

# WORKERS VOICE

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COMMUNIST WORKERS ORGANISATION

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## THE TEBBIT BILL: T.U.C. SABOTAGES FIGHTBACK

In 1979, the government recorded the greatest number of strikes since the war. 29 million working days were lost. In 1981 the figure was as low as it was in the middle of the war - 4 million. How did the Tory government achieve this dramatic reduction in working class struggles?

The Labour government of '74-'79 had failed to control the class struggle. The "winter of discontent" ('78-'79) had warned the bosses that workers had not been defeated. In desperation, the bosses brought in the Tories to attack the working class in a more direct way, to intimidate the class into surrender.

The Tories have recorded some successes. Most of the few strikes in 1981 were desperate attempts by workers to preserve jobs, while real wages fell. In its offensive against the working class, the Conservative government has had two allies - unemployment and the TUC.

Although the Tories didn't cause unemployment (it had tripled under Labour) and it has immense overheads (e.g. the riots), it has been useful to them in attacking the working class. Workers often feel that if they lose their job, they won't get another one. This intimidates them into accepting bosses' discipline. But accepting the bosses' argument doesn't work, and there have been strikes at plants where there have been huge redundancies, after workers realised that accepting wage cuts and job losses does not preserve living standards and jobs. (see "Lessons of BL" in Workers' Voice 6)

This is where the unions come in. The first great victory for the Tories was over the steel workers in 1980. They deliberately provoked a strike which the steel union (ISTC) weakened immensely by holding it back for six weeks, dividing the BSC steel workers from the private sector, limiting the demand to a payrise below the rate of inflation, thus allowing the bosses to go ahead with their redundancy plans. Since the defeat of this strike tens of thousands of jobs have been lost.

The following year, the Tories took on the miners. They announced the closure of 20 pits. Some miners responded immediately, without waiting for union instructions.

- On February 17th 1981, the Welsh miners came out.  
- On February 19th, the NUM called a halt to the strike, pending negotiations.

This obviously meant negotiating closures, so the miners in Kent and Scotland ignored the NUM and came out anyway. But thanks to Arthur Scargill, the Yorkshire area was held back. When Scargill said he had received 'assurances' over the phone from the NCB, most of the Yorkshire miners carried on working.

Thanks to the NUM's divisive tactics, the miners strike collapsed on February 23rd - and Scargill needed police protection against hundreds of angry Kentish miners when he arrived



at NUM headquarters in London. Since then, the NCB has closed or partially shut 12 pits.

As unemployment passed 10% last summer, a summer which was marked by riots of unemployed youths in the cities, workers were forced to occupy factories to try to defend jobs.

The unions' tactics in occupations had already been worked out during the Gardners occupation in 1980 in Manchester. Simply, they keep occupations isolated and tell workers they can win on their own. When the occupation is lost, the unions reach a "compromise" whereby hundreds of jobs are lost, and call this a victory. Radical leftist shop stewards are

just as prone to this habit as hardened union officials - Socialist Worker heralded the job losses at Gardners with the headline "At Last A Jobs Victory"! In fact there were 400 sacked - and the unions chose the victims!

At Laurance Scott Electromotors' workers and unemployed were prepared to organise mass pickets. So the unions stepped in to organise mass pickets - limiting them to once a week, on Mondays! They asked Scargill to organise blacking of Laurance Scott products in the mines. He refused. The workers should have gone directly to other workers, instead of relying on the unions.

The workers at the Staffa East London factory in autumn 1981 did not know the lesson of the Laurence Scott occupation - otherwise they wouldn't have asked Scargill to organise blacking of Staffa pumps in the mines. He didn't oblige.

### The Tebbit Bill

The Tories successes so far have encouraged them to go in for the kill. The pinnacle of their strategy is Norman Tebbit's Employment Bill, designed to make all effective class struggle illegal and deliver a crushing blow to the working class.

This Bill, when it becomes law will

- make strikes in solidarity with another group of workers unlawful;
- make the blacking of particular firm's products unlawful;
- all political strikes will be unlawful, e.g. strikes to release imprisoned militants;
- strikes in solidarity with workers abroad will be unlawful;
- victimisation will be made much easier.

The only form of industrial action that will still be legal will be disputes between one group of workers and their employer. If strikes are limited to this, they will be easily defeated. So all forms of effective class struggle, solidarity strikes, the use of flying pickets etc will be illegal.

All this is to be enforced by fining the unions involved. However, if the unions pull out of a strike on the grounds that it is

continued on page 2



# THE TEBBIT BILL

from  
page  
1

illegal, the Bill contains clauses which enable judges to fine any strike committee, official or unofficial.

## Unions against the Bill?

The TUC is opposed to this Bill because it's an attack on their bank account. But that's not all they're worried about. It's also an attack on their power. What the TUC is afraid of is that they will be forced to oppose strikes that they would be better able to defeat if they made them official. More strikes will be unofficial which is why the TUC want to organise opposition to the Bill outside the law. If the unions stay within the law, and the class struggle is made illegal, the unions won't be able to control it. They will become increasingly irrelevant.

If the working class struggles outside of the unions and against the law, then it will tend to struggle outside of all ideological restraints, and so the ruling class will be forced to resort more and more to naked force. This would illustrate more than anything the class nature of present day society; and hiding that nature is one of the most important functions of the unions.

The Tories themselves are not afraid of this. They think the working class is so intimidated that they don't need the unions to control it anymore. They're saying to the unions: we don't need you to police the class, we're going to use the courts instead.

'Radical' union leaders like Bill Keys, General Secretary of SOGAT, see the dangers of the Bill for their power. After the Bill becomes law, he wants the TUC to adopt the following policy:

"The TUC to have power to call for co-ordinating action where it is considered that legitimate trade union action has taken place." (Tribune, our emphasis)

This means he is letting the TUC leaders get away with not opposing the government as usual. If Terry Duffy wants to sabotage strikes, he will do the same as he did at Laurence Scotts - encourage his members to scab. If Arthur Scargill is asked to organise blacking of Laurence Scott's products, he can ask the TUC if "it is considered that legitimate trade union action has taken place" - and if it isn't, if the strike remains unofficial, he can carry on doing as he has done throughout the Laurence Scott strike - nothing.

The more 'radical' elements in the TUC openly call for workers to break the law when the Bill becomes an Act - since workers will have to do this anyway, they've got nothing to lose by saying this. Workers are already ignoring Prior's Act. The London dockers at Tilbury are consciously breaking the law on picket lines. Bill Keys is right - if the TUC

don't organise, the workers will organise outside the unions; the only effective opposition to the Tebbit Bill - illegal, non-peaceful mass strikes which have nothing to do with parliament, in which the working class directly attacks the police and the courts. This is what happened in '72, and the TUC only began to 'organise' it when it was already rolling in order to better control and defeat it.

The TUC has appealed to employers to oppose the Bill. Some sections of the ruling class feel that the Bill might provoke working class resistance. For example, the Financial Times points out that compulsory ballots before strikes are not always the best way for unions to defuse working class militancy. During the steel strike, workers in Sheffield set fire to ballot boxes. The unions often prefer to call mass meetings, since if they didn't the workers would organise them themselves.

## Workers Against the Law

The way to smash the ruling class onslaught is to do what we did in 1972 against Ted Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

Ten years ago, the crisis of capitalism had only just started to bite - the British working class was still famous for its militancy and the bosses relied on the unions rather than the police to control the class struggle.

The Industrial Relations Bill was initially not opposed by the unions at all, since its aim was to give the unions more power to control their members. It gave the unions all sorts of legal advantages if they registered with the government. In return, they were supposed to change their rules so as to make all strikes not organised officially by the unions illegal.

Generally, the unions were happy to go along with this. Those unions which refused to register, like the AUEW, did not organise strikes against the Bill.

In spite of the unions, strikes against the proposed law began to break out at the end of 1971. The TUC saw the danger of the class struggle going out of their control, and 'advised' the unions not to register under the Act when it became law in February 1972.

The Act set up special courts to fine strike leaders. If they refused to attend the court, they could be imprisoned for contempt. When dockers went on strike throughout Britain, five London dockers were imprisoned for non-appearance in court.

