low wages of the Brazilian workers.

The rapid change in the economic life of the country has brought no benefit to the Brazilian workers, especially those who have recently moved off the land. When the Army took over in 1964 half the workforce still worked on the land. By 1976 only 38% did so. The drive to industrialisation drew thousands to the cities which found themselves unable to cope with the influx. The shanty towns (favelas) which grew up have no sanitation, no running water and no electricity. Their inhabitants live on the fringes of existence, depressing the wages of those in work. This is perfect for the bosses who have a cheap labour force without having to pay taxes to house workers.

... BUT MONEY FLOWS OUT

However, as all good debtors know, the more you borrow, the more you need to borrow to keep up the interest payments. The profits being squeezed out of the Brazilian workers didn't pay the debts because these profits were exported to help prop up the shaky economies of Europe and the USA. Brazil has also had to keep on borrowing to help pay for the rising cost of imported oil, especially in the last seven years. But as the crisis deepened in the leading capitalist countries it has been harder and harder for Brazil to raise more loans and those that can be raised are at very high rates of interest. As a result Brazil's foreign debt, which at \$57 billion is the largest in the world, takes the bulk of any profits which are used to pay off the interest.

THE STATE ATTACKS...

Just as the Brazilian bosses have made the working class pay for the "economic miracle" with low wages they now expected to make the workers pay for the economic collapse with a cut in real wages. At the same time rising unemployment, due to the cut-back in investment, is another attack on the working class. Workers so recently attracted in from the countryside are cast aside at the whim of the bosses. As a reserve army of unemployed they are another useful weapon in the bosses' attack on the workers. However inflation is the main way in which the bosses cut real wages in the 1980s. Today in Brazil inflation is higher than the "catastrophic" level which brought the generals to power in 1964. Unemployment is so widespread that the government has lost count of the numbers. This is not surprising as the State doesn't care how high it is because it does not pay any unemployment benefit.

... THE WORKERS RESPOND

The government has tried hard to keep wages well below the rate of inflation, arguing like the bosses do everywhere, that high wages cause high inflation. However for several years wages have been held below the rate of inflation and yet prices have risen more than ever. Brazil shows how the only thanks the bosses give us for belt-tightening is to ask for another notch in the belt.

So in March and April of this year, with inflation at 80% and still rising, sections of the Brazilian working class decided they had had enough. 200,000 metalworkers (from the car factories in Sao Paulo) came out on strike demanding higher pay. They rejected the 63% wage "increase" offered in line with the government's pay policy (i.e. a 17% cut in wages), and demanded 80% on a par with price rises. Immediately the workers set up pickets to prevent the use of the unemployed as scabs. This led immediately to violent battles with the police.

UNIONS - WHOSE FRIENDS?

The union leaders called for "calm" following these struggles. This call should not surprise any workers today. For years the role of trade unions in strikes throughout the world has been to contain them, despite the radical words often used by union leaders. When working class anger at cuts in their living standards surges up, the unions often call for strikes to keep control of the movement and to hold on to their reputation as defenders of the workers' interests. Every sell-out is justified by the unions as a "reasonable" settlement or "the best that could be reached in the circumstances". And one way in which they try to control the strike is to confine it to "their" members and to prevent solidarity action by other workers which would take the struggle out of union control. In Brazil, in spite of the arrest of the union boss, the unions refused to call for the help of workers in other factories and industries.

The government, composed mainly of the most backward sections of the Brazilian ruling class, clearly did not see (as their more astute allies in Western Europe do) the benefits of negotiations with the trade unions. If they had freed Lula, the imprisoned trade union leader he would have negotiated a solution to the strike along the lines that the State wanted

to impose. In fact the State forgot a lesson it had learned in 1979 where in a similar strike they first suspended Lula from his post, and then reinstated him because they could not bring the strike to an end without his cooperation. The role of the union is to let just enough steam out of the political pressure cooker. They call a strike and then proceed to lead it nowhere except to demoralisation.

