

# WORKERS VOICE

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## Polish Capitalism is Bankrupt

# POLAND: REVOLUTION NOW!

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..and more

The immediate future for the Polish working class is full of immense danger. The proletariat of Poland is facing now the choice which all the world's masses will face soon - its own revolution or the armed repression of the ruling class. We call on the workers of Poland to take the road of armed struggle against the capitalist state and to fraternise with the workers in uniform who will be sent to crush them. We call on Polish workers to abandon Solidarity's path of class collaboration; to dismantle the capitalist state by setting up their own government of workers and soldiers councils. We have no illusions about the difficulties facing such a struggle, nor do we overestimate the chances of success but we have no choice. This article explains why.

#### POLAND AND THE WORLD CRISIS

Poland is just the latest in a long line of states to succumb to the effects of the world economic crisis and find itself bankrupt in all but name. The fact that Poland is part of the Eastern bloc only shows that the so-called Communist countries are just as much part of the world capitalist economy as anywhere else. The "disruption in production" during last year's strikes is not the cause of Poland's present crisis. Polish

capitalism is reaping the harvest of a policy of massive borrowing from the West begun in 1970. The aim was to try and stave off an economic crisis which was already causing working class "unrest". It has inevitably failed.

By 1979 Poland's repayment of interest on foreign debts amounted to 92% of the country's total income. Today Polish debts to the West dwarf those of countries like Zaire and Turkey which have recently been bailed out by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). By the first quarter of this year Poland was unable to pay the interest due on debts to the West (which now totalled \$24bn) without receiving "hard currency" from Russia. The USSR bailed out its satellite with \$2bn of finance and goods.

However, with the ending of Soviet hard currency supplies at the beginning of April the Polish Government was forced to announce to its Western creditors that it was unable to make further payments. Relatively quickly (by 29th April) the 15 major Western Governments owed money by Poland reached an agreement to help bail out the Polish economy. Repayment of 90% of Poland's loans have been put off to a later date and \$2.1bn of interest due is also being "deferred". On top of this, since the beginning of the year the EEC has sold £270m worth of dairy products, sugar, grain and animal feeds to Poland at 15% below market prices.

It is not humanitarian concern for the working class in Poland, but self-

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## WORKERS VOICE

## EDITORIAL

### UNEMPLOYMENT: After the Peoples March

After the People's March the TUC admitted it doesn't know where its campaign against unemployment is going next. This isn't surprising, since anything the TUC concocts to "fight unemployment" is done to maintain credibility with the working class so that it can divert the anger of the unemployed on to safe grounds for capitalism. The TUC is negotiating away literally thousands of jobs week by week. The "non-sectarian" People's March has been a safe way for it to polish up its tarnished image. Every shade of ruling class opinion from Methodist ministers and Catholic priests to the Trotskyists sank their differences to support the march. Such universal agreement is a sure sign that the ruling class is uniting AGAINST the working class.

The Left revealed just what a lack spittle for the anti-working class trades union movement it is. At the time did any of the leftist groups attack this march for what it was - a manoeuvre by a section of our rulers to try and divert the working class' energies from facing up to its real enemy - the capitalist state. All the marchers ended up with was sore feet and hard luck speeches from politicians. Like that pathetic episode in working class history, the begging-bowl Jarrow March of 45 years ago, the People's March will achieve nothing.

CWO members intervened on this march at several points en route and at the rally in London. Our message was that anyone wanting to be part of a real struggle against unemployment should ignore the march and join with

us revolutionaries to agitate amongst the unemployed for mass action against the state's attacks.

With unemployment at 3 million, the state is attacking unemployed workers in the most blatant fashion. Dole cuts, taxes on the dole, abolition of Earnings Related Supplement, no tax rebates for those made redundant, are all in the pipeline. The People's March hasn't altered these facts. Pleas to Parliament are no use. In the short term the unemployed can only win some concessions by mass action to terrorise the ruling class into withdrawing some of its attacks. In the long term capitalism offers us unemployment and austerity today in order to offer us war tomorrow. The only response the working class can have is to destroy capitalism.

The working class needs to be united in its fight against capitalism and this fight needs to be linked to the fight for communism. In other words, the only solution is a political solution. As we said in one of our leaflets, "class struggle, not people's march". What needs to be built amongst the unemployed is an organisation of political groups to give direction to the struggle. Through these groups unemployed workers can:

- \* unite with the employed workers and prevent the bosses splitting our class (e.g. in mass picketting of factories)
- \* oppose the State's attempts to cut dole and Social Security
- \* organise a collective fight against victimisation of individuals
- \* organise to support strikes
- \* oppose the use of unemployed workers as scabs
- \* form centres of communist education. Armed with political understanding, unemployed workers can take a leading role in the struggle of the whole working class and in the building of a real working class party - an international revolutionary party. This is the party which can lead the working class, not to Downing Street with pathetic petitions, but to its liberation by the communist revolution and the construction of communist society.

If you are unemployed and agree with us that an effective organisation of those out of work demands political organisation outside of the capitalist parties and the trade unions, contact us at the group address. ●

#### SOLIDARITY WITH THE IMPRISONED MILITANTS OF BLIDA!

In Workers Voice 3 we exposed the myth of national liberation, showing how "liberated" countries like Algeria are just as capitalist and repressive as any other. We expressed our solidarity with 5 communist political prisoners in an Algerian jail. The International Communist Party has asked us to publish this appeal. We are glad to oblige.

#### FUND APPEAL FOR THE PRISONERS

Please send donations by International Money Order to:

'Solidarite Algerie'  
c/o SARO  
Editions Programme,  
20 rue Jean Bouton,  
Paris 12, FRANCE

AFTER THE CONVICTIONS EXTRACTED UNDER TORTURE AND WITH A MERE SEMBLANCE OF A TRIAL, FIVE MILITANTS AND CONTACTS OF OUR ORGANISATION HAVE BEEN CONDEMNED BY THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL OF BLIDA TO SENTENCES OF BETWEEN THREE AND TEN YEARS IN PRISON. THEIR NAMES ARE MOHAMED BENSSADA, RABAH BENKHELLAT, ABDELMALEK KENDOUR, ALI AKKACHE AND MOHAMED NAAMAN. WE SALUTE THESE YOUNG REVOLUTIONARIES WHO, IN SPITE OF TWO YEARS OF SECRET DETENTION AT THE HANDS OF THE ALGERIAN MILITARY SECURITY, HAVE FOUGHT COURAGEOUSLY AND INCESSANTLY FOR THEIR IDEALS.

THIS TRIAL IS A NEW EPISODE IN THE REPRESSION WHICH DAILY SAVAGES THE WORKING CLASS AND THE IMPOVERISHED MASSES OF ALGERIA, WHILE THE NEW RULING CLASS ISSUING FROM ALGERIAN INDEPENDENCE GROWS CYNICALLY FAT, ACCUMULATING RICHES HEAPED ON RICHES. THE DESPERATE FURY AGAINST THOSE CONDEMNED AT BLIDA SHOWS TO WHAT EXTENT THE ALGERIAN BOURGEOISIE FEARS THE DIFFUSION - PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE ARMY, THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUMENT IN THE DEFENCE OF ITS DOMINATION AND ITS PRIVILEGES AGAINST THE ANGER OF THE MASSES - OF REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM, WHICH UNMASKS ALL THE LIES ABOUT SELF-Styled ALGERIAN "SOCIALISM" AND DEMONSTRATES TO THE OPPRESSED THE ROAD TO THEIR EMANCIPATION. NEITHER REPRESSION NOR BOURGEOIS LIES CAN PREVENT THE EXPOSURE OF THE BOASTS OF THE BOURGEOISIE, BOASTS WHICH BECOME HOLLOWER DAY BY DAY, IN ALGERIA AS ELSEWHERE, AND NOTHING CAN PREVENT THE WORKING CLASS FROM SEIZING HOLD OF THE WEAPON OF MARXISM IN ORDER TO ORGANISE THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITALISM AT THE HEAD OF THE MASSES.

WE CALL ON ALL REVOLUTIONARIES, ALL MILITANTS IN THE CAUSE OF PROLETARIAN EMANCIPATION, TO FIGHT WITH US FOR THE LIBERATION OF THOSE CONDEMNED AT BLIDA, IN ORDER TO RIP THEM OUT OF THE CLAWS OF THE MILITARY SECURITY.

AS FOR THE ALGERIAN BOURGEOISIE, THEIR COPS, THEIR EXECUTIONERS AND TORTURERS, WE ASK FROM THEM NEITHER "MEASURES OF LIBERALISATION" NOR CLEMENCY. WE HAVE ONLY ONE THING TO SAY TO THEM. ON THE DAY WHEN THE WORKING CLASS PROCEEDS TO SETTLE THE SCORE, THE AGONIES THAT IT SUFFERS ON BEHALF OF THE MASSES WILL BE THE MEASURE OF THE SUFFERING THAT WILL BE INFLICTED ON THE BOURGEOISIE AND ITS DOGS IN RETURN.