The working class wasn't going to stand for this. The dockers closed Fleet Street by mass picketing, and with no national papers appearing, the workers throughout the country became aware of their power, and hundreds of thousands came out on indefinite unofficial strike. This is what forced the government to release the dockers, and to abandon the Industrial Relations Act. The TUC didn't come into it - except when they tried to call off the strike. Socialist Challenge is lying when it says:

"The TUC and the Labour Party can smash Tebbit as they did Heath - if they choose." (18.2.82)

The TUC didn't smash Heath - far from it - they held back the opposition to the government. When hundreds of thousands came out on indefinite strike, the TUC called a one day strike - in other words, they told workers to go back after one day! Calling a one day strike in the middle of an indefinite strike is obviously the same as calling an end to the strike. Jack Jones, then leader of the TGWU, said it was necessary to call the one day strike for the TUC to regain control of the movement. In this they succeeded - once the ruling class had released the five dockers, the movement's immediate aims had been realised, and lacking any further political direction, it petered out.

To repeat the struggles of '72 will take more than just militancy. Militancy was based on the boom years of the '60s when workers could get what they wanted by striking because the bosses were able to pay. Today, militancy isn't enough. The bosses say they can't afford to pay, and workers know they are telling the truth.

Today, even temporary victories require immense struggles. If workers' struggles are isolated, they will be defeated, as our examples have shown. The only way of pushing back the bosses' attack even temporarily is to organise mass strikes outside the unions.

In 1980, the workers in Poland, without unions, came out on mass strike and forced the government to grant a wide range of political and economic concessions. However, the leadership of these strikes was gained by reactionary reformists like Lech Walesa. The workers were led up the garden path of 'compromise' and were defeated.

We must learn from this. We must organise strikes outside the unions, with revocable strike committees answerable to regular mass meetings. We must not allow the trades unions and the Labour Party to control the movement. If we allow those reactionaries to gain control, they will either make the strikes totally ineffective, or limit them to demanding the repeal of the Employment Act. If we allow this to happen, and limit ourselves to smashing the Tories' strategy, all that will happen is they'll call an election, and another government will be brought in to control the working class, as happened in 1974.

"Bring down the Tories" is not enough. Workers must prepare to bring down capitalism. To do this, they need to develop, not just the consciousness of their power, but political consciousness of the road to their liberation - communist revolution.

The Communist Workers Organisation contributes to the development of this consciousness by building the nucleus of a revolutionary party in Britain - a party which opposes the unions' 'compromise' and class collaboration, a party which opposes the Labour Party and its left-wing appendages, and a party which also strives to regroup militant workers in factory groups offering political clarity and a political strategy.

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### POSITIONS OF THE COMMUNIST WORKERS ORGANISATION

\*\* Every country in the world today is capitalist - including the so-called Communist states (for example Russia and China).

\*\* Trade Unions and shop stewards 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.

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# BELGIUM, BRITAIN, ONE WAY FORWARD

## The Crisis in Belgium

Belgium over the past couple of months has been shaken by numerous violent confrontations between the riot police and thousands of striking workers. The working class in Belgium is facing the same attacks on its living standards as workers here in Britain. However, unlike in Britain, austerity policies brought in by the new Centre/Right coalition government of Christian Democrats and Liberals have brought a violent response from the Belgian working class.

The government's new emergency austerity measures include

- the devaluation of the Belgian franc and for the working class this means a direct cut in its living standards in that imports (food etc) cost more.

- the ending of the indexation system under which wages kept pace with inflation. This means a cut in real wages. At the same time, wages have been frozen until the end of May. According to the *Economist*, "the real aim is to cut real wages by 3% this year".
- cuts in public spending (schools, housing etc)
- the ending of subsidies to 'unviable' industries which means redundancies for many workers. Already Belgium has the highest unemployment level in Europe - 453,000 - over 13% of the workforce.

These attacks on their living standards have been met by increasing working class resistance. In particular, in the French speaking area of Wallonia, where almost all of Belgian steel production is concentrated, steel workers have been determined in their efforts. The steel industry has been one of the hardest hit by the present world crisis of capitalism. The Belgian government's response was to announce that it was going to put into effect the EEC's decision to slash steel production and withdraw all subsidies to the industry by 1985. For the Belgian steel industry, this meant that the 80% state-owned Cockerill-Sambre Corporation, which is based in Liege and Charleroi, had to cut its steel making capacity immediately. Its 50% over-capacity conflicted with the EEC's agreed production quotas. Similar agreements over steel quotas in 1977 led to the loss of 150,000 steel jobs in the EEC. Britain's steel industry lost, as a result, 40% of its steel jobs and France lost 25%. It was clear that the time had come for Belgium to play its part in the EEC's attempt to restructure the whole of the European steel industry in its effort to make it more competitive vis-a-vis its North American and Japanese counterparts. In the short term, the

EEC now demanded that the Belgian steel industry shed almost immediately 10,000 jobs.

## The Workers Fight Back

These cuts were agreed to by the Belgian government but the steel workers thought otherwise. Protests began immediately which culminated in the FGTEB union - the main union in the steel and engineering industries of Wallonia - calling an indefinite strike to fight the proposed plans.

The strike began at the end of February. By mid-March, the strike had become more violent culminating in clashes in Brussels between thousands of steel workers and squads of riot police. At the same time, the FGTEB called a one day general strike for Friday 26th March against the rest of the government's austerity programme. Why did the unions in Belgium call this action? The British bourgeois *Times* clearly understood their tactics - "Belgian unions try to control workers' anger", they stated. (27.3.82) In the same report the unions' aim was seen as an attempt to "channel the militancy of the

membership" caused by "the growing grassroots anger at the relentless way in which the government has imposed its austerity programme". This had exploded into "uncoordinated action" which "the union leaders are increasingly anxious to control".

How the unions channelled their members' militancy into a dead-end can be seen when we look at the running of the so-called 'indefinite' strike. Management, from the start, attempted to divide the steel workers and eventually were successful. They threatened Liege workers with bigger redundancies and wage cuts than the workers at Charleroi. As a result, on the 25th of March, the day before the one day General Strike, the Charleroi workers voted to return to work, whilst the 20,000 Liege workers decided to stay out. The unions went along with this management manoeuvre to divide the steel workers.

Having defused the situation, the other unions continued the climb-down. On the same day the rail unions cancelled a one-day 'protest' strike against the austerity measures. In both cases the unions accepted government plans to 'mitigate' the redundancies and then claimed a 'victory'. It was not long before the demoralised and isolated Liege steel workers returned to work, accepting also the compromise plan.

However, as the austerity measures start to bite, feelings will rise even more sharply. Already discontent has been spreading throughout the country. In the middle of March, riot police used water-cannon and tear-



The iron fist is revealed: Belgian riot police attack workers.

gas grenades to break up a demonstration in Brussels by 5,000 SABENA employees protesting against proposals to cut their pay by up to 24%.

## Belgium, Britain - One Way Forward

It is clear that the government's austerity programme which is aimed at economic recovery is having, as in Britain, very little success. As the crisis deepens in Belgium the government's attacks on the working class will not only continue but increase. So far there has only been a partial response by the working class. This has been limited to the south of the country. Even in the south the protests have been fragmented by the unions. The steel workers have fought the steel cuts, the railway workers have fought the rail cuts and so on. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the steel strike, there was an example of what needs to be done in the future if the attacks on the working class are to be resisted. Some steel workers called on engineers for support in the key areas of Charleroi and Liege and, as a result, engineering workers came out unofficially in support for three days. This example needs to be not only



Workers build barricades against the riot police.

followed but generalised throughout the whole country. Only a total response from the Belgian working class will hold back future attacks. As we have stressed before, the experience of the working class all over the world teaches us one lesson above all others. To be effective today, its no longer possible to use the trade unions to fight either wage cuts or redundancies. In order to fight these attacks, workers must fight the unions also.

If the fight is left in the hands of the unions the workers will be defeated. The Belgian steel workers need only look at the thirteen week strike over pay at the British Steel Corporation in 1980. The unions showed that as long as the fight was in their hands the bosses had no need to worry. The British steel workers allowed 'their union', the ISTC, to organise their strike, assuming that their union would defend their interests. We all know what eventually happened - defeat!