The Brazilian strike was doomed whilst it stayed in the union strait-jacket. The unions successfully stopped any solidarity action with other workers and the strikes were confined to the car factories and the docks. The union also sabotaged the struggle by refusing to release union funds to pay strike benefit (just as the steelworkers union did in Britain this year). The workers however did gain some experience of fighting outside the unions by setting up their own strike fund to feed their dependants. This however was not enough and after the 41st day the isolated workers were forced back to work. By the end of May the strike was over.

WHICH WAY BRAZIL?

The "economic miracle" offered the workers who had created it, precisely nothing. After 10 years of "boom" under the military government the average Brazilian worker needed to work twice as many hours just to buy the basic essentials of food, clothes and housing. The end of the boom offers even less to the workers. The capitalist class in Brazil, as in all other countries, can offer the working class no future except more belt-tightening and eventually death in a third world war.

In this sense Brazil confirms the view put forward by the CWO in 1975 that, as far as the "less developed" countries of the world were concerned;

"As the crisis deepens we can expect to see further upheavals there and further advances by the class" (*Revolutionary Perspectives* 3)

Further upheavals will be the order of the day and not just in Brazil, Poland, South Africa or Korea but in many more countries. The list of countries which have experienced massive working class unrest goes far beyond the half-dozen or so we could have listed in 1975. Whilst these struggles might not have reached the same heights in quality as they have in quantity we should not forget that the crisis continues. It has no solution under capitalism which left to itself will only lead us to a third world war. The only real solution is one produced by the working class and this can only come out of the struggle against the lower standard of living that capitalism offers us. The future belongs to the workers but today communists will need patience;

"...as the crisis levels out over the next few years the advances made and lost in one area will be regained in another. The march from the counter-revolution to the dismantling of capitalism is not a straight line, but ebbs and flows with the movement and pace of the crisis. The impossibility of the success of the workers' struggles within capitalism forces the struggle onto the historical alternative - communist revolution."

(*Revolutionary Perspectives* 3)

Workers link up across racial 'divide'

MASS STRIKES

IN SOUTH AFRICA

For the past four months South Africa has been swept by a wave of class struggle and widespread revolt against the apartheid system. Over 50,000 workers have struck and whole townships have battled with the police. These battles have often involved street barricades, the burning of police vehicles, buses and cars, and the looting of foodshops. Over 60 people have been shot by the police.

THE STRIKES

The strikes represent the highest level of class struggle South Africa has experienced since the war. They have been far more organised and extensive than those of the last massive strike wave in 1973. They have seen, for the first time ever, Black and Coloured (mixed race) workers uniting in a major strike. This occurred in the Volkswagen strike and in the strikes at the other car factories, and indicates that the South African workers can overcome the divisions which the ruling class has imposed upon them through the apartheid system. Strikes which have occurred have generated sympathy strikes, particularly where workers have been victimised. Within a week the Volkswagen strike had spread to 11 other factories in the car producing town of Uitenhage. Similarly, in the Johannesburg municipal workers' strike, electricity workers struck in sympathy with power station workers who had been dismissed for striking. The strike then spread to dustmen and sewage workers and eventually 10,000 council workers were making it the biggest strike against a single employer in South Africa's history.

The strikes have also been actively supported by the communities in which workers live. For example, when 800 meat workers were dismissed for participating in a solidarity strike, an effective boycott of meat was organised throughout the townships of the Cape peninsula in support of their demand for their reinstatement. Similarly, a boycott of flour caused a flour company to re-employ 78 sacked workers.

All these strikes have, as is usual in South Africa, been illegal and subject to police harassment. However, in almost all cases workers have returned to work with pay increases although these have been far below what they have demanded. The most notable exception was the Johannesburg municipal workers' strike which was broken by bussing out the strikers at gun point and importing scabs. Undoubtedly the single most significant advance of the strikes has been the unity of Black and Coloured workers which was achieved in the car plants.

However, despite the militancy and strength of the strike wave, class struggle in South Africa is vulnerable to two lines of attack from the ruling class. Firstly, that of directing the struggle into demands for unionisation and, secondly, directing it into the channels of African nationalism.