International Communist Party

## IRELAND C.W.O. meeting report

As the hysteria of the H-block hunger strike campaign mounted, the CWO held a meeting in London. Our speaker began by outlining the CWO position on the national question. We explained that, while certain national struggles were progressive in the last century, especially in aiding the development of capitalism; today, in a world dominated by imperialism, all ideas of national independence and economic development are illusory and national movements inevitably become attacks on the working class. This was followed by an examination of the failure of Eire to develop economically since independence, except where this was in the interests of Western imperialism and under its domination. Lastly, our speaker outlined the anti-working class nature of Irish nationalism from the 1913 Dublin General strike (where the nationalists called in British troops to crush the workers), through the IRA's armed suppression of the Cork Soviet of the Cork Soviet in 1920, to its present terror campaigns against British and Irish workers.

Amongst the following discussion were a variety of interventions from members of the International Communist Current (ICC). On the issue of the campaign for solidarity with the hunger strikers, the ICC argued that many of the imprisoned were ordinary workers, rather than IRA men, and that in the milieu surrounding the solidarity campaign there was a possibility for communist intervention. We replied by saying that none of those imprisoned had ever made such a claim (and if they had we would support them) and that solidarity campaign was initiated and orchestrated by the IRA. Those who appeared to have disagreements with this campaign were even more nationalistic than the IRA and were not workers breaking away from nationalism. We pointed out that the ICC is treading dangerous ground here; just as they had in looking for something positive in the strike of the bazaar against Russian intervention in Afghanistan, or in the explicitly race riots in Miami last year.

Another member of the audience then stated that the CWO seems to have a very "purist" criteria, and that we refuse to relate to any movement tainted by reaction. In reply we stated that the important

thing was to have criteria, to distinguish if a movement had potential for development or not. It was this that enabled us to say that a riot in Miami against white workers had no potential, while the Brixton events, in confronting the capitalist state, did. Similarly, the IRA-initiated the solidarity campaign on hunger strikers had no potential, while the recent strike of hospital workers in Northern Ireland against the presence of troops at their workplace, did have, despite later IRA involvement. (Because it united Catholic and Protestant workers against the state.) Without criteria we would simply tail-end apparently similar, but in reality widely divergent social movements.

## appeal fund

The deepening of the crisis and the increase in the class struggle multiplies the number of tasks facing communists. The CWO has responded to this challenge, but the ever increasing costs of materials, transport, etc. mean financial difficulties. If you agree with the ideas put forward in Workers' Voice, help to extend and build its work with a donation. Send to the group address. Or send us a supporters' subscription; £10 to receive all our publications and to aid our work.

# THE BRIXTON RIOT

We are printing below an unedited account of the Brixton events of April, recorded by a CWO member who lives there. It does not pretend to be a simple chronology and the comrade has expressed immediate views on the events.

The account shows clearly that the events of Brixton cannot be dismissed simply as a "race riot" and that many unemployed young whites also took part. The ruling class at first seemed to agree with this. The "top people papers" were full of evidence showing that it was a struggle of unemployed youth (both black and white) versus the police. As the implications that the British working class had actually taken to violence in response to State repression sank in, they quickly changed their tune. Soon they had decided to label it a "race riot" even if this meant ignoring their own evidence. In this they were helped by the so-called "Brixton Defence Committee" which was set up afterwards and immediately banned whites from taking part in its activities.

Outside of Ireland it is not often that the British bourgeoisie, one of the most subtle and therefore one of the most dangerous in the world, is forced to display the iron fist of the State so openly. When it does, however, there are soon plenty of organisations prepared to help it out. Usually it is the unions. The TUC is doing its bit of police work by organising safety valve events like the People's March to distract unemployed youth from attacking their real enemy - the capitalist state. Add to the TUC racist organisations like the Brixton Defence Committee, which called off a demonstration on Easter Sunday because of fears of "more violence", and it is not surprising that the police have had an easier time of it since April 13th.



The ruling class has also seen to it that plenty of sob stories of violent acts on friendly "bobbies" have been published to make us forget the daily acts of violence of the capitalist state. However, the working class can be sure of more violent confrontations with the police in future. The "forces of law and order" will always, as in Brixton, start the violence, since it is their law and their order which holds the working class in its present position. They cannot be persuaded to give up state power. As strikes and demonstrations multiply in response to the crisis, as the struggles of the unemployed link up with more powerful struggles on the factory floor, workers must be prepared to unite and defend themselves against the repression of the state.

The riot in Brixton remained simply a riot because it arose spontaneously and did not have any immediate objectives or long term aims. These need to be put forward by communists inside the working class, both in groups of unemployed communist workers and in the factories. These groups can play a role far beyond their size in the event of another Brixton.

It is true that, isolated behind barricades in Brixton, the unemployed youth could not have won anything. A sustained struggle, however, which took the police station and the municipal offices; and which held out in organised fashion for several days would have provided inspiration for other sections of workers. As it is, Brixton has already given our rulers nightmares and it will take more than the Scarman "enquiry" to erase them.

## Brixton Letter

It's not every day that the unemployed loot and burn one's local shopping centre. But the signs have been there for some time for those with eyes to see. In this case, the smouldering anger of the unemployed was sparked off by increased police harassment of black unemployed youth in Lambeth, specifically by an incident on Friday 10th April. A black youth was stabbed in a typical Brixton gang fight. The police tried to take the youth, Michael Bailey, away for "questioning" - i.e. leave him to bleed in a cell all night, as has happened to several black workers recently, with some fatal consequences. Black youths attacked the police car and freed their comrade from the law. They sent him to hospital in a taxi.

The police patrolled Brixton for the next 24 hours, trying to provoke trouble. At approximately 5p.m. on Saturday 11th plain clothes police assaulted a black youth in Atlantic Road. "The worst public disorder seen in Britain for years" (*Times*) began. The first-ever petrol bombs on the streets of mainland Britain mysteriously appeared. The police moved in with riot shields - only to discover that they are inflammable! Barricades of cars were set up, and a bus was hijacked and driven towards the thin blue line. White unemployed young workers joined forces with black and for several hours took control of the centre of Brixton. Unfortunately the consciousness of the rioters never reached the stage of seeing the next step - a mass attack on the police station. Instead, most of them diverted their energies into

splitting up into small groups of looters. The police station and its rich hoard of guns and files could have been taken, had there been a politically conscious presence amongst the unemployed rioters. In the event, many shops were looted and burned: clothes shops, two pubs, shoe shops, jewellers, radio shops, Woolworths, a Citizens Advice Bureau, and several derelict houses. No banks.

Several policemen were seriously hurt, and 224 arrests were made. Although, as I have said, looting was a diversion, it does not mean that all the rioters were criminals. There were some negative aspects, apart from the lack of positive political consciousness. A racist squatter's house was burnt - although the rioters may have thought it was empty. All the other houses (rather than flats above shops) burnt out were derelict. Council leader Ted Knight's claim that the council had to rehouse 29 families after the riot was a slander on the rioters - almost no harm came to working class people from the rioters themselves.

As everybody here knows, it was not a race riot. Many white youths were involved. Journalists of the capitalist press were attacked. It was an explosion of anger of unemployed workers, in a specific situation, at a specific enemy: the

police. The best way to express solidarity with the detainees is to create unemployed communist groups.

## ORDER REIGNS IN BRIXTON

Monday, 13.4.81. Evening. Helicopter with searchlight still overhead. Police stations full of detained "rioters", picked up at random. Looters arrested and tortured. Many broken arms and legs.

The Labour left say it was the fault of the Tories. The *Newsline* says it was a plot to discredit Ted Knight. The *Militant* calls for "Democratic control of the Police" and the return of the Labour Government. *Socialist Worker* claims there were IRA sympathies expressed in the riot. Some of these leaflets were torn up by the local workers. The SWP have temporarily dropped their call for reform of the police, and pretend they don't support Her Majesty's Opposition. All the leftists support the liberal "Brixton Defence Committee" which has already (15th April) negotiated with the police and declared its intention to calm down the situation - in other words, to help the police "restore order".

Helicopter still overhead. Hundreds of police. Last night 30 police with dogs raided and arrested 2 anarchists living in the centre of Brixton. The theories of the police are amazing: since black workers are obviously incapable of organising anything themselves, they must have been led by white outside agitators. French and Italian youngsters are being picked up - according to the *South London Press*, the police believe 2 Frenchmen started the riot! We can only say that had our agitators been an influence on the unemployed of Lambeth, the police would really have had something to worry about. A communist unemployed fraction is essential and we must build that influence.

By Wednesday the calm had really set in. The proposed rally for Easter Sunday was called off by the "community leaders". These do-gooders form a black police force and have divided black from white workers by turning a workers' struggle into a "racial problem". This is the ruling class policy of "divide and rule" in action. These scum are preparing to betray any of the unemployed youth who put their trust in them and their so-called "Brixton Defence Committee".