The lessons are clear. Any attack by the government needs to be met head-on by generalised strike action throughout Belgium, organised outside the unions. At the same time, delegates should be sent to gain support from French and German workers who are also faced with similar attacks.

British steel workers can learn much from the struggles of the Belgian workers. Their violent response and the attempts to generalise the struggle give an indication of the way ahead. B.S.C. is planning further cuts.

1,000 Motherwell steel workers have just been told that they face a £15 a week wage cut. If they leave the fight against this in union hands, they will be defeated. It is necessary to go outside the unions, to elect strike committees and link them up plant by plant and appeal directly over union heads to other workers for support. In Belgium the workers have indicated the way.

## C.W.O. PUBLIC MEETING

### The Falklands Crisis

■ Weds. May 19th, 7.30pm  
Hackney Trades Club  
96 Dalston Lane, Hackney

■ Bus 38  
B.R.: Hackney  
Downs



# REPRESSION

In every country in the world, the bourgeoisie is reinforcing its apparatus of repression and terror. As the crisis gets worse, workers are forced to fight to try to defend their living standards. This is the main reason for the increase in police and military repression in the world - the need for the ruling class to crush the class struggle. That is why there was a military takeover in Poland.

All over the world, the working class is fighting increasingly violent and bitter struggles. Communist organisations exist to link up these struggles, to point out the international nature of the class struggle and the

repression against it. In WV4, we published an appeal for support for the defence of communists imprisoned and tortured in Algeria. Here, we respond to appeals from Austria and Iran. We don't appeal to the bourgeoisie for clemency towards prisoners of the class war. Our appeal is to the working class. Only the working class can push back the state and its mercenaries. Only the working class can finally overthrow it. This can only be finally successful on an international scale, and only with the leadership of an international communist party. All our international work is aimed towards building that party.■

## AUSTRIA Repression & democracy

Gruppe

KOMMUNISTISCHE POLITIK

Postfach 18  
A-1183 Wien

We have received a communication from the Austrian Gruppe Kommunistische Politik (GKP) which we are printing in this Workers Voice as a gesture of solidarity. The Austrian bourgeoisie has long prided itself on its "neutrality" (which brought enormous economic benefits) and on its social stability. The effects of the crisis are now hitting Austria, and social conflicts have emerged (see WV 5). To prepare in advance to deal with this, the state is strengthening its measures of repression. We hope the GKP will be able to provide us with a fuller account of the situation in Austria, which we would publish in the next issue of WV. (Some historical material on the Austrian Constitution has been omitted for reasons of space.)■

### APPEAL TO THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATIONS OF ALL COUNTRIES!

The socialist party (SPÖ) of Kreisky, which likes to pride itself of having created a unique island of democracy and prosperity in Austria amidst a world shaken by crises and wars, is preparing a grave attack on the freedom of organization of the proletariat. A drastic aggravation of the political parties act ("Parteien-gesetz") is planned on the pretence of getting legal grounds against neo-fascist organizations finally.

The purpose of the new bill is evident: In view of globally intensifying class struggles and in view of the fact, that even Austria ceases to be an "island", Kreisky & Co rearm in every aspect - politically, ideologically, the police (by organizing special anti-terror- and anti-riot-forces) and juridically. Far from being a measure against the still negligible subversive activities of the neo-fascists, this draft means an unveiled threat against all revolutionary organizations. Participation in a militant demonstration, participation in picket lines or - in short - behaviour of single members, which doesn't correspond with the requirements of public order is enough to criminalize it as a whole.

The democratic antifascists may exult at this draft as a success of their lasting struggle for more democratic antifascist laws. They forget that Kreisky himself, in the same way as Heinz Fischer (parliamentary chairman of the socialist party), on the occasion of the presentation of the draft has repeatedly declared it to be a weapon against organizations which try to escape from the surveillance of the "Vereinspolizei" and to be directed against "right and left". No attempt to prevent any impetus of the proletariat to organize itself autonomously could be more evident. So much the more as the SPÖ more or less propagates the inhibition of left and right "groups of extremists" after the coming into force of the bill.

It is quite obvious that first of all our organization, the "Internationale Kommunistische Liga (IKL)" and the "Kommunistische Organisation Wien (KCW)" would be afflicted, as the SPÖ already has evoked in the "Arbeiter-Zeitung", by such a change of law.

Without cherishing illusions in democratic rights or bourgeois legality, without changing our conviction that the freedom of organization of the proletariat does not depend on articles but merely on the relation of forces between the classes, convinced that the working class can make use of constitutional guarantees to its own account only if it confirms its international character, we directly appeal to all revolutionary organizations, since we can resist - in the current situation in Austria - the forthcoming wave of repression only with international solidarity.

We therefore call upon to publish this appeal and to make a real contribution to start destroying the bankrupt logic of the nationalist, democratic answers to specific acts of repression of the ruling classes finally.

UNRESTRICTED FREEDOM OF ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKING CLASS!  
AGAINST REPRESSION!  
PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM!

Vienna, February 10, 1982

## TURKEY Repression & terror

While the international bourgeois press weeps crocodile tears over the repression of 'civil rights' in Poland, an ominous silence reigns over events in Turkey. Haig, US imperialism's current mouthpiece expresses 'astonishment' that anyone could compare Poland with Turkey. Indeed the scale of repression in Turkey is so great that comparison with Poland is difficult! Since the military coup in September 1980 over 30,000 people have been arrested, several hundred killed in 'clashes' with the security forces (i.e. summarily executed) and scores of death sentences have been passed. Inside the jails of the junta mistreatment and torture are the daily rule. The silence of the western press results from the fact that Turkey is a key, though fragile, link in the US dominated NATO alliance. The US and its allies welcomed military rule as a 'stabilising factor'.

The ending of civilian government in Turkey stemmed from the same factors as in Argentina (and indeed Poland): the catastrophic intensification of economic crisis and a rising tide of class struggle. Turkey was always a backward economy and with the onset of the crisis and repatriation of many Turkish workers in the EEC (whose wages were Turkey's main export earner), only massive injections of loans and recycling of debts from the OECD countries kept her afloat. At the same time, even the switch from a rightist regime of the Justice Party to Ecevit's Republican People's Party (a social democratic outfit) in 1977, failed to curb the struggle of the Turkish working class. The strike wave of 1975 with 660,000 days lost was followed by the engineering industry lock-out in 1977 and then in February 1980 by the massive near-insurrection of 200,000 workers centred on Ismir. Using the pretext of acting against 'terrorist violence' (much of it finding support in the Army itself, e.g. the neo fascist Grey Wolves), the army dissolved parliament and the political parties. But apart from 'token' arrests of bourgeois politicians, the main repression was directed against the working class, as were the austerity measures (e.g. wage freezes) imposed by the military regime.

The coup found its widespread support in the circles of western imperialism since it guaranteed - for a while - the continued payment of debts and stability of Turkey as a trading partner. But with the collapse of Iran into chaos, Turkey assumes a vital role in the US global policy of 'containing Russia'. Before Reagan's election, Carter had resumed arms supply to Turkey (which had been cut off for violation of human rights) and secured a flow of long-term credit to its ailing economy. And a definite shift towards Turkey in its conflict with Greece over the Aegean Shelf and Cyprus took place at the same time. This has contributed to the rise of a social-democratic regime in Greece which is threatening to leave NATO. As we said in Revolutionary Perspectives 13 "Greece will be pressurised to compromise over Cyprus and the Aegean: if it is unwilling and a choice has to be made, Western imperialism will opt for Turkey." (p.15)

Russia in the meantime is hoping that Turkey's difficulties will force her to do an 'Iran' and adopt a policy of neutrality.. Therefore, Russia's criticisms of the Turkish regime have also been fairly restrained. They have also been expanding economic links.