Unionisation:

Strategy of the Bosses

The progressive sectors of the South African ruling class are trying to help Black workers set up trade unions. These sectors, whose interests lie in mining and manufacturing, are supported in this aim by the European and American capitalists. The USA and the EEC have drawn up codes of conduct for firms operating in South Africa which, amongst other things, recommend recognition of Black trade unions. The three big motor companies, Volkswagen, Ford and General Motors, were amongst the first to recognise Black trade unions. They wish to see a stable, Black working class whose grievances are expressed by "responsible" unions. This is part of a wider aim, namely the ending of the apartheid system and the establishment of a Black capitalist class united to the White capitalists by their joint exploitation of the working class.

The government, which represents more reactionary interests, those of the farmers and the 55% of the economy controlled by the State, has resisted these aims because it understands that they must lead to the undermining of the whole apartheid system. The issue is not new. Black trade unions existed in the 1940's and by 1951 there were 1 million Black workers in trade unions. In 1953 a government commission recommended that Black trade unions be recognised. Then, as now, the nationalist Government saw this as incompatible with White nationalism. Instead they decided to crush the Black unions and control the class struggle by naked force. In the 20 years between 1953 and 1973 the Black working class had more than doubled. The suddenness and violence of the 1973 strikes in Natal made even the Government realise that the existing system of open repression could not be continued. They have gradually been forced to concede on the unionisation issue. After the 1973 strike the Government introduced laws which enabled workers to be represented by "workers' liaison committees". These committees were to exist in each factory and be made up of representatives of workers and representatives of management. These committees were bosses agencies and nothing more than a clumsy attempt to prevent workers uniting across whole industries. Realising the hopelessness of this attempt to contain the class struggle the Government set up a commission to advise it. The commission recommended recognition of Black trade unions. At first the Government tried to exclude migrant workers, who make up 30% of the workforce, from the right to union recognition, but even on this they have conceded.

Earlier this year the racial colour bar on all jobs was lifted

and Black unions permitted to apply for Government registration. This permits them to be represented on the industrial councils which determine wage levels and organise arbitration of disputes in each branch of industry.

There can be no doubt that the move to unionisation is being introduced by the capitalists to control and police the class struggle simply because the nineteenth century methods have failed.

The previous record of Black trade unions shows they have been just as anti-working class as the White unions. During the Second World War they agreed not to strike to help the war plans of the Government. The ruling class were thus able to fight the imperialist war with the help of the Black workers and then viciously crush the miners strike which erupted after the war was won. The present wave of strikes shows the new unions falling into the familiar role of bosses' policemen that we see in the rest of the world.

In those factories where the bosses have favoured unions the strikes have been far less violent than in those where they have stuck to the old system. In Durban where the bosses simply sacked 6,000 striking textile workers, the strikers rioted and attacked management buildings. Police had to use tear gas and baton charges to restore order. Although the strike was eventually broken other employers were worried that the strike and the violence would spread to their factories. At the SASOL plant, which makes oil from coal, and in the Johannesburg council strike, the bosses tried to use the liaison committee system. At SASOL general intimidation of construction workers and the killing of one of them by the army sparked off riots, burning of vehicles and buildings and the death of a White man. The site became so tense that the whole workforce had to be sent home a day early with full pay. In the Johannesburg council strike the council tried to use a works committee and an "in-house" union, which the council itself created, instead of an independent union. Again the bosses' old methods failed and the strike had finally to be broken by force of police guns.