## THE NEED FOR WORKERS DEFENCE

There were some signs of the beginnings of political consciousness over the weekend. The workers (black and white) chanted "Siegheil!" as the Home Secretary toured the area on Sunday. They realise that Democracy and Fascism are as different as Daz and Omo. They, by and large, reject the slogans of the capitalist left, such as "Disband the SPG", "Reform the Police", etc. If unemployed workers are prepared to throw firebombs at the police, outside of bourgeois struggles like in Ulster, there must be potential, as the *Guardian* fearfully puts it, for "extremists" (i.e. we communists) to cash in.

After the 1905 revolution in Russia Lenin argued for the creation of underground workers terrorist groups, to gradually prepare the working class militarily for the eventual insurrection. He poured scorn on those who washed their hands of such practical tasks. But he assumed the Party was to be the unquestioned general of these groups - political consciousness precedes practical organisation. That is why we can't set up defence groups until we've grouped a nucleus of communist workers round us. Communists never try to create defence groups outside the control of the political vanguard. We will continue to stress the need for political groups - at the same time never forgetting that the fight will eventually become A FIGHT TO THE DEATH WITH A VIOLENT UNRELENTING ENEMY

## CAR CRISIS = CAPITALIST CRISIS

The massive development of the world's car industry has been at the heart of the post-war boom in the Western economies. Car production has replaced railways and shipbuilding at the centre of industrial production. Steel, oil, electrical and gas power and a host of allied industries making aluminium, fabrics, plastics, glass, rubber, etc. are all dependent on the continued expansion of "volume car production". It is not surprising, therefore, that a look at the car industry shows us an exact image of the state of the capitalist world economic order. Since the post-war boom ended in the late Sixties both of them have exhibited all the signs of a patient with a terminal disease. This article explains how the decline in the rate of profit - the law of operation of the capitalist economy - has brought this crisis about.

The recent strikes at BL and Ford, together with the announcements of plant closures by BL and General Motors illustrate once again the crisis in the world car industry and the crisis of capitalism. At the Metro plant trimmers said they could not keep pace with the increased speed of Metro production and 2,600 other workers walked out in sympathy. At the Ford Escort line in Halewood, body plant workers refused to work to standards they said were unachievable at the increased production speed. Others walked out in sympathy and the whole night shift struck. The new disciplinary code used by the management to enforce their "After Japan" productivity programme became the centre of the dispute. The Metro workers stayed out a week despite the pleas of union leaders to return to work. Eventually they returned, agreeing to put their grievances through official disputes procedure - i.e. let the unions shuffle it all under the carpet. The Ford strike lasted 10 days and paralysed all U.K. plants. It ended with the management agreeing to withdraw their own 'disciplinary' code in return for the unions putting an end to unofficial strikes and themselves enforcing shop floor 'discipline'. Both disputes were a fightback against increased exploitation and in both cases the higher productivity levels will be imposed by the unions.

In the same week General Motors announced the partial closure of the AC-Delco component factory, with the loss of 1,000 jobs and BL announced the closure of the Rover factory at Solihull, the ending of TR7 production and layoffs at Jaguar. In all, at least 6,000 BL jobs are to go. That's just in one week. Since he became Chairman of BL Edwards has axed 56,000 jobs (1 in every 4) and closed 15 plants (1 in every 5). Ford's Vice-president announced that he intends to make 40% of the U.K. workforce redundant before 1985 (28,000 jobs are to go). Talbot (formerly Chrysler, which was formerly Rootes), the last of Britain's 4 producers, has just closed its Linwood plant in Scotland and plans to "rationalise" the rest of its U.K. production.

The world motor industries, with the exception of the Japanese, are in crisis. In 1980 Chrysler has had to be bailed out by the U.S. government by a loan guarantee of \$1.5 billion. Massey Ferguson, the agricultural machinery producer which owns Perkins engines, has had to be bailed out by the Canadian government. General Motors lost \$755 million; Ford lost \$1.54 billion. This was the biggest company loss in the whole of U.S. history, but the record only lasted a week - until Chrysler's figures were published. Chrysler lost \$1.71 billion. In all the U.S. car makers lost \$4.2 billion. In Europe Peugeot-Citroen, Fiat and Ford of Germany all showed enormous losses. In the U.K. Ford alone made a profit. The combined loss of the U.K. big four was \$500 million, with BL alone losing \$535m. Last year U.K. car makers produced under 1 million vehicles for the

first time since 1957. The crisis has had its effect on employment in the vehicle components industry. In the U.K. the Department of Industry reckons that over the last 18 months 20% of jobs have been lost in the major component companies (from 340,000 to 270,000). 1980 was a bad year for the industry as a whole but this only represents the downward trend which has been steadily developing since the mid-60s.

### CRISIS OF PROFITS

After the war Britain and the U.S. dominated the world car market, and Britain remained the largest exporter of cars until 1954. The U.K. industry had not been devastated to the extent of the rest of the European one and production was generally with pre-war plant which had been mothballed during the war. European production on the other hand, had to start again from almost nothing. Factories had either been bombed to pieces or machinery run into the ground. Unlike in Britain most small producers had been destroyed or, as in the case of Japan, had never existed. Factories in Japan and Germany were built with loans from the U.S., given under the Marshall Aid plan, and production restarted with massive exploitation of a defeated working class which meant very cheap labour for the bosses. By 1955 West Germany had overtaken Britain as the world's second largest producer and exporter of cars. By the 60s France and Italy had re-entered the world market and in 1963 Japan became an

or its various left-wing supporters claim. (The workers in the nationalised industries have their labour power exploited just as viciously as those in private industry.) Nationalisation is in fact a last-ditch attempt to save the "national" capital. Without the concentrated investment of the State to prop up these industries the national economy would collapse.

This is why Leyland's approaching bankruptcy in 1975 forced the British government to nationalise it. Similarly, when Chrysler U.K. was on the brink of collapse in 1976 the government was forced to guarantee half the company's losses for four years. Exactly the same has happened in the U.S. with Chrysler. The Treasury Secretary announced that it was cheaper to bail out Chrysler than let it go bankrupt. Keith Joseph said exactly the same when he handed BL £990m in January.

These collapses also show how interconnected the world economy is and how disaster in one country would quickly spread to others. Chrysler had loans from 350 banks in 15 different countries. The U.S. government insisted that all the banks involved make fresh loans to Chrysler and that they postpone the repayment of the \$3 billion owed them. That is, the problems of Chrysler were shared out amongst world capitalism. The same thing happened with the rescue of Massey Ferguson. When the problems recur they will be more serious and more extensive. When Chrysler goes bankrupt it will take a few banks with it.

# CAR CRISIS =



# CAPITALIST CRISIS

exporter of cars for the first time. In the early 60s the production of cars was still highly profitable. It is in this period that the new car works were built on Merseyside, in Scotland and South Wales; plants which were to be served by expanded steel mills in places like Shotton, Ravenscraig and Port Talbot. However, throughout the 60s the average rates of profit fell steadily despite annual fluctuations. Today many of these plants and the steel mills which served them have closed.

If profits are calculated as a percentage of the capital employed, this rate, though it's not the same as the Marxist rate of profit, gives us some idea of what's happening. For the whole U.S. motor industry this rate fell from 9.3% in 1968 to 3% in 1975 and became a loss by 1980. For Britain the rate was 13% in 1960, 3.6% in 1967 and, after various ups and downs in the 70s, also became a loss in 1980. This fall in profit rates has led to many bankruptcies, mergers and rescue operations.

This is only a repeat of what has happened in other industries earlier in capitalism's history. Railways, mining and shipbuilding have all gone through the same process of bankruptcies, mergers, closing down of capacity, until they have first asked for government aid and then, when that failed, have been nationalised (usually at a highly advantageous rate of compensation to their former owners). The State doesn't nationalise because it is a step towards socialism as the phony 'socialists' of the Labour Party

Our certainty about this collapse is not based on blind faith, as the following section shows.

### THE REAL CAUSE OF THE CRISIS

When workers sell their labour power to the capitalists the wages the bosses pay are equivalent to only a fraction of the value which their labour produces. If a worker does an 8 hour day he has probably produced the value of his wages in the first hour. The other 7 hours he works for the capitalist without pay. The 7 hours unpaid labour is the source of the bosses' profits. Only workers can produce profits because only living labour has the ability to produce more value than originally existed. Machines, robots, computers, etc. cannot produce new profits because they can produce nothing without an operator, programmer or wage labourer.

Competition, however, compels the bosses to continually install new and better machines so they can compete with their rivals. Although the new machines increase the rate of exploitation (what the bosses call "productivity") they also exclude workers from production. Because only workers, not machines, produce profits, by sacking workers the bosses remove the source of their profits. At the same time, since each new series of machines is vastly more expensive than the ones it replaces the bosses continually have to set aside a bigger proportion of their profits for re-equipping their factories. The only way they can get the amount of profits required is by

selling bigger quantities of goods. They can only do this by reducing prices, and so competition intensifies and inevitably the producers with the least advanced machinery are destroyed.