In preparation for a possible return to democracy if the working class danger is tamed, the Turkish rulers are engaged in re-establishing the credibility of the Republican People's Party (RPP). Ecevit was released from jail and swiftly re-arrested for talking to the press (as the regime knew he would) and has again donned the crown of the democratic martyr. Ecevit who allied with the neo-fascist National Salvation Party to gain power in 1974, who invaded Cyprus and massacred the Greek population, who put 13 provinces of Turkey under military rule in 1978-80 and was the 'Trojan horse' of the coup! The RPP welcomed the coup as a chance to restore order and rid the country of the terrorists!



Not only the RPP, but all sections of the Turkish 'left' spread the message of 'anti-fascism' (of which the army was a hoped for vehicle!) against the rightist forces as the main task of the day, and prepared the way for the coup. The Turkish Labour Party (a front for the CP) and its trades union federation DISK summed up their aims as "to drive the National Front (rightist) coalition from power". DISK was set up in 1967 as a 'left' rival to the official trades union federation and is strongest in the new industrial areas like Ismir. It is against the members and supporters of DISK that the bulk of the military repression has been directed. Although a Stalinist union with bourgeois aims, the mass of its members comprise the most militant sections of the working class, despite their 'anti-fascist' and reformist illusions. There are also indications that some of the workers in the DISK are influenced by communist ideas; a recent trial accused them of aiming at "the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship". Despite their confusions, communists must solidarise with and publicise the plight of the working class militants facing the dungeons and the gallows of the butchers of Ankara.■

## IRAN Communists fight back

In the last edition of *Workers Voice* we published material from a group of Iranian communists on repression in Iran. Since then we have received from these comrades a pamphlet which comes from the group KOMALA (Toilers' Revolutionary Organisation of Iranian Kurdistan), with which they have close links. While not agreeing with everything in this pamphlet, we would urge our readers to study it. It contains many clear positions on Iran and the tasks of communists, for example,

"The Islamic Republic Regime is a bourgeois regime.

Both factions of it are bourgeois and counter-revolutionary and work towards the provision of suitable conditions for the production of imperialist super-profits."

"The Iran-Iraq war.. was the continuation of the reactionary and counter revolutionary policies of the regimes of both countries....."

"... the 'defence of the country' of the bourgeoisie is not the task of the proletariat."

"The liberation of part of the proletariat (in Kurdistan) is not at all possible without connection with the whole proletariat (in Iran).

The working class of Iran constitutes a single class, to be organised and led by its single and vanguard communist party."

The pamphlet is available from Box W5, 4th Idea Book Shop, 14 Southgate, Bradford 1. (50p. p.pd)

We hope to have a fuller discussion of the implications of this pamphlet in the next *WV*.

From the same source we have received the following appeal on behalf of militants imprisoned in Iran. Since receiving their appeal we have heard that three of them have been executed. We do not have fuller information on the views of those imprisoned, neither do we necessarily agree with all aspects of the appeal. However, we are publishing it in solidarity with those who, however confused, are clear on one thing: the bourgeois nature of the Iranian regime.

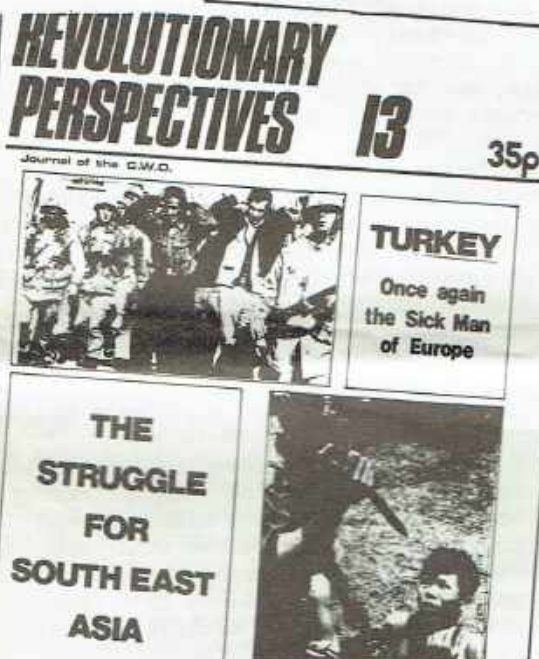
"Shame and hate to the Islamic Republic"

We echo this cry of the U.C.M.

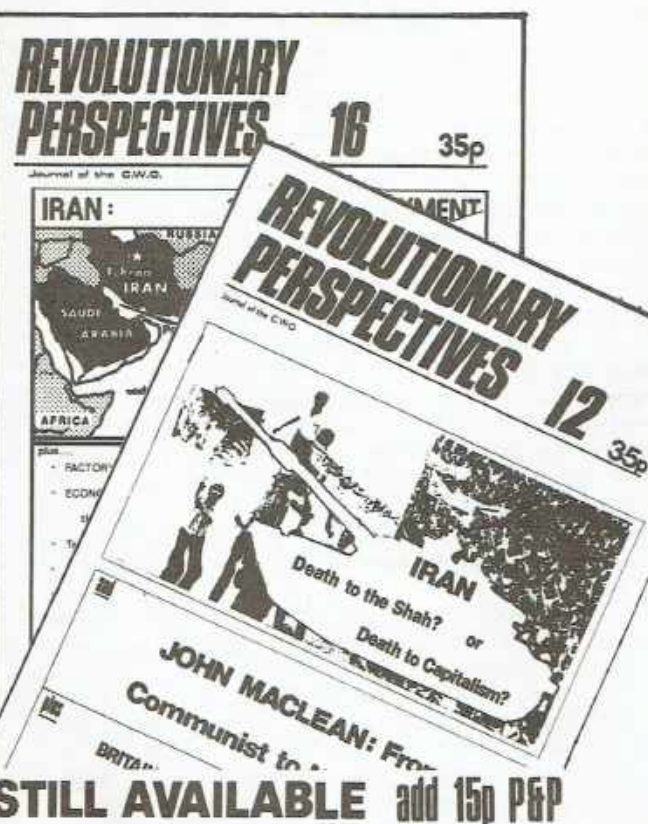
CWO May 1982. ■

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### APPEAL TO THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING CLASS AND COMMUNISTS

In February 82, several prominent members of the Organisation of Paykar for the Emancipation of the Working Class, one of the leading organisations of the communist movement in Iran, were arrested by the capitalist regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Amid arrested are the first and general Secretaries of the Organisation, ALI REZA SEPASI-ASHTIANI and HOSSEIN AHMEDI ROHANI, widely known for their 17 years of ceaseless struggle against the bourgeoisie and imperialism. No doubt that the regime may at any moment attempts to execute these comrades; and if they do so, it would be a serious strike to the cause of the working class in Iran.

Three years of brutal suppression of the communist and working-class movement, and denial of all democratic rights of the masses by the Islamic Republic of Iran, has once again clearly demonstrated the inherent tendency of the bourgeoisie to resort, everywhere, to suppression and violence when facing the growing struggles of the masses worn out by poverty, unemployment and all the sufferings imposed on them by the capitalist system. Today the bourgeoisie, in a world-wide scale, is showing its very real policy in the epoch of imperialism; from the imperialist countries of the west to the countries like Turkey, El-Salvador, Ireland, and Poland, everywhere militant workers, toiling masses and communists are facing imprisonment, torture, harassment and execution. The arrest of comrades of Paykar Organisation is yet one recent example of the attacks of the world bourgeoisie on the international proletariat.

Workers!

At a time when all States and forces of the world bourgeois-imperialist counter-revolution, whether those explicitly bourgeois or those bourgeois states claiming to be socialist and their assorted followers, are supporting either the Islamic Republic regime or the bourgeois forces within the opposition; at a time when the proletariat in Iran is on the verge of forming its independent class party- the communist party - and is more than ever nearer to settling accounts with the bourgeoisie; it needs your whole-hearted class solidarity.

We appeal to all communists and militant, and class-conscious workers fighting for the cause of emancipation of the proletariat to do whatever they can in creating such an international anger and force that the capitalist regime of Iran would not dare to execute these prominent comrades, and is forced to release them.

DOWN WITH CAPITALISM!

LONG LIVE PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM!

