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The Falklands war broke out at a time of relative social peace in Britain. The ruling class over the last two years had achieved a massive reduction in the level of class conflict. On the one hand the threat of unemployment cowed more and more workers into submission; on the other the isolation and smashing of specific groups of workers - like the steelmen in 1980 by the Tories and their trades union accomplices - served as a warning of the "futility" of sectional strikes. Days lost in strikes declined from 30 million in 1979 to 4 million in 1981. Then came the war over the Falklands, and the subjection of the entire population to waves of nationalist propaganda. The war was carried out with little active resistance from the working class to the unions' chauvinistic support for it. (See the "Falklands Balance Sheet" on p4.)

The bosses must have felt jubilant. Was this the final nail in the coffin of the class struggle? But, hardly had the war ended when sections of the working class began to move on a scale not seen for three years. Strikes by various sections of transport workers, and in the health services were a slap in the face to the bosses, who clearly hoped that, in the post-Falklands mood of "national unity", the working class would be prepared to accept even further sacrifices, even greater reductions in living standards, for the "national interest". And even more encouraging is the threat of unrest among the seamen still in the South Atlantic over the withdrawal of "active service" payments.

From the Falklands War to the Class War

Fleet Street electricians to close the national press for a day. Some London transport workers tried to spread their strike and get solidarity action from railmen. And most strikes remained solid. Harwich men rejected an attempt to blame their action on "agitators". The nurses refused to be bribed by the offer of 1% more than hospital ancillary workers. Rail drivers support for their strike grew as the strike progressed despite the most intense press incitement to scabbing in living memory. The outcome of the strikes varied:

- the transport and rail strikes were defeated
 - the Harwich men won a temporary "reprieve"
 - and, at the time of writing, the health workers dispute looks deadlocked.
- But why, despite these positive factors, did the struggles not unify, extend, and smash the combined schemes of the bosses and the Tories?

Unions & the Class

Some of our readers, in response to our view that the trades unions are integrated into the capitalist state and exist in order to

control it. After weeks of exhausting the workers with token, rotating and 1-day strikes, they will only propose an all-out stoppage when the workers are financially and physically exhausted, as a prelude to defeat. The health unions consistently opposed solidarity actions, and appealed to miners and newspaper workers not to strike, limiting their "solidarity" to union delegations on the picket lines. ASLEF in the rail dispute and the NUS at Harwich made it clear they were not opposed to the new work practices in principle, and only demanded "consultation" in their implementation. Even the Harwich victory has dangers: the NUS has accepted that £1 million a year economies must be made and is to "suggest" ways of making them - doubtless once the lucrative holiday season is past for the ferry bosses.

As well as hamstringing the struggles in these practical ways the unions also sow dangerous ideological confusion. They portray their fight as one to protect good "socialist" parts of the economy (railways, hospitals) from nasty Tory attacks, and imply that a new Labour government is the answer to all ills. Workers

STRIKES IN BRITAIN

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The root cause of the present strikes is the attempt by the government to reduce the drain of surplus value from the shrinking profitable sector to the unprofitable. In other words, to reduce the cost of "unproductive" state enterprises, like health, and to make productive (but unprofitable) industries (e.g. the railways and other nationalised transport) more "self-financing" by cutting subsidies. This explains the attack on London transport workers by the introduction of the new work practices, the 5% with productivity strings offer to railmen, introduction of "flexible rostering" for train drivers, and proposed cuts in seamen's wages and jobs at Harwich. All these attacks stem from the same cause - the same cause which has forced the health workers to strike against a 7.5% wage offer (a fall in real wages of 2.5%). The argument for the unification of the strikes was obvious and should have been overwhelming.

Many of the workers showed a willingness to go beyond passive tactics in their struggles. The Harwich workers sent out flying pickets to other ports and threatened to spread the strike. Nurses went to pits in Yorkshire and got sympathy action from miners, and persuaded

discipline the working class, point to the fact that unions call strikes - in fact, since the late 1960's, the trend for more and more strikes to be official, rather than unofficial, has snowballed. This, they say, "proves" that the unions can be made to respond to working class pressure and represent their interests. But the role of union led strikes - as the steel strike in 1980 showed - is to head off discontent, prevent it breaking out into unofficial and therefore dangerous actions, to exhaust the workers involved in fruitless and frustrating action, and to isolate the struggle from those of other workers. Whatever the stated aims of union officials, or the intentions of loyal union members, trades union control ensures an orderly defeat of the class struggle.