In contrast to this, where unions have been recognised, as in the car factories, there has been "order". Instead of trying to spread the strikes, the unions have called for responsibility, moderation and a return to work! When the Volkswagen workers came out the two unions involved urged their members "not to take part in an illegal dispute". When 11 other factories came out in sympathy the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) called for "all strikers to return to work except those employed by Volkswagen". The same organisations prevented Ford and General Motors workers from joining the strike when they were on the point of doing so. When Goodyear tyre workers bypassed the union to demand a 160% increase, which would have brought the rate to £1.60 per hour, the unions described this demand as "ridiculous"! When the Volkswagen strike was settled with a 27% increase, which brings the rate to 80p per hour, (workers were demanding £1.10) the International Metal Workers Federation in Geneva, which funds FOSATU, described this settlement as a "breakthrough for disciplined trade union action". Even in the Johannesburg municipal workers strike (which had as one of its demands trade union recognition), the union involved, instead of trying

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to spread the strike to other workers and politicise it, spent its time petitioning the law courts to restrain the police from beating its members and stealing their possessions. The leader of this union, for his pains, was finally arrested in the corridors of the supreme court and charged with sabotage - so much for the capitalists' respect for the law.

South African unions are trying to make a place for themselves in the capitalist system and this means proving themselves moderate and law abiding. It means proving themselves to the bosses not to the workers. Nowhere is this clearer than in Port Elizabeth where Ford are paying Black workers to be shop stewards in order to contain the class struggle. Volkswagen and General Motors are so impressed with this idea that they will soon follow.

All the energy workers spend in struggling for unions is wasted. As these events prove, even before the unions are properly established they are working against the workers. When they are fully established they will be what the bosses want - shop floor police.

African Nationalism Strategy of Tomorrow's Bosses

The guerrilla campaign of the African nationalists has been stepped up over the last year. Police stations have been attacked, Black policemen killed and oil installations at SASOL successfully bombed. Through these attacks on the State and their propaganda for Black rule the African nationalists have been able to infiltrate both the campaigns against apartheid and the class struggle.

In mid-April Coloured pupils started to boycott classes in protest at the appalling education they are given. The schools are so crowded that students are taught in shifts. The annual spending per Coloured student is £100 whereas for Whites the figure is £400. The amount spent per "African" student is £30. As happened in SOWETO in 1976 the boycott soon led to battles with the police and enormous bloodshed. The first response of the authorities was to arrest the African nationalists in the communities involved. This repression has only led to greater sympathy for the African nationalists and it is they who have gained most. The Government's plans for securing the Asian and Coloured peoples as allies against the Africans by means of a new constitution and a three tier parliament are in ruins. Even before the troubles in the Cape both groups had rejected the Government's plans because they made no provision for the Blacks. During the boycott both Black and Asian students supported the Coloureds, and the Coloured students took up the campaign for the release of the imprisoned African nationalist leader, Nelson Mandela.

Without the intervention of communists to direct the class struggle against all forms of capitalism, the working class in South Africa will undoubtedly be misled into supporting the demands of one particular capitalist faction - the African nationalists.

On the anniversary of the SOWETO killings of 1976 the African nationalists called for a general strike just as they have done in previous years. Although this call was not taken up, in certain other strikes African nationalists have taken control. In a strike at the

Ford car plant earlier this year, the trade unions were ignored and the strike run by the nationalists. In this way the nationalists are often able to succeed in preventing the class struggle of the Black workers. But as the events in Zimbabwe prove once again the only result of any successful nationalist struggle is a change in personnel of the ruling class. "National liberation" in Zimbabwe has meant that the repression of strikes, and the imposition of austerity, is organised by men with black faces instead of men with white faces. The Zimbabwean workers have gained nothing. There have been far more strikes since Mugabe's victory than in the three years before it and these strikes have only been met with calls for patience and harder work. The same occurred in Mozambique and Angola. Nationalist struggle is always the enemy of class struggle.

The Way Forward

The class struggle in South Africa needs both political independence and organisation apart from ruling class ideas of both left and right. As in Europe, the main barrier to effective organisation in South Africa is the trade unions. Effective organisation in struggles can only be achieved through elected strike committees in frequent communication with the workers they represent through mass meetings. Such strike committees are organisations with a real potential for linking up and spreading strikes because they do not

have a permanent existence as reformist bodies like the unions. Each strike wave in South Africa is a potential surge forward for the South African working class. Their economic demands may not be won and their gains are eaten away rapidly by inflation - but each gain in confidence, each lesson learnt about the unions or the need for solidarity increases the possibility of advanced groups of workers organising around a communist perspective. And if the South African workers are not to suffer the same defeats at the hands of the trade unions as their European brothers and sisters have done in the past then their struggles must produce, directly or indirectly, a communist organisation. This communist organisation will give a political lead.