Student Supporters of the "Unity of Communist Militants"-Britain



# LETTER

We are printing extracts from a letter sent to us about the riots of last summer. This letter objects to our attitude to the riots and tries to link this to our attitude to the development of class consciousness and racial and national struggles. These are certainly key-issues which the future world communist party must be clear on, and we are prepared to discuss them seriously. The writer, or group, who wrote this letter did not give an address. The brief comments which follow these extracts are not a full reply and we invite the authors to contact us in an open way.

Dear CWO,

Despite some correct positions the CWO holds (e.g. the capitalist nature of the so-called socialist states, the left-wing of capital etc) we feel there is a need to criticise its position with regard to the so-called riots and return to a Leninist position. ....Riot is a bourgeois term employed by the philistine bourgeois press.. The only difference between these revolts, and say the Hungarian uprising (1956) or the Paris Revolt (1968) is the scale and duration of the revolt.. Only those who are blind will fail to see that the so-called 'riots' were the first revolutionary stirrings of the young dispossessed proletarians, insurrection in its embryonic stage.... The CWO goes even further to insult the rising proletarian youth by trying to distinguish between the 'political' and the 'criminal' elements.

The CWO also confuses political with communist consciousness... Spontaneity itself is consciousness in its embryonic form... The spontaneous struggle of the workers, whether a strike or an armed uprising will inevitably end up by being dominated by bourgeois ideas unless communist consciousness is present in the working class... If we compare the consciousness of your so-called 'rioter' to that of these workers who are still in the grip of reformism and trade unionism, the political consciousness of the young proletarians may be considered as being at a fairly advanced stage, at least they know who their enemy is - the state... The youth got its first taste of class warfare, and its first revolutionary education...

....Nor can we ignore the example set by the revolutionary youth on the streets of Belfast which .. this summer rose up in support of political prisoners ... The CWO ... does not take up the defence of political prisoners either in Ireland or England.....

Revolutionary greetings,  
I.C.



## CWO Reply

The uprisings in Hungary 1956 and France 1968 were different in quality, not just in scale, from last summer's riots. In both the earlier revolts the employed working class was heavily committed to the struggle and it was this that made them a serious threat to the bourgeoisie. This was not the case in the events of last summer. Only the employed and especially the industrial working class has the power to challenge and overthrow the state. This is why we called on these involved in the 'riots' to establish links with the working class.



"Community" policing in Brixton,  
Summer 1981

The communist revolution can only be accomplished when large sections of the working class begin to develop communist consciousness. That is to say, they begin to recognise the need for communism and their role in creating it. This consciousness can only develop as a result of a long series of battles amongst which the riots of last summer must be included. The writer is tilting at windmills in suggesting that we think otherwise. To quote the dictionary definition of 'riot' at us is no substitute for actually grasping the content of what we did say. History has shown that the catalyst, without which this consciousness cannot develop, is the class organisation of the proletariat - the communist party. The party must be prepared to criticise the weaknesses of working class struggles, and give a practical lead in directing them towards communist objectives. Spontaneous rebellion must be converted into communist understanding. It was for this reason we criticised looting and advocated seizing local press and radio stations in order to spread a political message. So that we can give a practical lead, we are working to establish groups of unemployed workers who not only spread communist propaganda, but actually attempt to take the lead in such situations. This is much more useful than euphoric flattery of the spontaneous movement.

You accuse us of "lack of tact", "insulting vocabulary" etc in our articles on last summer's events. Yet Lenin insists on the class conscious vanguard uniting a confused mass struggle, directing it, seizing banks, introducing dictatorial measures against the bourgeoisie etc. Such actions must constitute a confrontation with the confused and spontaneous aims of the unemployed youth and must therefore involve criticism. It was the anarchist Bakunin, not Lenin, who uncritically identified with spontaneous action.

The CWO does support the cause of political prisoners on a class basis. In our article on the 'riots' in Workers Voice 5 we call for strikes to release those imprisoned. But we do distinguish between unemployed proletarians fighting the state and reactionary IRA nationalists (see Workers Voice 3, "Ireland: out of the Maze"). It is the worshippers of spontaneity who are incapable of distinguishing between positive and negative movements, and who eventually become their apologists.

CWO.

## R.C.P.: the next step?

The Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) is one of the fastest growing groups in Britain. As one of the few groups which claim to oppose reformism, this is not surprising. Elements on the left, and some workers in struggle, have begun to realise that you can't be against the bosses as well as being for Tony Benn's and Militant's campaign to save British capitalism. They have seen the Labour left, and their equivalent in the trade unions betray the working class in struggle after struggle. They remember the last Labour government's social contract, under which wages shrank and unemployment almost tripled. So they are looking for a 'radical' alternative.

The RCP's paper, the next step, has given plenty of useful coverage to the way in which the trade unions sabotage workers' struggles. They often advise workers to break out of the control of the union officials (e.g. their articles on Laurence Scott in ins June-September 1981). They attack the shop stewards for accepting the aims and arguments of management, and negotiating real wage cuts and redundancies for the sake of profit. In particular, they attack even radical leftist shop stewards for their role in sabotaging the class struggle and negotiating away hundreds of jobs, as they did at Gardner's, Manchester (ins Jan '81, "SWP joins TUC jobs auction"). They argue that "there is no salvation in trades unionism" and point out that "Trade unions organise workers along sectional, industrial and craft lines. Trade unions reflect the divisions (sectional, sexual, racial) which capitalism imposes on the labour movement. The unity of our class can only be achieved around objectives which relate, not to a particular section, but to the interests of the proletariat as a whole". (ins Dec. '81)

Unfortunately, the RCP never asks the obvious question - WHY do shop stewards and trade union officials do this? Why have the trade unions helped the bosses impose discipline on the workers for the last 70 years? Is it just because of the absence of the RCP?

An example of the conclusions they usually reach on the trade union question is their analysis of ASLEF's successful attempt to control and sectionalise the recent rail strike:

"To beat BR, rail workers need to inform their militant tactics with a strategy that puts their living standards and working conditions before other considerations. This means changing their unions into organisations that fight ruthlessly for their members' interests" (ins March '82)

Has this never occurred to militant workers before? Of course it has. When unions sabotage struggles, the most militant workers usually end up trying to change their union into a fighting organisation. They always fail. Some of them end up as 'militant' trade unionists, whose radical talk makes them even more effective as saboteurs of strikes. Or they simply capitulate to the pro-capitalist bureaucrats like Frank Chapple of the Electricians did long ago, or like the shop steward did at Kings Cross who instructed his members to stop blacking the Sun, or like the ones at British Leyland, British Airways and Ford who argue against all-out strikes or lead the workers through the official procedures which are designed to sap their strength. (See, for example "Lessons of the Leyland Strike" in WV 6) The list is endless.

So what's the alternative? The only alternative is to break from the unions and organise strikes through mass meetings of all workers involved. In their analysis of the Laurence Scott Electromotors occupation, the RCP come close to this conclusion. the next step's supporters found themselves up against the unions, and turned to the workers themselves for the answer to how to run the occupation:

"Supporters of the next step waged a constant battle inside the occupation against the bureaucratic way it was conducted. The officials ran the occupation as a small clique; they never convened a meeting of all the shop stewards and only called mass meetings when obliged to. We called for regular meetings to ensure the widest possible



political discussion and assessment of the experience of the occupation. The officials tried to blame their conservative approach on the backwardness of the rank and file. 'If we have a mass meeting' said one, 'they'll vote to call off the occupation'. The radical left groups - whose members largely fraternised with the bureaucrats rather than the rank and file - echoed this prejudice. But as it proceeded, the occupation itself proved them wrong." (tns Sept. '81)

But what is wrong with union officials is not their lack of respect for democracy, that they are 'a small clique', or that they don't convene meetings of the shop stewards (when most shop stewards accept the bosses' aims, as the RCP correctly maintain, what's the point of calling meetings of them?). What's wrong with union officials is that they are permanent representatives of organisations which negotiate between capital and labour - the trade unions. While capitalism was still an expanding, progressive system in the nineteenth century,

## one step forward two steps back

unions played an important role in organising workers to win improvements in their living standards and political reforms. Today, however, in the era of wars and revolution, the scope capitalism has for granting concessions to the working class is limited. Those who negotiate on a permanent basis between the workers and their bosses can only negotiate real wage cuts, worse conditions and redundancies. There could be no better demonstration of this simple lesson than the continuous sell-outs of both union officials and shop stewards in Britain in the last few years. The RCP's idea of turning the unions into organisations which reject capitalism's logic and defend their members' interests regardless of the consequences for the bosses, means turning them into revolutionary organisations - something which they can never be. The strategy of communists towards the daily struggle now means calling for mass working class action outside of the unions and the regroupment of the most advanced workers into factory groups.