#### THE BOSSES' SOLUTION

The bosses' response to the crisis has been to concentrate the industry into larger and larger units to install more productive machinery and increase exploitation of those workers not made redundant by the new machines.

In 1939 there were 33 independent car companies in the U.K. In 1963 there were only 5 major producers and 2 minor ones; in 1981 there are 4. In other countries a similar concentration has occurred. In Germany there are 4 major producers, in France 2, in Italy 1 and 2 minor ones and in Japan 2 major and 3 minor ones. At the same time international link-ups are taking place. BL is to build a new car in conjunction with Honda. Alfa Romeo is to build a new factory near Naples to produce cars in conjunction with Datsun. Innocenti is building engines with Daihatsu of Japan. Isuzu (Japan) is to make axles for General Motors' new J car. Fiat and Peugeot/Citroen are jointly producing a new engine, and Volkswagen is combining with Datsun to build a Passat factory in Japan. These link-ups are part of the global concentration of the motor industry and are aimed at achieving greater profitability and improving each firm's competitive position. If the process was allowed to go on the whole industry would be controlled by one or two companies and production in countries like the U.K. would be ended. However, at the same time nation states are taking over their industries to prevent national bankruptcy.

One of the methods they use to protect local industry is import controls. The U.S. has just forced Japan to limit its imports which last year took 29% of the market. This is despite the fact that all the Japanese motor companies, except Toyota are approximately 20% owned by U.S. capital and Japanese profits are partly U.S. profits. The U.K. and Japan have a 'voluntary' import limitation scheme, France limits Japanese imports to 3% of the market and Italy limits them to only 2,000 cars per year. The Japanese are using international agreements to build factories abroad in conjunction with local companies as a way of getting round protectionist measures like these. Datsun's plans to build its own factories in Britain and the U.S. are part of this strategy.

The bosses are also planning massive investment in new machinery. Ford U.K. is to spend £300m each year, BL £450m and Japanese and U.S. investment is even larger. Together with the new investment old plants are being closed and production concentrated in fewer factories. Plants don't need to be very old to be closed either. The Rover plant at Solihull was only built in 1976 and was then hailed as the most modern and advanced in Europe!

This machinery has, of course, meant tremendous increases in exploitation for those workers who are not made redundant. Before the 1st World War no manufacturer produced more than 1 car per man per year. By 1935 British workers were producing 2.8 cars per man per year. By 1965 it was 8.5 at BMC, 16 at Volkswagen and 18 in the U.S. The new Metro line at BL is at present producing 19 cars per worker per year, and when it's working at full capacity this will rise to 25! Japanese car workers, meanwhile produce 30.

If we assume a BL worker is paid the equivalent of 2 cars per year, this means that in an 8 hour day he now produces his wages in the first 50 minutes; whereas in 1965 it took him 2 hours. From 1965 to 1980 the rate of exploitation has increased 240%! This process is going on worldwide. The bosses pretend it is lazy workers who are the cause of the crisis. Two years ago Michael Edwardes was telling BL workers how much more productive Italian workers were and warning them that they must work harder. The Fiat car boss, Aenelli, complained to

journalists last year that "although Italian workers are paid 20% less than German workers, German workers are 37% more productive". Italian workers must, he said, work harder. This year in West Germany the Economics Minister, Count Lambsdorff, told car workers that Japanese workers were far more productive. Japanese workers, he said, work 20% longer hours and only get £3.70 per hour whereas German workers get £5.50 per hour. German workers, he concluded, must work harder.

#### WHY THE BOSSES' PLANS WON'T WORK

To increase exploitation effectively the bosses have to install new machinery and to do this they have to make enough profit to pay for it. The rise in the cost of capital plant can be appreciated by the fact that a new moving production line at Morris in 1934 cost £300,000, complete with machinery, tooling, etc., whereas the BL automated Metro plant cost £275m in 1980. Each of the new multiwelders on the Metro line cost £3.5m which, allowing for inflation, is probably equal to the cost of the entire new plant at Morris in 1934. The problem for the bosses is getting hold of the profit they require for this scale of investment when, at the same time as installing the new machinery, they are forced to exclude workers, the only source of profit, from production. Their solution of making the remaining workers work harder cannot work. Firstly, there is a physical limit to speed-ups, and workers resist them as the strikes at the Ford Escort and Metro lines show. Secondly, when the capital involved in production becomes so large even massive increases in the rate of exploitation fail to generate enough profit to replace capital equipment. Also, as the rate of profit falls, the bosses must sell bigger numbers to achieve the mass of profit they need. Whereas the Morris line in 1934 could be replaced by the sale of a few thousand cars, the replacement of the Metro line will take 3 or 4 million sales. At a time of world economic crisis this means competition is even more vicious, only speeding up the tendency towards collapse.

Although BL workers have increased their productivity approximately 300% since the mid-60s the group is still unable to generate the profits it needs for reinvestment. Instead of making the profits itself the government is just giving BL the money. By the end of 1982 £2,300m will have been poured into BL. What this means is that the government is simply taking profit from those sectors of the economy which are still making profits and handing them over to those where the rate of profit is low. Exactly the same is happening in the U.S. with Chrysler. These two companies are not special cases. They illustrate the situation which other producers will soon find themselves in, and which all heavily capitalised sectors of the economy are experiencing.

Clearly the reason for the Japanese car industry's place at the top of the capitalists' profitability league is the massive exploitation of the Japanese worker. This is the result of the use of advanced machinery, able to produce the highest output per man hour in the world, coupled with relatively low wages to workers in other economically advanced countries. However, this doesn't mean that the Japanese motor industry is immune from crisis. As we have seen, greater "productivity" for the capitalists brings with it declining rates of profit. It is only a matter of time before the massive amount of profit produced by Japanese motor workers is inadequate to finance even more advanced machinery.

#### POSITION OF THE WORKERS

Throughout western Europe and the U.S. the bosses have pushed through redundancies and lower wages with the help of the unions. At BL the unions told the workforce to vote for the Edwardes recovery plan - that is, vote for plant closures, redundancies and wage cuts! The unions then called off

strikes in protest at a wage offer of 8% which meant a cut in real wages. Eventually the workers accepted this offer. At Fiat, with the help of the unions, the firm has managed to make 25,000 workers redundant. Fiat boasts that, despite a cut in the workforce of 20%, production is still the same and that there is now no absenteeism. In the United States the United Autoworkers Union has imposed a pay freeze, plant closures and massive redundancies at Chrysler. The union actually lent Chrysler \$500m and now union leader Fraser is a member of the Board of Chrysler! This union not only has shares in the company which exploits its members, but it also has an official on the board to supervise that exploitation. This sort of situation is not just limited to the U.S. In Japan 7 Datsun workers were recently sacked for "criticising their union". These workers complained about low pay, bad conditions in the company "dormitories" in which single workers are forced to live, and said the union was "the guard dog of the company".



Of Datsun's 46 directors, 7 have had full-time union posts at some time in their careers! The recent action of the British unions at Ford and BL simply confirm what's true worldwide: the interests of the unions are with the bosses and it's not surprising they don't defend the workers.

#### THE FUTURE

Some workers think if they make sacrifices then their firms will return to profitability. This isn't true. The Linwood workers accepted speed-ups and pay freezes and they got the boot just the same. Workers have no interest in helping the bosses try and solve the problems of capitalism. Their interests are in destroying the system. The only way forward is to oppose all the bosses' "rationalisation" and productivity plans. Opposition to these plans will only succeed if it is on a mass scale and if it crosses craft and industry boundaries. The struggles need to be organised through mass assemblies and revocable strike committees. This can only be done outside the trade unions who are everywhere, as the Datsun workers said, "the guard dogs of the bosses".

As a first step towards initiating this type of struggle groups of communist workers in the factories need to be organised around a political understanding of the capitalist crisis and the historical interests of the working class. Such groups can give the lead in vigorously opposing the lies of the bosses and the unions, and link the struggle against redundancies and pay cuts to the historical struggle for communism. This struggle is for a system of rational economic planning where perfectly-working machinery isn't scrapped because competition decrees it is out of date; a society where everyone is involved in producing goods directly for the community's needs and therefore without unemployment, without wage labour and without the exploitation that is the hallmark of capitalism - East and West.

# THE 600 YEARS OF CLASS STRUGGLE PEASANTS' REVOLT

In Britain the rulers of the capitalist system prefer to forget their own class' history of violence against "law and order" in the past. They tell us the lie in school history books that "our" (i.e. their) history, unlike that of "inferior" countries, has been a gradual, peaceful process which has advanced towards a stable, near-perfect political system. The reason they put forward this myth is obvious. "Our" (i.e. their) system is peaceful and only reluctantly has to use violence to defend itself from "extremists". From Thatcher to Benn, from the Pope to the Archbishop of Canterbury, all the spokesmen of the capitalist order denounce "violence" whilst justifying every act of the forces of law and order. But the ruling class will not agree to give up its power without a fight. Without violence there is no hope that the working class will be able to overthrow this system.