For example, the NUR and ASLEF called their strikes - in the same industry, caused by the same problems - at different times, turning the workers against each other. Sid Weighell of the NUR appeared on TV and accused the train drivers of causing redundancies in the railways! The health service unions held back from action as long as possible, until the build up of feeling was so great it had to follow and

should be reminded of the health, education and transport cuts of previous Labour governments.

The Way Forward

A vital point is illustrated by these struggles. The working class draws its immediate conclusions from its immediate experience - on its own it has no collective memory or collective experience. It is not simply the "union manoeuvres" which defeat the struggles. The workers are imprisoned in their struggles by the world-view of the bosses - a world view which they are repeatedly bombarded by in the newspapers, radio and TV. It is impossible for them to break from this world view without the intervention - in theory and practice - of communists. The recent struggles in Britain confirm once again that - without such an intervention on a wide scale - defeat in the short term and massacre in the long term awaits the working class. "Gdansk without the guns" was how one worker described Bathgate after Plessey and BL redundancies. We must show that the guns are coming and how to turn them against the real enemy.

NATO: a crack in the pipeline?

Superficial observers may be forgiven for concluding from recent events that the US bloc, and the NATO alliance, is on the verge of collapse. Since coming to power Reagan, who expresses the new "no nonsense" determination of the American ruling class, has been slow to throw a diplomatic veil over US policy and the implications that it has for Europe. The announcement that World War 3 would be fought in Europe, hopefully avoiding the destruction of the USA, caused some raised eyebrows among European rulers. Falling share prices were caused by the US's policy of high interest rates which the European bosses see as "hindering economic recovery".

In response to the widespread popular anti-Americanism caused by these and other measures - witnessed in the massive peace demonstrations last year - the various EEC governments felt obliged, while in fact accepting the implications of US policy, to express "regret" that Reagan was stating them so openly. Recent measures have intensified the propaganda war between the US and the EEC.

The US decision to block participation by US firms in the building of the Soviet pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe has threatened contracts gained by many EEC firms. US firms in Europe will be barred from participation, and even European firms will be hit by the "blacklisting" of US technology for the project. Meanwhile, the US's own lucrative grain sales to the Soviet Union continue. Reagan hopes to drive the Soviet Union to bankruptcy and force the collapse of its economy - mainly at the expense of the US's "allies" in the EEC. As a sop to "national pride" there will be token efforts by the European governments to circumvent the ban - but there is no chance of these developing into any larger-scale conflict with the US.

At the same time the US has unilaterally imposed important tariffs on EEC steel coming into the USA. This kick in the teeth has led to protests from the European allies over "lack of consultation" etc. Instead of leading to a trade war, the response of the EEC was to offer to "voluntarily" limit their share of the US market to around 5%, showing once again their complete economic subservience to the USA.

The fact that the USA dominates its bloc (and, indeed, does so with an ease which the USSR must envy!) does not exclude conflicts within it. Nor does it mean that all the nations within its bloc are subject to the same level of domination. Clearly economic contradictions within the bloc create problems, and the domination of, say, economically powerful West Germany by the USA is not on the same level as, say, Costa Rica. But US dominance was again revealed when Japan finally agreed to roughly double its arms expenditure to "contain" Russia in the Pacific, despite the preference of the Japanese ruling class that the US should defend Japan - and bear the costs.

But, despite conflicts and limited independence within the bloc, there is no chance that these conflicts could lead to the end of US domination. Economically and even more so militarily the EEC remains dependent on the USA, and, with some scope for negotiation, has to pursue a broadly US policy. Any ideas the Kremlin may have of the "Finlandisation" of Europe (i.e. pulling western Europe away from the US bloc) following a break up of the western alliance are no more than dreams. Europe will not break from, nor will it become an "equal partner" of the USA. It will continue, despite protests, to carry out policies which, however they may hit Europe economically, ensure continued US military protection against Russian imperialism.