### The RCP and Imperialism

It is fundamental to a Marxist analysis of world politics that there are only two choices open to humanity - socialism or barbarism. If socialism is not achieved, or if it is isolated in one country, that country will quickly slide into capitalism. This prognosis was confirmed with the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the emergence of state capitalism in Russia.

The Trotskyists did not accept this analysis, continuing to see Russia as a "degenerated workers' state". During World War Two, they defended Russia, and after the war tried to explain the societies which were set up in East Europe by the Red Army. Some of them realised they were not workers' states, since the working class played no part in their creation, but could not grasp the fact that they were capitalist. The RCP is one of these tendencies.

In its attempt to prove that Russia isn't imperialist, the RCP comes to some tenuous conclusions about the western bloc. They recognise the approach of imperialist war, but don't think it will be between Russia and America. They think it will be between western countries; say, between Western Europe and America, or even between America and Japan. Japan had better hurry up and rearm! If, however, Russia is attacked, the RCP say they will defend it, as its defeat would strengthen imperialism. That is, they will tell workers to fight and die in the defence of a country whose class nature they are not sure of, but which is definitely not imperialist. Afghanistan? That was a mistake.

"Relations between West Germany and the US are especially tense" says Frank Richards

in his attempt to find preparations for war between NATO countries (tns Feb '82). Elsewhere in the same article he says that Bonn aims at an "eventual reunification of Germany; it is central to Bonn's long-term strategy". But how will this strategy be achieved without military conquest, which will need American backing? The 'tension' between the US and the FDR is due simply to the West German bourgeoisie's realisation that their country is in the front line of the next world war - some of them are even opposed to the siting of US missiles in Germany since this would mean the devastation of the FDR in a Russian counter-attack. As the crisis drags the powerhouse of Europe down, as it is rapidly doing, the Germans will fall into line with the war plans of their American masters. West Germany was created by US imperialism, as, indeed, was the EEC; the new-found pacifism amongst some of its leading parties is nothing but a Chamberlainesque farce. If Schmidt still believes in detente, he will be replaced by a Thatcher or a Mitterand.

The article "Cold War Illusions" in tns March '82 claims to show that Russia isn't imperialist because it is weaker than the US. Tns quotes an American defence journal to the effect that Russia's "marginal advances in minor countries have been dwarfed by Soviet setbacks in China, Indonesia, Egypt, India and Iraq". This may be true, but all it shows is that Russia is being pushed back by the US bloc. Russia is no less imperialist for being the weaker. Revolutionaries don't defend the weaker imperialist power - otherwise they would have supported the bombing of Pearl Harbour!

### National Liberation

The RCP say they would defend any country against imperialism. This means they defend Argentina in the Falklands, since Britain is, for them, imperialist. In their leaflet "Stop Britain's War Plans in the Falklands" they state "The reasons why the Argentine junta has decided to exercise sovereignty over these islands just now are immaterial to the attitude British workers should adopt in this conflict". Are they immaterial to the Argentine workers? Should they call off the life and death fight against the junta and its austerity measures to support the war effort? Without this the junta cannot enforce its claim! RCP policy is an attack on the Argentine working class, and shows the cul-de-sac of "anti-imperialism" today.

There is not enough space in this article to detail our opposition to the RCP's position on national liberation in general. We refer the reader to "Ireland - out of the Maze" in WV 3. Unlike the RCP, Marxists have never unconditionally supported national liberation struggles - thus, even when Marx supported the Fenians (as he sometimes did), he condemned their bombing in London which killed workers in Clerkenwell.

Today Marxists don't merely condemn the IRA's tactics - they point out that since capitalism has achieved its historic tasks and become a decadent social system, the era when national liberation struggles could be progressive, and when some of them could be conditionally supported by the working class, is over.

RCP's blind support for the IRA leads them to support its attacks on the British working class civilian population and to apologise for its sectarian attacks on Protestant workers. In relation to the Bessbrook massacre they say, "But such incidents are exceptional... The IRA has never made a policy of sectarian attacks on Protestants". (tns April '82) But such attacks are the inevitable by-product of nationalist ideologies which subordinate class divisions to nationalist inter-class unity.

The RCP occasionally has glimmerings of clarity. For example, "It seems paradoxical that socialists should identify their aims with those of nationalists. The nation is a bourgeois institution and nationalism is, essentially, a bourgeois outlook." (tns Feb '81) and "You can't fight nationalism with nationalism" (RCP slogan, 1980). But they still call for messages of support for the Armagh women who issued a statement "We are women nationalists" (tns April '82).

## IRELAND:

### the fruits of

### 'National Independence'

On the 27th of January, the day when the Irish Coalition Government of Fitzgerald fell, an advertisement appeared in the Financial Times from the Irish Industrial Development Authority. It announced that the return on money invested in Irish industry was twice the EEC average.

The Industrial Development Authority offers the following benefits to companies willing to invest in Ireland: no tax on profits for the first five years, a 50% grant to cover the cost of all buildings and equipment, and the free training of the workforce. This at a time when the debts of Ireland per head of population is greater than that of Poland.

To deal with this mounting debt the government budget was proposing to increase VAT from 15% to 18%, to increase petrol by 11pence a gallon, to increase income tax, to put VAT on clothes and shoes not to mention the increase in tax on drink and cigarettes.

When new industries come to Ireland they set up not in the cities but in the country. They set up in areas with a history of high unemployment and emigration. Competition for jobs means that the company can pay as little as possible. Ireland has the lowest wages and living standards in the EEC. So the bosses turned Ireland into a European Taiwan.

However, the austerity measures directed at the already low living standards of the Irish workers raise the danger of a violent response. Haughey, one of Ireland's richest men and now the prime minister, said during the recent election campaign that his first priority if elected would be Northern Ireland. This is a sure sign that the bosses and those in power are worried. They love Northern Ireland, it is their best trick. Whenever things get out of hand they whip up nationalist and patriotic feeling by turning to Northern Ireland. For example, De Valera's "trade war" with Britain in the slump of the 1930s.

Ireland's boom of the '70s was fuelled by overseas borrowing. But the bubble is now burst: the inflation rate is 23% and rising, the unemployment rate is 11% and rising. No wonder the Irish bosses are in a flap. They have milked the cow dry.

The leader of the Coalition in his election campaign spouted the phrase "Ireland in debt is Ireland unfree". This is a trick not only of the bosses in Ireland but of bosses the world over. They try to make us think that their debts are our debts and that accepting a lower standard of living is our "patriotic duty".

Now is the time for our fellow workers in Ireland to prepare themselves for the coming fight. Now is the time to find out how capitalism works and why. Now is the time to prepare for change. The situation in Ireland shows that "national independence" cannot lead to independence from capitalism and its laws. Write to the CWO for information on what is to be done and for our other articles on Ireland in Workers Voice 3 and Revolutionary Perspectives 15. ☐

### Break Step

The RCP has made a partial break with elements of Trotskyism, e.g. in identifying Labour as a bourgeois party and in their critique of some trade unionist illusions. But a fuller development can only come with a break from the Trotskyist pseudo-alternative to Stalinism and a linking up with the traditions of the real fight against Comintern degeneration waged by the Italian Left, the recognition of Russia as capitalist and of the reactionary nature of national struggles today.



# YUGOSLAVIA: The Cracks Appear

The crisis and social decomposition are affecting the state capitalist economies of Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Balkans. In March this year clashes broke out again in the southern Yugoslavian region of Kosovo. In the same month high ranking talks were held between the Russians and the Yugoslavs. Both events express the strains the country is being subject to as a result of the economic crisis.