In this series of articles we aim to show that "all history is the history of class struggle" (Karl Marx) and that the key to those struggles is the development of the productive forces (i.e. economic developments). This month we begin by celebrating the 600th anniversary year of the so-called Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

## BACKGROUND TO THE REVOLT

"When Adam delved, and Eve span who was then a gentleman" (Slogan of 1381)

By 1300 the feudal system was in decline. The exploiting class of landowners had squandered their wealth in warring wars amongst themselves and against the King. The rise of trade and small scale industry in the towns had begun to dissolve feudalism from within. At the same time the major exploited class, the villeins, who had to work two or more days a week on the landowner's estate in return for a small plot of land, were beginning to flee to towns to escape villeinage. Some of those who remained had begun to produce goods to sell, rather than to simply consume them themselves.

These trends increased with the Black Death which hit England in the middle of the century, killing one third of the population. The germs of capitalism flourished in the epidemic. Landowners were suddenly short of labour and to keep their villeins from absconding had to accept fixed payments (which became increasingly worthless at a time of inflation) instead of labour from their villeins. The villeins now turned to working full time on their plots, producing a highly profitable surplus for the market.

At the same time as the villeins were becoming peasants a floating population of vagabonds, ex-soldiers, plague refugees, etc., had come into existence outside feudal relations. The lords now looked on these to replace the villeins' labour and the system of WAGE LABOUR began to develop. With labour in short supply, labourers were able to force up wages by forming secret associations demanding a minimum wage. The purchasing power of the lower classes was now higher than at any time for 500 years and the ruling aristocracy faced economic ruin.

The ruling class (including the Church which owned one-third of the land at this time) counter-attacked. The Lords passed the Statute of Labourers and the Petition against Vagrants, which were attempts to reduce wages to what they had been before the Black Death. Lords tried to increase taxes and forced reluctant villeins to work by brandings and whippings. The period before 1381 was one of resistance, of flights of labourers to the towns and riots. But the spark which set off the revolt was the attempt to shift the burden of the

French war onto the shoulders of the lower classes by a poll tax of 3 groats per head of the population.

## THE REVOLT AND ITS AFTERMATH

Villeinage was most widespread in Essex and Kent, where the biggest towns also lay. Here the villeins and labourers rose and, often led by poor clergy (like John Ball), they attacked the local manors, burned records of their taxes, and destroyed the lords' millstones (he had a monopoly on corn grinding). As they swept on London the most hated lords and churchmen were killed, as were lawyers and royal officials. This selective terror paralysed the ruling class.

The revolt of the peasants was a signal to all who hated the feudal system. Many towns at this time were dominated by the local landlords (e.g. they had to pay them taxes). Just as many of the leaders of the peasants were rich villeins, frustrated at feudal laws, so in many towns the revolts were led by small capitalists who wanted self-government for their town and an end of feudal overlordship. At this time both the small capitalists and the emerging working class had a common interest in fighting against feudalism. This is most clearly seen in London, where there was an emerging working class in the cloth and other industries. Their wages were held down and they too were burdened with taxes for the unpopular war.

The Londoners threw open the gates of the city to the rebels and joined in the killing of war profiteers, nobles and churchmen. They were led by John Ball who told them:

"Good people, things cannot go right in England, and never will, until all goods are held in common, and there are no more villeins and gentlefolk, but we are all one and the same."

With most of the army away in France and the rebels in control of London (a difficult place for mounted feudal knights to fight), the position of the ruling class was difficult. Getting the rebels out of London was vital. The King, Richard II skilfully met the rebels at Smithfield and promised them all their demands. These were for the abolition of serfdom, free buying and selling of land, and the abolition of the laws restricting wages. A majority of the rebels, trusting the King, went home.

Ball and his lieutenants, like Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, were killed or executed and their dispirited followers fled. Once the rebels were out of London the King broke the promises he had made (except ending the poll tax). The arrest and execution of 1,500 rebel leaders began. Some peasants realised they had been tricked, but were scattered by well-armed knights. Although it was put down the revolt shook feudal society to its foundations, and undoubtedly speeded up the emergence of capitalism as a new system of production. The revolt failed because the opposition to feudalism generated by capitalist development was not strong enough; by the next mass insurrection of 1640 the balance of forces had altered considerably against the last defenders of the feudal order.

## THE REVOLT AND THE WORKING CLASS

This uprising destroys the myth that British history is "different". Like anywhere else, the history of Britain is a series of ferocious class struggles based on the economic development of society. It shows that negotiation with the ruling class is suicidal. The class struggle must be fought to the finish by the ruthless use of terror against the exploiters.

The 1381 revolt failed because of the weakness of the revolutionaries. The revolt included the rising bourgeoisie (rich peasants, merchants) who wanted the free development of capitalism. For them, despite the revolt's defeat, developments were eventually to bring a victory for which they had not been strong enough in 1381. In alliance with the bourgeoisie at this time were the dispossessed labourers and urban poor, a disorganised and wretched class unable to impose its will on society. Out of this class was eventually to emerge the working class, which would have the numbers and strength to stake its claim as a ruling class. Today the working class can see that under its leadership the wretched mass of sub-proletarians (landless labourers etc) can be won to a struggle for communism. As for the peasants proper, the revolutionary policy must be to divide off the poor peasants from the leadership of the richer peasants whose "revolutionary" hopes are limited to creating the conditions for extending their own property.

The peasants' revolt took place at a time of the decay of feudalism. Today we live in the period of the decay of capitalism, in the midst of economic crisis, wars and catastrophes. Out of the convulsions of feudal decay there grew the capitalist system. Out of the disintegration of capitalism will come the proletarian revolution and a communist society. This society will regard the cause of John Ball and his poor followers as hopeless, but honour it by seeing it as our cause. With us it will triumph. •

## Paul Mattick (1904-81)

At the beginning of the year the death of Paul Mattick, one of the leading influences on the "council movement", occurred. Mattick was born in Germany and during World War One joined the youth section of the Spartakusbund, and later German Communist Party (KPD) formed in 1919. When the latter split in 1920 Mattick belonged to those who went on to form the KAPD after being expelled from the party for their opposition to work in the trades union and parliament. In the late 1920s Mattick emigrated to the USA where he animated the journals Council Correspondence and Living Marxism. These criticised the tactics of popular fronts, especially in relation to the war in Spain (1936-39). Ceasing active political work in 1941, Mattick continued to write for various publications and to publish books and essays till his death.

Mattick's main contribution to the revolutionary movement was undoubtedly his recovery and development of the work of the Marxist economist Henryk Grossman on the theory of the capitalist crisis. At a time of the greatest boom in capitalist history, Mattick, in his Marx and Keynes (originally published as articles in the 50s and 60s), argued correctly that Keynesianism could not overcome the Marxist law of the falling rate of profit, and that a new, more catastrophic crisis than that of the 30s lay ahead. Mattick's work has made a major contribution to the economic thought of the CWO.

Mattick's main weakness was also the one which explains his abandonment of politics in 1941. Inheriting from the German left an over-emphasis on the spontaneity of the masses and a tendency to downgrade the role of the party, Mattick eventually came to deny the need for a political party altogether. It was this view which hastened the demise of many elements of the revolutionary movement during the period of counter-revolution from the 20s to the 60s, and which is continuing to hamper the development of a clear centre of attraction which can prefigure the future international communist party today. In saluting Mattick as a proletarian fighter we do him justice, not by glossing over his fatal errors, but in subjecting them to Marx's "ruthless criticism of all things existing" which Mattick himself claimed as his watchword. •

# FRANCE PLUS CA CHANGE...

Eighteen years ago nearly 10 million French workers came out on strike in the biggest strike in history. However, the most significant fact about the events of May 68 was that it signalled the end of the biggest capitalist economic boom for nearly 100 years. This boom of a mere ten years led to claims by the ruling class that Marxism and class struggle were now irrelevant. Books were written claiming that the working class was either conservative or that it had ceased to exist. May 68 and its aftermath cut off this idle speculation in mid-sentence.

Two years ago French steelworkers waged one of the most militant struggles by any sector of workers in Western Europe in the last decade. These clashes were particularly militant in the steel towns of Longwy and Denain where steelworkers took on the riot police and managed to bulldoze a police station and burn the contents of the office of the employers' associations. But, as in



The power of every state rests on armed force: CRS riot police confront the Longwy-Denain steel men in 1980.

May 68, the French ruling class was able to rely on the unions to lead this struggle from a confrontation with the capitalist state into feeble token marches (although even here the unions had difficulty controlling a "peaceful demonstration" in Paris) and CGT (Communist Party trades unions) "days of action" (as opposed to the real actions already carried out by the workers). In addition the unions were successful in isolating the steelworkers from other workers in struggle at the same time (particularly the immigrant workers of Paris). Whilst the steelworkers were not conned by nationalist calls from the CGT that the crisis in the French steel industry was all the fault of "German trusts", the promise of large redundancy payments and "phased" redundancies in the steel industry bought off the struggle. Since that time the French working class, like its counterpart in Britain after the steel strike here, has been very quiet.