The South African working class struggle needs political direction in combatting the lies of African nationalism and uniting black, brown and white workers in a class struggle which understands its goal as world communism and the abolition of nation states. It needs organisation which will generalise struggle as widely as possible across racial divisions as well as across industrial and skill boundaries. This political direction can only be achieved, as elsewhere, when communists are in a position to lead the workers' struggles. This requires the formation of groups of communist workers, linked to a communist party, within the South African factories.

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Read REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

Journal of the COMMUNIST WORKERS' ORGANISATION

Workers' Voice appears quarterly at present. The Communist Workers' Organisation also publishes an annual theoretical journal, Revolutionary Perspectives. For an annual subscription to all our English language publications, send £1.50 to the group address on page 11. (Foreign subscribers send £2.50 equivalent to cover the cost of postage and bank charges.) Cheques and money orders should be made payable ONLY to the Communist Workers' Organisation.

FOR FRENCH
READERS

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1905 (cont.)

Luxemburg calls on Social Democracy to be ready to take the lead:

"... the Social Democrats are called upon to assume POLITICAL leadership in the midst of the revolutionary period ... to see that the tactics of the Social Democrats are decided according to their resolution and acuteness and that they never fall below the level demanded by the actual relations of forces, but rather rise above it - that is the most important task of the directing body in the period of mass strikes."

(The Mass Strike p.51-2)

And, whilst the Soviet began as a non-party body, it came increasingly under the influence of the Social Democratic Party.

"The party now had its chance to make use of all the tremendous advantages of its Marxist training and because it was able to see its political way clear in the great 'chaos' it succeeded, almost without effort in transforming the Soviet - formally a non-party organisation - into the organisational instrument of its own influence."

(1905 p.267)

No-one at this time, apart from the Anarchists who represented everyone but themselves as "bourgeois", raised the bogey of the control of the Soviet by the party as a danger because the class and the party were both travelling in the same direction. In 1905 the defeat of the Russian working class was not put down to the nastiness of the Bolshevik (or Menshevik) Party, but to the failure of the army to join the revolution. The whole anti-party ideology is a product of the single experience of 1918-21 in Russia, and even then no-one raised the cry that the revolution was not an affair of the party until the following years of counter-revolution.

1905 teaches us that we should not be arguing about whether the political party is necessary or not, but what the tasks of that party are.

THE TASKS OF THE PARTY

The first task of any revolutionary group is to analyse the direction of the class struggle and to assess the balance of class forces. Only by knowing the real strength of the working class and the level of sympathy for revolutionary ideas at any given moment can the party relate concretely and practically to the class struggle. All the time the party must use its understanding of the lessons of history and its analysis of today's class struggle to put forward a clear and consistent policy to give a lead to the rest of the working class. As Luxemburg wrote in The Mass Strike, revolutionaries are:

"... the most enlightened, most class conscious vanguard of the proletariat. They cannot and dare not wait, in a fatalist fashion, with folded arms for the advent of the 'revolutionary' situation. ... On the contrary they must now, as always, hasten the development of things and endeavour to accelerate events." (p.65)

In doing this the party will

inevitably make mistakes because,

"however well everything is calculated in advance, every strike gives rise to a whole series of new facts, material and moral, which cannot be foreseen and which eventually decide the outcome of the struggle." (Trotsky, 1905 p.278)

The real test of a true working class party will be its capacity to move with the revolution and to learn the immediate lesson of the class struggle, propagandise it as widely as possible and thereby resume its leadership of the struggle.