The destruction of the US bloc can come from only two sources: the military victory of the rival Russian bloc - or an international proletarian revolution which destroys both imperialist blocs.



THE END OF SOCIAL PEACE

The uneven nature of the economic crisis is shown by the fact that in its early stages (1974-6) some countries were near economic collapse (Italy, Britain) while others were little affected. But the illusion that the crisis was a local or a national problem has evaporated as more "stable" capitalist countries (Germany, Austria) feel its effects. The CWO has had many contacts over the years with communists in Scandinavia, most of whom felt that their area was immune from crisis and class struggle, and consequently avoided the problem of revolutionary commitment and founding of an organisation, for the pleasures of academicism and marginalistic politics. (See "Oslo Meeting" in *Revolutionary Perspectives 9* for an account of some of these reactions from the libertarian and councilist milieu in Scandinavia to the communist politics presented by the CWO.)

Today economic and political crisis in Sweden has been followed by a deterioration of Norway's economy and the outbreak of the biggest strike wave there in 40 years.

That the bosses are rattled by the militancy of the oil workers is evident from a report that militants "are being harassed, their telephone calls tapped; they have been accused of corruption, they have been moved from one platform to another without any reason being given and they are called in by psychiatrists for mental observation initiated by the oil companies". (*Guardian*, Aug 5th 1982)

We are printing below a brief account of these developments from a CWO contact in Norway. Now that the class has begun to move there we hope that revolutionaries will not be too slow in following, by beginning to address the problems of intervention in the class struggle in an organised manner, and by building the foundation of a clear communist

minority. This can only be achieved by overcoming the councilism which once dominated the Scandinavian milieu and which led to its demise.

The crisis is now starting to hit Norway with full force. Unemployment is still quite low (officially about 2 per cent) but rising. Profitability is low, forcing the bosses to attack wages even harder in order to stay competitive on the world market. Oil revenues do not change this.

The working class is badly armed for these attacks on their living standard. The workers still have huge illusions in this society and its institutions. They still see the unions as their defensive organisations. Strikes are few and they are mostly under the control of the unions and within bourgeois legality.

At least since the autumn of 1978 the Norwegian working class has seen steadily sinking real wages. First through a 15 month wage and price freeze and after that a succession of wage negotiations in which wages have risen below the rate of inflation. The workers responded to these attacks on their living standard with protest strikes demanding that the unions be tougher in negotiations. These actions reached their climax last summer when about 60,000 workers struck for a few hours in the biggest illegal strike since the Second World War. The workers were angry at facing another year of sinking wages, and this

anger was transformed into these strikes and also a movement to change union leaders. This unrest died down by the autumn, but it had shown the unions that they had to take a more militant posture in this year's negotiations in order to control discontent.

Never before have we heard so much tough talking from union leaders before and during the negotiations. But in the end they settled for wage rises far below inflation - gone was the tough talk! What was left was a deep concern for the national economy which has trouble with its profitability and ability to compete on the world market. This and not the workers living standard is guiding the unions.

It was left to the transport workers to fight the battle of the year, in defence of wages. The strike started in late April and lasted for a couple of weeks. Some clashes occurred between striking petrol drivers and non-strikers (mainly drivers owning their own trucks) and also in the docks. The strike ended with the same result as that of the others with the unions calling it off and settling for pay rises below inflation.

The most combative section of the working class has been the oil workers. In the past few years they have been out on several wild-cat strikes, which led to the formation of a new union which was set up during the strike last winter. Now, they put their faith in this new union, but will soon see that the new union will become like the old one.

This year's negotiations have led to a new round of falling real wages. But the working class is also facing another attack. Several factories have been closed or are likely to close soon. So far, workers' resistance to closures and lay-offs has been left in the hands of the unions. These are "fighting" lay-offs and closures with militant talking, token strikes, demonstrations and petitions to the government. This struggle has not been able to stop closures and lay-offs; in several cases the unions have been an important force in having the workers accept lower wages, part time work, work without pay, and other "aid" to companies in difficulty. Many companies receiving such aid have later closed down, or demanded that the workers make even greater sacrifices in order to help them through the "difficult situation".