The struggles of the steelworkers in France gave a slight indication of what could be achieved by COLLECTIVE action. In some notable instances, such as at Dunkirk, the unions were denounced as opponents of the workers and at Longwy a union meeting called by the CGT was disrupted when workers denounced the Communist Party mayor as a "betrayer" and refused to let him speak. However, these positive signs did not lead to all-out rejection of the unions and all the steelworkers have been left with a sense of frustration.

Whilst there can now be no lasting

victories for the working class short of an overthrow of the capitalist system and its state, these skirmishes prepare workers for the final battle. The individual sense of frustration with the role of the unions and the Left parties which is the outcome of every significant struggle today prepares the way for collective rejection of these bodies tomorrow.

But at the same time our class enemies also learn new lessons from each struggle. In France after the steelworkers' struggle, the French capitalists, led by the Government of Giscard, realised that a frontal attack on the working class only risked a violent reply from the workers. This was especially true where the workers were known to be strong and militant. Here, the State tried to bail out crisis-ridden industries such as steel, lorries, cars, armaments, chemical and nuclear industries, with loans and tax cuts. Other industries which are not so crucial to the national economy and where the class has shown comparatively little militancy recently (e.g. textiles and shoes) were left to their fate. (Which means, for example, that in the textile region of the Vosges almost

crisis without provoking another Longwy and Denain. In this context the farce of the panic selling of shares on the Paris Stock Exchange (the Bourse) after the Presidential election victory of Mitterand gave the impression that the Socialist Party really is anti-capitalist. But the panic of a few small-time capitalist investors does not represent the real interests of French capitalism. In the years of crisis ahead the Left's self-proclaimed "socialism" will be better able to control the class struggle and avoid a repeat of May 1968. Mitterand's strategy will be the opposite of Giscard's. Whilst the state security courts have already been abolished and the basic minimum wage has been increased (in order to win the Parliamentary elections), appeals have already been made to workers to work harder and not to strike. Instead of Giscard's austerity with a Right-wing face the workers now face Mitterand's austerity with a Left face. As the French would say, "the more it changes, the more it stays the same". It remains to be seen whether the French working class will continue to accept any of the faces of capitalism.

## THE RACISM OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY

Racism has been a useful practice for every ruling class in history to divert attention from the barbarities of its system. From the massacres of Jews in 12th century York to the pogroms in Russia at the beginning of this century a scapegoat has always been found for the masters of tyranny and oppression to blame in times of crisis. In this century capitalism has raised racism to new and horrific levels which reached their height in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany.

But the advocates of the "master race" theory are not the only capitalist racists. Capitalism uses racism as it uses sexism, sectionalism and all the other historical oppressions to divide worker from worker. In France we highlighted the racism of the French state in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 15\*. Not only have immigrants been blamed for the capitalist crisis, but at least 1 million have been deported ("repatriated" as the politicians call it) and harsh anti-immigrant laws are enthusiastically carried out by the police. An increasingly active supporter of the police has been the French Communist Party. At the end of last year this Party really showed its nationalism when the Communist mayor of Vitry-sur-Seine (a suburb of Paris) descended, with a large gang of thugs, on a new hostel for immigrants. After tearing out wiring and plumbing they bulldozed any outside amenity they could reach. To cover up this novel method for encouraging "repatriation" the French CP organised a noisy anti-drugs campaign, claiming the entire immigrant population was involved in drug pushing! In this they tried to frame a Moroccan worker at Montigny-le-Corneilles for drug trafficking in a failed attempt to expel him and his family.

The French CP has been losing votes slowly but steadily since 1965. Its anti-immigrant campaign during the Presidential elections was part of a cynical attempt to win votes by playing on nationalist sentiments (immigrants have no vote) and blaming the economic crisis on foreign workers instead of world capitalism (the real culprit). After beginning by calling for import controls through its trade union, the CGT, then blaming the failure of the French steel industry on the "German trusts", the CP's nationalism led it to a position in favour of "immigration control". Vitry-sur-Seine was, therefore, just a logical extension of the nationalism of this so-called Communist Party.

\* Price 40p post paid, from group address.

half the workers are on short-time or are unemployed.)

It was this attempt to quell working class militancy by using State funds to reduce the effects of the crisis and gradually phase-in unemployment which led the French ruling class to abandon Giscard in the Presidential elections. His economic policies of free trade badly hit the "petit bourgeoisie" - the farmers, fishermen, shopkeepers and small producers. It was to these groups that the programme of state subsidies of Mitterand and the Socialist Party deliberately appealed. In reply to Giscard's challenges about socialist economic plans, Mitterand outlined his view of a "socialism" which protects the small businessman:

"It is the left which nationalises in order to defend the interests of the small investors ... Bureaucratism is what you do."  
(Times 18th May)

With the working class "behaving itself", with the Communists becoming daily discredited and therefore unlikely to play any important part in Mitterand's government, the idea of a Socialist president, after 23 years of Right-wing rule, held no terrors for the French bourgeoisie.

What the capitalist class hopes is that the Socialist Party will be able to persuade the workers to pay for the

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●The Communist Workers Organisation's main task is to contribute to the building of the world communist party. If you agree with our politics, write to the group address.

Send us information on the class struggle at work or write to us with comments and questions on our politics.

## address for correspondence

**CWO, PO Box,  
283 Clarence Drive,  
Glasgow G12**

To receive our political platform, our factory group platform and unemployed workers group platform, send 50p (includes post) to the group address.

# POLAND

Continued  
from  
front page

interest which motivates Western governments. They don't want Poland to repudiate its debts since it would add to the crisis of the Western economies. At the same time they want to show how strong the "free world" is compared to "communism".

Yet in the long run all the efforts to bail out Poland make the economic crisis worse and only put off the final day of reckoning. For example, Poland has agreed to pay for its food imports from the EEC by "bilateral credits". In other words, by exporting industrial products to the West in return for the food. This is at a time when Poland has no industrial products to export since production has dropped dramatically - on average 10% in the first quarter of this year. In vital industries the drop is much greater. Cement production has declined by 25%, agricultural machinery by 15% and production of coal and copper, which not only supply raw materials for Polish industry but also valuable export payments, has dropped by 20%. Yet the hope of Eastern and Western capitalists alike is for an increase in production, an increase which can only be brought about by a massive intensification in the exploitation of the Polish working class.

## THE SITUATION OF THE POLISH WORKING CLASS

While the interests of Polish capitalism demand that Poland tries to repay its debts by upping productivity and reducing production costs in order to increase exports and earn foreign exchange, for the Polish working class this means working harder without pay increases and without any prospect of the goods they produce going to fill Polish shops. An average wage rise of 23% in the first 3 months of this year doesn't mean much when the shelves in the shops are bare and when more and more necessities of life are being rationed. Since May rationing has been extended from meat and sugar to include butter, flour (2.2lb per month), cereal grains (4.4lb every 3 months) and rice (1.1lb every 3 months). The introduction of a 5 day working week for many Polish workers is offset by the increasing hours of tedium spent waiting in food queues and the general inconvenience of sporadic power cuts.

In the past it has only been the militant refusal of the Polish working class to accept price rises and cuts in consumer supplies which has cushioned them from some of the effects of the economic crisis. Fear of "social unrest" has prevented the Polish ruling class from attacking the working class as hard as it would have liked. But now, despite the magnificent example Polish workers have shown the rest of the world in 1970, 1976 and last year, their economic "gains" are proving worthless against the reality of the capitalist crisis. There is no better example than the experience of the Polish working class to show that in the 20th century it is impossible for workers to achieve real reforms.

## 'SOLIDARITY' AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST

At the height of the mass strikes last year the demand for Government recognition of the newly-formed "free" trade union (Solidarity) came to the fore. The Polish working class knew from experience that resort to the streets and direct confrontation with the State would lead to bloodshed. They saw in Solidarity a peaceful, "non-political" way to gain reforms, an organisation created by the mass of the workers which would stand up for their real interests. As the masses put

their trust in this new organisation, the mass organs created during the struggle - strike committees linked up into inter-factory committees - disappeared. As Solidarity gained control over the struggle strikes were kept separate (and therefore less effective) from each other in time and place. As early as last autumn Walesa had joined the Government and the Catholic Church in appealing to striking workers to return to work "in the nation's interest". Although the less perceptive "hardliners" in the Russian Politburo and the Polish Communist Party (PCP) may not recognise it, the Polish ruling class has found a valuable weapon which it can use inside the working class to defend its interests. An organisation which the working class believes is genuinely representing it is much more useful for getting workers to accept greater exploitation and cuts in living standards than any tactic of carrot or stick openly applied by the State. And because Solidarity is trying to reconcile the irreconcilable - the interests of the capitalist class with those of the working class - it is forced to try and curb the class struggle; to oppose strikes where this is possible and when this is not possible, to propose token stoppages to avoid effective mass strikes. In short, Solidarity's role, like trade unions everywhere, is to act in the interests of the capitalist state and it is no accident that Lech Walesa is now seen by the Western press as a "moderate" and a "realist".