This was what the Bolshevik Party did in 1905. After first dismissing the Soviet as a mere trade union body they soon realised that in its attempts to unite strikes it had become a political body. In this political body they saw the instrument which the workers would use to bring down the capitalist state. Soon they passed from watching on the sidelines to fighting within the workers' council to get the Bolshevik programme adopted. It was this political element which was missing from the analysis of Luxemburg. This was largely because she concluded that "spontaneity ... plays a predominant part ... because revolution does not allow anyone to play schoolmaster with them." Her worship of this "spontaneity" led her to say that the economic and political strike were the same thing. She did not realise that, though the economic strike is the breeding ground for the political strike, this does not lead automatically to the overthrow of capitalism without a conscious decision of the workers. This conscious decision can only be put forward in the first instance by the revolutionary minority whose very task is to educate by deed and word the mass of workers in the workers' councils.

Rosa Luxemburg's weakness here is completely exposed in her pamphlet The Mass Strike on the lessons of 1905 in which her only mention of the workers' council is in the way it organised a strike to get the 8 hour day! And this was the same body which Lenin and Trotsky clearly saw at the same time as the political organ which was capable of destroying the capitalist state and of establishing a workers' state. The lessons of 1905 are the same as those of 1917. As we wrote of 1917 in Revolutionary Perspectives 4:

"State power of the Councils, an intransigent attack on capitalist relations of production, and a revolutionary communist party; these are the weapons of the working class in a revolutionary struggle. But even this 'Holy Trinity' is merely a collection of empty shells unless they are the emanations of a powerful international class movement. As weapons of the masses they are everything, without the masses they are nothing."

(p.35)

For readers who are interested in following up some of the ideas here the following articles in Revolutionary Perspectives are useful.

"Russia, Revolution and Counter-Revolution, 1917-23" (R.P.4); "Terrorism and Communism" and "Trotskyism and the Counter-Revolution" in R.P.9; "Class Violence" (R.P.13); "The Role and Tasks of the Communist Minority" and "The ABC of Councilism" in R.P.14; "Discussion on Terrorism" (R.P.15). See also Trotsky's 1905, available in Penguin and Luxemburg's The Mass Strike also available in paperback.

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MEANWHILE IN ITALY...

Turin, Sept. 12.—Striking workers brought production at Fiat's car plants to a virtual standstill today in protest over the company's decision to axe 14,000 jobs. The Metalworkers' Union, which called the four-hour stoppage last night, said this

comparisons can be drawn, it seems certain that the Polish successes have given an additional stimulus to the determination of the Fiat workers in Turin. This stimulus could be embarrassing to the unions as well as to the management because it could carry the protest beyond union discipline.

The face of 1980 CRISIS BRITAIN

WORKERS VOICE

The Tories are telling us that their economic policy is "still working" - which is more than over 2 million of us are doing. In fact the Tories' economic policy is going as planned. By building up a 'reserve army' of unemployed they can use the threat of job insecurity against any section of workers that tries to defend its living standards. At the same time we are being told the health and education services are "too wasteful" and must have their share of our taxes cut. Yet the Government is still spending money on the armed forces. The latest "essential" they have used our taxes for was a month long NATO exercise in Europe, which cost a mere £300 million (or enough money to supply teaching materials to every pupil in Britain for over two years). The Tories are also preparing for a series of battles with the working class. This explains why police pay went up by 21% without a murmur of protest from the Government about its inflationary effects. It was a different story for steel workers and nurses who ended up with figures $\frac{1}{3}$ below the rate of inflation.

THE RIGHT-WING

The Tories still think the workers can pay for the capitalist crisis. Though the steel workers surprised them by staying out for three months, the strike ended as a victory for the Tories. They had provoked a strike (by offering only 2%) at a time when steel stockpiles were high, so they could simply wait for the strikers to be driven back to work through hardship. The rest of the working class drew the lesson and nearly every sector without an important place in the economy settled for around 13%. The stronger sectors have found they have obtained higher awards without much of a fight, since the Government was only picking on what it thought were 'soft touches'.