The upheavals in Kosovo are not a new development. In August 1981 there was a series of political trials in the region, leading to the sentencing of about a dozen people to periods of up to fifteen years in jail. This was coupled with a widespread purge of the local Communist Party organisation. The repression was a follow up to an outbreak of rioting and discontent in the area in April, when an undisclosed number of people were killed by security forces. This was the biggest social upheaval in Yugoslavia since the Second World War, and the ferocity of the repression shows the nervousness of the ruling class in a situation where the economic crisis is out of control.

Kosovo lies within Serbia, bordering on Albania. The majority of the population are native Albanians, and Moslem; the area has 'autonomy' within Serbia. Like much of neighbouring inland Yugoslavia, the area is poverty stricken, with little industry and a growing 'marginal' population. Unemployment is high and made worse by the expulsion of millions of Yugoslavs from Germany, many of whom came from Kosovo.

The riots started with student protests over housing conditions, and spread to wider social strata in Kosovo and other towns in the region. As they spread demands began to be made by students and party officials for Kosovo to become a separate republic inside Yugoslavia, or even for it to unite with neighbouring Albania. The latter aided the riots covertly and kept up a war of nerves during them. But being dependent on Yugoslavia for its land links with Europe, and at present negotiating to build a rail link to Belgrade, the Albanians are not just now in a position to press for their ideal of a 'Greater Albania'. If the Albanians' move back to the Russian camp gathers pace, Hoxha, the Albanian leader, may feel able to become more ambitious.

The peculiar structure of the Yugoslav state and economy gives the ruling class both advantages and disadvantages in dealing with the crisis. Its federal nature (six separate republics with two more autonomous regions) means that discontent, as in Kosovo, can easily take on a nationalist, inter-classist nature, with one nationality complaining about

the privileges of another. Although a useful safety valve for the class struggle nationalist tendencies, if they go too far, could lead to separatism and the break up of the country.

The famous Yugoslavian balancing act - its neutrality between East and West - was a product of the reconstruction period after the Second World War; it is now becoming more and more difficult to maintain. The repatriation of millions of workers from the EEC has led to disenchantment, as has the increasing difficulty of gaining access to the EEC for Yugoslavian goods (especially agricultural produce). Over the past few years there has been a steady increase in trade with COMECON. Russia is now Yugoslavia's main trading partner, as well as supplying most of the country's armaments. Exclusion from COMECON means Yugoslavia paying world market prices for its oil, and ensures a steady balance of payments deficit. When Tito died, the ruling class organised a propagandist fear of Russian invasion, to show their loyalty to the Titoist tradition. But with an increasingly unmanageable crisis, it would be tempting for the Yugoslav ruling class to shift the blame on to Tito, and dethrone him as has been done with Mao in China. This could also pave the way for a reconciliation with the USSR and COMECON, which would be in Yugoslavia's interests. Such a move would be more likely if the fragmentation of the country was a real possibility. In that case the Army would be the only guarantee of national unity, and the Army is traditionally pro-Russian.

With a collapsing economy, increasing regionalist pressures, and in the background the sensitive issue of border disputes with all of its six neighbours, the 'independence' of Yugoslavia is becoming increasingly untenable. And as the Red Bougeoisie ponders its options in their luxurious Adriatic villas, the cities of Yugoslavia abound with a floating mass of bootblacks, beggars and cripples selling Tito memorabilia. But behind all this lurks the great imponderable factor which holds the key to the situation: the Yugoslavian working class. Only by rejecting the false option of the nationalist groups within the ruling class can the Yugoslav working class prepare for a unified class response to the crisis. Thus any support for Albanian nationalism, under whatever guise, plays into the hands of the various sectors of the ruling class. The workers of Kosovo must wrench control of the social movement from the hands of the nationalists, and launch forth on their own class terrain.

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Write to us! We welcome all comments on our political positions, and will reply to all letters received.





# Holocaust in CENTRAL AMERICA

## the Communist Alternative

Marx wrote that "Capital comes into the world .... oozing blood from every pore." Today it is leaving it by the same route. The 100,000 dead and the half million refugees of Central America are the direct victims of the capitalist crisis as it engulfs every area of the globe. The roots of the present social decay in Central America lie in the decomposition of the local economies.

In the 1960s the countries of America managed, with the aid of high coffee prices and US aid, to begin programmes of industrialisation. Industry rose from 11% to 18% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 1970. This resulted in an enormous increase in the wealth of the oligarchy (Somoza in Nicaragua, 'the 14 families' in El Salvador etc). It also altered the social structure of those states creating a small working class and a comparatively numerous class of petty bourgeoisie and small capitalists. The latter classes soon found their dreams of joining the elite shattered by the world capitalist crisis in the early 1970s. The roaring inflation in the industrialised countries brought a collapse of Central American economies. Industrial growth fell from 8½% to 3½% whilst Government borrowing rose 600%. Trade surpluses vanished and growth rates plummeted - in El Salvador by 20% in three years. Foreign capital refused to lend whilst 'native' capital fled the country. This radicalised the petty capitalist class.

In Nicaragua the economic crisis provoked all sections of the bourgeoisie to unite in abandoning Somoza and to turn the Sandinistas into the 'democratic' front which eventually seized power in 1979 (see "The Bourgeoisie Sacrifice Somoza" in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 14).

The Sandinistas are an inter-class united front ranging from leftist elements through the Catholic Church and the petty-bourgeoisie to large sections of the upper and middle bourgeoisie, which aimed at a re-negotiation of Nicaragua's relationship with US imperialism (and still does!).

The Sandinistas knew that they could not get into power without US backing so they altered their 1969 programme which called for "the establishment of a revolutionary dictatorship based on the alliance of workers and peasants" and replaced it with a call for "a democratic and popular government" in 1978. From this point on its victory was assured. The US told Somoza when to flee the country and the capitalist class united round the Sandinistas.

Strikes in Nicaragua are already illegal and punishable by heavy prison sentences whilst the lack of basic food and medical supplies threatens the population with starvation and death. In addition, inflation runs at 50% and unemployment at over 20%. The new regime says that 'sacrifices' will be needed. Truly the bourgeoisie sings the same song from Gdansk to Guatemala!

### El Salvador

In El Salvador, where no one dictator so totally monopolised economic life to the exclusion of the petty capitalists, the result has been a split amongst the urban middle class. Some have supported the Army whilst the rest have taken to the guerrilla struggle. In November 1979 a coup got rid of the repressive but ineffectual Romero and the Christian Democrats led by Duarte were brought into the government in an attempt to give the Army massacres a human face. They hoped that this would encourage the US (then under Carter's "human rights" policy) to give military aid to crush the guerrillas. The real power remained with Garcia, the Defence Minister whose official and unofficial killers have not stopped their work. At least 15,000 have been murdered by the army since Duarte took over.

The guerrillas have existed since 1969 after a series of splits from the Salvadorean Communist Party but until 1977 they were in no position to claim a large following. The polarisation of the El Salvador petty bourgeoisie has swelled their ranks and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) has the support of six groups (3 ex-Stalinist groups, 1 Trotskyist, the National



Militant youth take over a lorry in El Salvador in the general strike of 1981.

Revolutionary Movement and the Christian Democrats who refused to enter Duarte's coalition). In every respect this movement is an exact copy of the Sandinista movement. In short it is a bourgeois movement.

The bourgeois nature of the guerrillas is also shown in the statements of the FMLN leaders. The most "hardline Marxist-Leninist" FMLN leader, Ana Guadalupe Martinez, declared on January 22nd that:

"... the massive North American aid received by Duarte means that our complete victory over the enemy is impossible. We are therefore in favour of talks. The war in El Salvador will only end when the USA and Duarte's Junta sit down and talk with the FDR-FMLN and with other political forces such as the representatives of the small national firms which are opposed to the dictatorship."

So the massacres are just to get a better negotiating position with Reagan. The FMLN leader Cayetano Carpio has said that an eventual negotiated settlement must "humiliate nobody" which presumably means US imperialism and the Right wing death squads! In any event the class nature of this struggle is clearly revealed as nothing but a bourgeois faction fight masquerading under the title of a "national liberation struggle".