Thus, when Solidarity members in Bydgoszcz were beaten up by police sparked off the threat of a full-scale general strike last March, Walesa managed to use a 4 hour token strike for workers to let off steam, postponed the general strike pending negotiations with the Government and finally called the whole thing off after familiar-sounding promises that the officials responsible would be punished after a government enquiry. With the interests of "Poland" at heart, Walesa said the agreement to call off the strike was "the best possible for the country at the time".

Since then Solidarity has gone on to co-operate with the Government in imposing a three month ban on strikes and has incorporated private farmers into its ranks (Rural Solidarity). With the formation of Rural Solidarity no further proof is needed of whose interests the "free" trade union really represents. Solidarity rose on the back of a working class movement determined to oppose price rises in basic food products. Less than a year later (May 11th, 1981) the union had joined the Government in demanding higher prices for milk, meat and bread! This is exactly what successive Polish Governments have been trying to do for the last ten years and which workers have opposed fiercely at the cost of 300 dead and even more imprisoned. Now Solidarity is to do the work of the capitalist state and is persuading the workers to accept these attacks. In June Walesa, sounding like any other union hack, explained that without wage restraint the Polish economy might collapse:

"We have recommended to all the branches of Solidarity not to make new claims for wage increases without the agreement of the union leadership - and not to undertake new strikes."

Despite this, Solidarity's origins and the opposition to the union from Communist Party "hardliners" inside Poland and from the rest of the Governments in the Eastern bloc, mean that it is still relatively easy for it to maintain a reputation of independence from the State even though it is really operating on behalf of the ruling class.

The union officials have quickly become cut off from the mass of the working class. For example, in Gdansk the town council offered the 'Hotel Monopol' to the union for its local offices. The union duly took over the building, putting 300 hotel workers out of a job in the process. Walesa's "common sense" solution to this problem was that the town council should find these people work.

The union has not been able to get away with these anti-working class activities without provoking some resistance. For example, in the shipyard at Gdansk workers have demanded the removal of the Solidarity representative, Anna Walentynowicz, for failing to represent their views. Last summer Walentynowicz was one of the militant leaders of the strike movement there.

The reason for these developments is not merely because the union has become bureaucratised or because individual Solidarity leaders are cynical traitors to their class. All trade unions, no matter how militant their origins, are forced to act against the working class because in order to exist permanently they have to take up the defence of the national economy. Solidarity now supports an increase in food prices because like unions everywhere, it is a nationalist organisation which is trying to solve Polish capitalism's problems. The Polish workers' cause cannot be advanced by a more militant version of Solidarity. Real working class solidarity can only be found by ignoring the growing trade union apparatus and procedures and returning to the methods of struggle of last year - strike committees of revocable delegates, elected and controlled by the whole workforce.

Solidarity's loyalty to Polish state capitalism has now won it the support of the Polish Communist Party. From seeing the advantages of "free" trade unions for controlling the class struggle, the Polish ruling class has moved on to see the advantages of a "democratic" Communist Party to do the same. Since last year 200,000 Polish CP members have left or been expelled from the 2½ million strong party, 1 million of whose members are also members of Solidarity. But the movement of the Polish CP towards Solidarity has brought with it the danger (from its point of view) that the workers will clearly see just which side Solidarity is on. Already, workers angry at the postponement of the last strike have burned down the Bydgoszcz police station in retaliation at State repression. Solidarity's "token" general strike policy has done nothing to prepare the working class for a real struggle and the union helped to make the workers, defenceless, unorganised against future attacks by the State police. From Moscow's point of view, even threats of general strikes only confirm the Politburo view that Solidarity is a force for "counter-revolution" which ought to be crushed. Solidarity's policy of backtracking and avoiding confrontation disarms the class and doesn't get rid of state repression or "the Russian danger".

## THE RUSSIAN THREAT

If Solidarity is under pressure from the workers then the reforming Polish Communist Party leaders are under even more pressure from Moscow. The scant tolerance of the Politburo for a reformist movement within a "fellow socialist" country has been accompanied from the start by barely disguised threats of armed intervention. For the past ten months or so, however, the Polish Party has been given leeway to put its own house in order. The reason for this is that the Polish events have occurred in different objective circumstances to the Hungarian uprising of 1956 or the "Prague Spring" of Czechoslovakia in 1968. In the 1980s the Russian ruling class is well aware of the immense economic burden and military strain

Warsaw Pact occupation of Poland would place on Russian imperialism. Like everywhere else, Russia is feeling the effects of the world economic crisis and is in no position to buy off local opposition by any substantial increases in economic aid as happened in Hungary after 1956. (The USSR is already giving Poland large supplies of raw materials such as oil and gas for nothing in return.) The option of financing an economic upturn with loans from the West (as happened in Czechoslovakia after 1968) has already been tried and failed. Moreover, the period of East-West "detente" has resulted in much closer economic links between the two imperialist blocs than in 1956 or 1968. Russia itself has greater trade links with the West than ever before and a Western trade embargo in the event of a Warsaw Pact occupation of Poland would seriously weaken Russia economically.

A military clampdown in Poland would not just be a simple matter of moving in to purge the Communist Party of reformists and replacing the leadership with a pro-Moscow faction. Unlike in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the reformist movement in the Polish Communist Party has developed from a mass movement outside the Party. (Russia is having problems even finding a pro-Moscow faction to back.) A massive deployment of troops in every major town in Poland would be necessary to crush this movement. This is at a time when Russia is committed to a war in Afghanistan. Moreover, in July 1980 Russia had done nothing to prepare its own population for an invasion of a country that is one of its most important allies. It would have been difficult for the Russian Government to send troops to put down strikes in Poland at a time of strikes of 2 million workers in Togliattigrad, Gorki and Russian Lithuania.

Against all this, however, the fact remains that Russian imperialism cannot tolerate any military weakening of its bloc. Poland is a key strategic element in Russian imperialism's defence system (which isn't called the Warsaw Pact for nothing!) The emergence of a Polish Central Committee not firmly under Moscow's control would be a sign of the feebleness of Russian imperialism. There is no doubt that Russia can get tanks to Warsaw at a moment's notice. Month-long military manoeuvres on Polish territory have seen to that. What's more the working class in Russia, East Germany and Czechoslovakia have been bombarded with propaganda about the "counter-revolutionary" threat from Solidarity in Poland. And, ominously, the class struggle inside Russia also appears to have lulled. Meanwhile, Moscow's political manoeuvres inside Poland to oust the reformists in the Communist Party (setting up of the Katowice stooge opposition Forum and attempts at a coup to get rid of Kania from the Central Committee) have been tried and failed.

While Kania desperately tries to stave off grass roots' pressure for reforms by publicising Moscow's letter of June 7th, with its clear threat that "socialist Poland ... will not be abandoned by us", the Russian Politburo has published the same letter to explain to its own working class why military intervention is necessary. If Kania keeps to his decision to allow free elections for the 9th Party Congress in July then the reformists will triumph. It was the victory of reformists within the ruling Party which triggered the invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. Thus, the question that will be asked at the Warsaw Pact Summit in Bulgaria in mid-June will not be "Shall we invade?" but, "When do we invade?"

#### REVOLUTION: THE ONLY CHOICE FOR THE WORKING CLASS

The Polish working class has lived under the shadow of Russian invasion for almost 12 months. That shadow has grown darker recently, whilst Solidarity has seen to it that the

class' capacity to fight is weaker.

The highpoint of last year's strikes in Poland was not the official recognition of Solidarity but the willingness of the Polish workers to strike in sympathy with each other; the mass involvement of workers through the formation of strike committees and the beginnings of a higher form of class organisation to generalise the struggle with the appearance of the inter-factory strike committee in the Gdansk area. This mass movement was a direct threat to the State and contained within it the possibility of a more serious challenge to capitalist authority. Factory committees, linked up district by district to form workers' councils (soviets) of recallable delegates, are the basic organs of workers' self-government. Practically it would have been only a short step for the Polish workers' movement of last year to have extended its strike committees and transformed them into the mass organs necessary for a revolutionary workers' state. The Polish state was in no position to resist - its Communist Party was divided and its army mainly unreliable conscripts. It is true that had the Polish workers carried out their struggle along these lines, then it would have provoked immediate Warsaw Pact invasion, BUT this would have not been on terms of Russian imperialism's choosing. With class struggle at a higher level in Eastern Europe, with the possibility of international solidarity of workers, the battle might not have been lost. And even if the Polish workers had lost the physical struggle what a great example they would have given to the world working class. In the event the Polish working class was not ready for such a step. There was and, as far as we know, there still is, no political organisation in Poland putting forward a revolutionary alternative to Solidarity's "peaceful" policy of class collaboration. Thus, the working class was neither politically nor physically prepared for a revolutionary assault on the capitalist state. In fact, it is the "blood bath" argument of a possible Soviet invasion which strengthens Solidarity's calls for class calm today.