This will be the Tory plan for next winter. - Avoid confrontation with the miners and power workers

if possible and take on the less favourably placed sections of the working class. The threat of unemployment will be used against these groups and some protracted struggles are likely to follow. Only the solidarity of different sections of the working class who have broken from the craft mentality of the trade unions can defeat this strategy. What is needed is a repeat of the solidarity of the Liverpool dockworkers who came out at the end of the steel strike in March to support the steel workers. On this occasion the support was too late, but the same action at the beginning of a strike would tip the balance of class forces back towards the working class and destroy the complacency of our rulers.

THE LEFT-WING

But what of the alternative the ruling class has to offer - the Labour Party? Since the war it has shared equally the spoils of office with the Tories. The Labour Party has done no more than manage the existing capitalist economy. It bases its claim to 'socialism' on the fact that it nationalised a lot of basic industries between 1945 and 1951. But nationalisation has nothing to do with socialism. In 1947 the coal industry and the railways were both losing money so their owners were very happy to sell them to the government. Nationalisation was just the step before 'rationalisation' in which thousands of miners and railway workers lost their jobs. Labour's claim to be the Party of "full employment" is then clearly a lie, especially if we remember that unemployment went up just as fast under Callaghan as it is doing under Thatcher.

Callaghan's address to the TUC Conference gave the working class a clear warning. When Labour get in they will want another pay policy - in other words we will be asked to suffer for the crisis once again. Labour denounces "Tory cuts" in

social services but, with hand on heart, it will carry much the same policy when in government. If the working class unrest this winter forces the Tories out, then Labour are waiting in the wings to pose as the workers' friends.

AND FURTHER LEFT?

And if the workers won't trust Callaghan any more, the left-wing of the ruling class has still one further hope. What if "real socialists", like Wedgwood-Benn and Scargill, took over the Labour Party? This latest con is doomed before it starts. What 'programme' could they offer the working class? More nationalisation? That would mean more lay-offs. Higher wages? These can only be offered if industry's productivity rises. If productivity is to rise it means workers must work harder and faster. In any case there is not enough profit for investment to introduce new plant. Today 80% of all profits go to investment in new machinery, but even this is not enough. 100% would not be enough because profit rates are too small to pay for new machines. Trotskyists and pseudo-Trotskyists like the SWP who claim that the crisis is caused by "greedy bosses" not investing their profits are just as stupid as the Tories who claim it is caused by the wage claims of "greedy workers".

IMPORT CONTROLS?

The TUC and some employers want import controls, but this again is no solution for capitalism. Import controls only lead to retaliation by other countries and cannot help solve the crisis. For the working class, taxes on imported goods would only mean an even higher cost of living in Britain. And as an answer to unemployment, import controls only EXPORT redundancies, they don't get rid of unemployment. In fact import controls, when they do come in, will not be introduced for any economic reason (since there isn't one) but to whip up hatred of foreigners. The "Buy British" campaign by the Bleachers and Dyers in Bradford and its echoes by Tory ministers and BL management are the thin end of a wedge. The wedge slopes towards another "solution" the capitalists have to the crisis - WAR.

Conscription papers which are already printed, and the Poseidon and Cruise missiles which are being brought in are all part of war preparations. At the moment the ruling class, Labour or Tory, both hope that the workers can be made to keep on paying for the crisis. When they find that no amount of sacrifice by the workers can save capitalism, or that the workers refuse to accept any more cuts, then, as in 1914 and 1939 the "solution" of war will seem more and more necessary.

All this is a long way from the rosy promises made in the late Sixties. 1980, we were told, would be a boom year as North Sea oil would be in full production. North

positions of the C.W.O.

- * Every country in the world today is capitalist - including the so-called Communist states (for example Russia and China).
- * Trade unions and shop stewards are the wage brokers for the capitalist system and cannot defend the interests of the working class.
- * The struggle for communism cannot be waged through Parliament, but must be carried out through workers' councils with recallable delegates.
- * The working class can only come to power through the creation of its own political party - the international communist party.
- * The capitalist system is in crisis and irretrievable decline. It can only offer inflation and unemployment and it cannot be reformed. The only choice for the future is war or revolution: BARBARISM or COMMUNISM!