The real truth is that in the era of decadent capitalism there can be no such thing as a struggle for national liberation. Any new ruling class finds that it must submit either to the old imperialism or to a new one. In Central America it is a question of establishing a 'new' relationship with US imperialism.

Possibilities that the strains between the various elements of the Sandinista government (which contains priests amongst its members) would lead to another Cuba can be largely discounted. In 1960, when Castro was forced by the intransigence of US opposition to a capitalist land reform to change Cuba's imperialist master and mortgage the entire Cuban sugar crop to the USSR, the USSR was not facing an unprecedented economic crisis. Today Russia cannot afford another Cuba, especially with its war in Afghanistan and its subsidies to Poland. Reagan's thunderings about 'subversion' in Central America are not primarily concerned with his fears for US interests in that area. What he is using the issue for is to whip up chauvinism and war feeling in the US population by claiming that there is a real Russian threat, so that they will get behind his programme of arms build up. Even as he denounces the leftism of the Sandinistas or the 'threat' of the FMLN in El Salvador he has already established contacts or negotiations with both. Whatever happens in the area the so-called 'anti-imperialist struggle' will be no threat to the USA, as long as the US ruling class plays its hand correctly.

### The Class Struggle in Central America

In 1979 we wrote that the workers of El Salvador "have placed themselves in the advanced guard of the world's working class". After 1975 when landless proletarians occupied hundreds of hectares in the countryside it sparked off a wave of action by workers against the capitalist crisis. In 1976 strikes in the sugar cane, coffee and cotton plantations forced the ruling class to make the first concessions to the workers for 40 years. But in 1979-80 the bourgeoisie became more frightened and more prepared for the workers when massive solidarity strikes led to the blacking out of San Salvador and the cutting off of its water supply. In the brutal repression by the state the army wounded hundreds and killed scores of workers who died fighting for their own interests.

With the further social decomposition and open civil war in El Salvador, with its massive repression, the strike wave subsided. But this does not mean that communists simply bewail the decline of this form of class struggle, and advise the working class to 'abstain' from the civil war and wait till the storm passes over. The first task of the workers and the proletarianised masses in El Salvador is to arm themselves in self defence against the fascists and the 'democratic' front.

The task for communists is to criticise and encourage a break from the inter-classist ideas of the FMLN, and to form the nucleus of a communist party, calling for the formation of rural and urban soviets, and the extension of insurrection to all of Central America. As the process of bourgeois normalisation in Nicaragua leads to a growing awareness of class differences, the lessons will be easier to draw both there and in neighbouring El



Armed guerrillas of the FMLN stop bus in roadblock.

Salvador. The tasks of the working class are not to unite with hostile social classes in a struggle for democracy and national independence, but to rally the semi-proletarians behind its own programme of proletarian dictatorship and internationalism.

# C.W.O.

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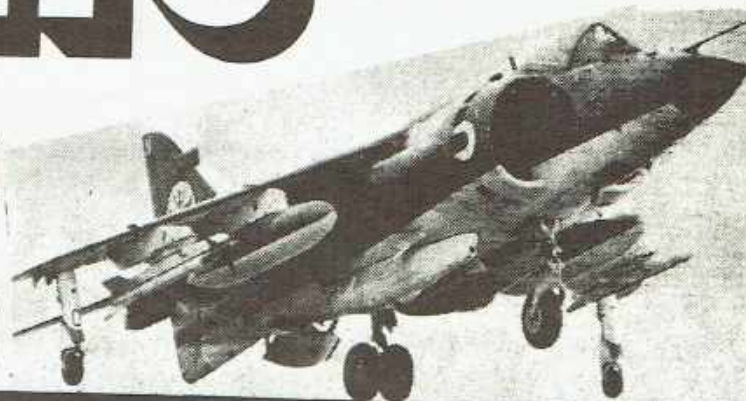
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## ★ DOWN WITH GALTIERI IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC



## ★ DOWN WITH THATCHER IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC



The battle between the British and the Argentine bosses for control of the Falklands has already cost hundreds of lives. Today's fighting is of vital importance to the British, Argentine and the world working class.

The dispute over the Falklands has given both the Argentine and British ruling classes the chance to test their war and propaganda machines. As their armed forces confront each other in the south Atlantic, lies about their motives are broadcast. The Thatcher government says it is opposing "fascist dictatorship" and protecting the "right of self determination of peoples", and Galtieri claims he's "fighting colonialism." But on both sides the war is a manoeuvre to direct attention away from the economic crisis and to make workers forget their real problems like inflation and unemployment, in an orgy of patriotism. In both countries the economic crisis is out of control. And just as a series of lesser crises led up to World War 2 at the time of the last world economic crisis, so the Falklands dispute is another small, yet significant preparation for World War 3. The Argentine military regime is not a "progressive anti-colonial" one, but one which has only survived by the most brutal repression of the working class. The mass strikes in Buenos Aires in 1975 persuaded the ruling class to dispense with 'civilian government' and go for open repression. Tens of thousands have been jailed and over 30 000 killed or disappeared since 1976. But even ferocious repression did not stop the class struggle or deal with the economic crisis. Today inflation is over 150% and Argentina's debts are \$32 billion - more than Poland's. The invasion of the Falklands is a gamble to gain the oil, fishing and mineral rights around the islands and its dependencies in the Antarctic in an attempt to ease the crisis. It is an attack on the Argentine workers. An attempt to defuse discontent which was threatening to explode once more. The Argentine trades union

(CGT) had tried to channel this discontent into safe token strikes, but on the outbreak of the conflict called these off and organised demonstrations in support of a regime soaked in workers blood! Not to be outdone the Argentine Communist Party announced its support for the dictatorship in the name of "anti-colonialism"; the Peronist guerrilla group, the Montoneros, in Cuban exile, volunteered to come back and fight for the regime which had all but exterminated them. All these groups, calling on the workers to support a regime which had massacred and pauperised them, show their true anti-working class nature by jumping on the bandwagon of social patriotism.

Similarly in Britain the Falklands is being used to deflect attention from domestic issues. With unemployment showing no signs of falling and economic recovery as far away as ever, the chance of rallying "national unity" and whipping up war feelings was a godsend. The British ruling class doesn't care about the Falkland Islanders. When the USA wanted the British Island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean for a naval base, Britain forcibly evicted the inhabitants and dumped them on Mauritius. They are still trying to get compensation from the British government. So much for the 'right of self determination!' The crisis allows the British bosses to justify cuts in social spending as necessary for war preparations. If this succeeds the green light will be given for further massive cuts and arms build up. The crisis also shows that when war comes the Labour pacifists are the biggest warmongers. The spectacle of Foot the 'peacemaker' and other Labour lefts joining in the chorus of chauvinism should cure a few illusions.

At the time of writing the outcome of the crisis is uncertain: but the USA holds all the cards. Argentina desperately needs to re-cycle her loans to the US banks, (she needs \$7 bn this year), while Britain could not wage war

unless the US supported the pound. Reagan did not want this conflict. He needs the support of Argentina in central America, and British acceptance of US missiles. Reagan's support for Britain proves that battle positions in Europe are more important to US imperialism than revolts amongst its latin American clients. The US's failure to impose a solution shows that the economic crisis has reached the point at which even minor disputes cannot be resolved peacefully.

Neither the regimes of Thatcher or Galtieri deserve any working class support. The example of the Portsmouth dockers who refused to sail with the fleet to carry out alteration work is an example which must be followed. If the bosses manage to whip up chauvinism in this dispute, it will be so much easier for them when bigger conflicts occur: the waters are being tested for war! We must prepare working class internationalism now. This means intensifying the class struggle and rejecting all demands for sacrifices. Already the trade unions persuaded Hawker Siddley workers in Bristol to end their overtime ban to produce parts for the airforce, and the dockers strike has been called off because it might damage the war policy.

Against the hysteria of the bosses and the unions we call for:-  
\*strikes against any cuts caused by the war.  
\*refusal to load ships and transport arms.  
\*active internationalism with the Argentine working class; workplace resolutions against the war and in solidarity with the Argentine working class in their struggle with their bosses.

We call on British and Argentine workers to remember "the enemy lies in your own country".  
**WORKERS HAVE NO FATHERLAND.  
WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE.**