Marxists are not futurologists but there are not 101 solutions to the Polish crisis. The Polish workers have only 2 choices. They can accept Solidarity's and the Government's calls for calm and belt tightening in which case they must accept the most drastic austerity for the rest of capitalism's existence. By the time Polish capitalism has completed a vicious exploitation of its workers in an attempt to pay off its debts, capitalism will have already brought us to the brink of war. This fate awaits the entire world working class if it sits back and waits for capitalism to solve its own crisis. Its solution is our destruction.

The only other alternative facing Polish workers is to take up arms, resurrect the class organisations they created last summer (mass strike committees), and expand them into workers' councils. The rotten fabric of the Polish state would collapse overnight as the Russians have predicted and the Polish workers would be facing the full might of the Warsaw Pact military. In this situation they can only rely on the international solidarity of the Eastern European workers both in and out of uniform to paralyse Russian imperialism. Given the facts that the class enemy has had 12 months to prepare to crush the class, and that the Polish workers have not yet created a revolutionary leadership aware of the issues at stake, the chances of victory appear very slim.

These chances will be even slimmer if the workers wait for a Russian invasion, since an uprising then will certainly be dominated by nationalism (as in Hungary 25 years ago). Even

## Lee's & L.S.E. Continued from back page

For example, they praise 'critically' ("So far, so good") the local AUEW bureaucrat who is involved in the LSE occupation to save the union's skin. ("Full-time AUEW organiser argued that if the workforce gave in ... the union would be smashed ...") As we said in Workers Voice 2, the unions,

"Far from defending the working class, they merely wish to retain their position as the auctioneers of workers' labour power. Worried that capitalism might learn to do without them, they demand 'worksharing' and 'voluntary redundancies' instead of compulsory sackings, in their desperation to keep alive the myth of reformism that they live by."

However, The Next Step has no understanding of the role trade unions play in containing the class struggle today and therefore these more 'militant' leftists can only call for "aggressive industrial action" in the "fine tradition" of trade unionism. But the tradition of trade unionism is the 19th century one of winning reforms from an expanding capitalist economy. Today capitalism is dying on its feet and the unions are doing their best to keep it alive because their very existence depends on it. The trade unions will never choose the path of mass action because this path leads eventually to challenging capitalism itself. Without acting outside the unions to overcome their isolation by mass solidarity action, occupations only prepare the way for defeat.

Unlike the various leftist cheer leaders who limit themselves to "support" for the occupations, our message to all workers facing redundancies is that only by taking the struggle outside the factory and to the rest of the working class, can it be strengthened. The fact that these struggles are confined to the factories, are limited by union divisions, that solidarity action has remained limited to gestures and financial support - these facts show the weakness of communists in the working class today. We need to build groups in the factories and workplaces to combat the divisive policies of the unions and to fight for a policy of class solidarity. Only with a strong communist organisation can the working class be permanently strong; and only with a strong international communist party will the last battle - for communist revolution - be won. That is our task. Join with us.

## PUBLICATIONS of the C.W.O.

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. (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.

now the most likely outcome of an armed uprising is that the nationalists will dominate it but if the workers begin the struggle on their own ground of fighting austerity and the Polish state their remains some hope for a positive outcome.

To call for revolution today is not simple-minded adventurism. Either the Polish workers carry on the class struggle and confront the class enemy, in which case they will raise the example for the rest of the working to follow, or they will be crushed. There is no third road.

# WORKERS VOICE

## Lee Jeans & Laurence Scott OCCUPYING THE ROAD TO DEFEAT

In Workers Voice 2 we reported on the occupation at Gardner's in Manchester. This struggle, which began with the whole workforce opposed to any redundancies, ended with the unions negotiating away 300 jobs and accepting short-time working for the rest of the workers. As we go to press factory occupations are continuing at Lee Jeans in Greenock (since 5th February) and at Laurence Scott Electro-Motors (LSE) in Manchester (now in its 8th week). The bosses of both these factories want to shut them down as part of a move to cut costs and improve profitability of the parent companies. (Lee Jeans is owned by the U.S. Vanity Fair Co. and LSE was recently taken over by a Doncaster group, Mining Supplies.)

The parallel with Gardner's is striking. As at Gardner's the workers' determination to stand up and fight for their jobs is being undermined by the unions at every step. For example, at LSE the bosses introduced first a 4 day week, then a 3 day week and wage cuts and the unions stayed quiet. They accepted the bosses' right to cut production even when it meant wage cuts for the workers. Also like Gardner's, the state's Short Time Working Compensation Scheme was used by the LSE bosses with no resistance from the unions. These subsidies hide the real extent of wage cuts for a time and con workers into thinking that 'management' is doing its best to

"save" their jobs. LSE bosses were confident that once the subsidy ended the workers would be in no position to resist and would meekly accept the necessity of closure and compulsory redundancies.

In fact this did not happen and the workers at LSE, as at Lee Jeans beforehand, chose to put up a fight to save their livelihoods. Mass unemployment has put paid to the idea of accepting redundancy pay and "having a rest" before looking for another job. The positive aspect of all the recent occupations is that they are a sign that workers in Britain are beginning to realise there is NO ALTERNATIVE but to fight.

In Greenock, for example, the official unemployment rate is 20%. The vast majority of the Lee Jeans 250-strong workforce are women whose average age is just over 20, and any redundancy pay they would be entitled to would not amount to much; many of these women are now the only breadwinners in households where husbands, fathers and brothers are laid off.

However, the tactic of occupying the factory and trying to prove that it is still a viable operation is a recipe for defeat. (Especially when more and more factories really aren't "viable" for the bosses.) From the outset both these struggles have been dominated by the idea that some sort of solution can be wrung from the bosses which is acceptable to them and yet a victory for the workforce. This is simply impossible. You can't defeat the bosses by accepting their arguments and logic, but this is exactly what all trade unions do.

### "OPEN THE BOOKS" = OPEN THE DOOR TO DEFEAT

The line of the unions, and the bulk of those 'supporting' the occupations, is that the struggle can be won by persuading the owners to be "good" bosses, or by finding another boss who will play the game. The National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW) at Lee Jeans is demanding access to company books in order to prove that the factory really is profitable and the bosses are stupid to close. The shop stewards' convenor said "if an independent accountant accepts the company case, we will call everything off".

At LSE the AUEW commissioned a study from the local polytechnic which concluded that:

"The unions accepted short time working as preferable to redundancies, and if the factory stays open, they

accept that if orders do not increase, then they will have to negotiate redundancies"

If the engineering workers of LSE or the women at Greenock accept the need to make their factory profitable, then they will have to accept redundancies, speed-ups, wage cuts and possibly no-strike agreements, the usual price paid in deals between employers and unions for staying in business. Even before the closure was announced the women at Lee Jeans were brutally exploited. Their basic wage was under £50 a week and productivity 50% over target. So what would a really "efficient" factory mean?

Both occupations have been able to keep going as a result of financial support from trade unions and the "labour movement". The Scottish TUC has expressed its "total commitment to get the closure (at Lee Jeans) withdrawn and a return to work" while the workers have been treated to a visit from Michael Foot and promises of "protection" by Mick McGahey of the NUM. This is all very useful for the militant image of the TUC and the Labour Party but it does nothing to break the isolation of these two groups of workers who remain locked inside the factories.

Yet break their isolation they must, if workers are going to match their willingness to fight with more than token action. It's useless relying on the trade unions to do this. The trade unions' role is to sabotage as far as possible all attempts to extend and unify the class struggle. For workers in a single factory facing redundancy the obvious way to begin to extend the fight is by calling for sympathy strikes from workers in the same group of companies. The two occupations are isolated from the occupations taking place at the same time. (Lee Jeans and LSE are not the only ones in Britain at the moment). As it is, the unions and their shop stewards encourage the workers to spend most of their time winning the "backing" of "fellow trade unions". But union resolutions and coins in the collection box are not enough. The unions and their leftist hangers-on make prolonging the occupation an end in itself. This is a tactic which can only lead to exhaustion and demoralisation. What is needed is mass solidarity action which means taking the struggle beyond the boundaries of both factory and trade union.

### THE LEFTISTS - FALSE FRIENDS

The various Stalinist and Trotskyist political organisations are in general content to tail-end any workers' struggle uncritically. For most of these organisations the sacking of 300 workers at Gardner's was hailed as a triumph. It's not surprising, therefore, that the workers at Lee Jeans and LSE are also finding themselves the subject of much leftist praise at the moment. Despite the Gardner's experience the SWP is as blind as ever and at the beginning of June Socialist Worker had nothing to add to an LSE shop stewards' view that all they needed was "financial help to win".

A more intelligent, but no less dangerous view was expressed in the pages of The Next Step. This paper correctly says that the Gardner's occupation ended in defeat. The best The Next Step can do is criticise some actions of the union bureaucrats but their logic pushes them ever back to the union swamp.

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## 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!