So far, Norway is still the quiet corner of the world. Sooner or later this will have to change. The workers will be forced to take up the struggle against the attacks on their living standard. The unions are no weapon in this struggle. The few strikes that have been fought outside the control of the unions have met the unions as enemies. As long as the workers leave the struggle in the hands of the unions, they will only lose more ground.

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STRIKES IN BRITAIN

From
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page

Autopsy on the Hospital Strikes?

In spite of sympathy from almost all workers, in spite of the solidarity action of miners, steelworkers, postmen, engineers, seamen etc. culminating in the magnificent walkout by the Fleet St. electricians in defiance of their own union as well as the health unions and the law, it was clear from the start that the health workers wouldn't get even the miserly 12% the unions were demanding. At the beginning the health workers believed they could pressurise the unions into organising an allout strike. The unions tactic has been to confine the strike to selected, local strikes. For example NUPE workers lobbied the union for an allout strike on May 5th but NUPE just ordered partial strikes spread out through the summer, which would have no effect on the government and wear out the workers gradually. Also on June 8th there was a massive one day strike supported by the miners. Workers could see that with this solidarity they could win an all-out strike so the next day 200 of them lobbied the TUC for allout indefinite action. The TUC of course said no and called another one day strike 2 weeks later. Although the succession of half day, one, three and five day strikes made it look as if the unions were gradually escalating the dispute, what they were doing was heading off the demand for a total strike - the only chance of success.

The unions policy of dividing the workers thus enjoyed increasing success. On June 14 the hospital workers in Edinburgh did what the union leaders told them and went back to work. On the same day the COHSE conference rejected a vote for an allout strike. It was considered unpatriotic to strike considering the deaths in the Falklands. To honour the dead, COHSE decided to help the murderers - the government. We intervened in the health workers demo in London and tried to persuade

miners and train drivers to leave the union rally for the picket line. Some train drivers did but most workers were led away from picket lines by the unions. The health workers themselves did show some awareness that the unions were betraying them - but they thought it was only a question of bad leaders. For example, in "Health Workers for the Full Claim", a bulletin produced by rank and file hospital workers, we read that the unions tactics have demoralised the workers who are "sick and tired of coming out for odd days here and there". But it still says "demand that the unions call an allout, indefinite strike." In fact in the area where there was a greater chance of generalising the fight, South Wales, where thousands of workers had struck for a day and demonstrated their support for the health workers in the middle of the patriotic orgy of the Falklands War, the workers didn't bother to strike at all. Once they realised that there was to be no total strike they realised that a limited action was worse than useless. There is no point losing 3 days pay for nothing. If you announce that you are going back to work after a token stoppage why should the state take any notice? The ruling class is not motivated by sympathy for good causes.

Workers in every industry must learn the lessons of this artificial struggle in order to break out of the union led and sterile guerilla tactic of isolated actions. In future struggles workers must BEGIN by electing strike committees of replaceable delegates OUTSIDE the dead hand of the union apparatus. They must send delegates to all big plants in every area to get sympathy action and recruits to the picket line. They should refuse any union deadlines to strikes. Only if all workers are involved in the struggle at every stage will they maintain their energy and commitment to the struggle. Left to see how the struggle is progressing on TV they will simply be prey to the lies of the government. Until workers take this path the present confident attack of the bosses on our standard of living will continue.

these workers were what the article called 'militants'.

"The principle of not crossing a picket line had to be weighed against the need to look at what was the most effective way of salvaging something from a disastrous position. The militants quite rightly decided to cross the picket line and return to work."

There is nothing surprising for communists in this since we have always argued that the left wing of the Labour Movement bureaucracy has always tried to contain the class struggle within the limits set by capitalism. What we have to continue to expose is their false claim to do this in continuity with the spirit of the early communist movement after the Russian Revolution. To justify their capitalist politics the SWP are especially astute at distorting Lenin. They justify scabbing by quoting "Left Wing Communism" where Lenin wrote that "the political leader... who is unable ... to avoid an obviously disadvantageous battle is absolutely worthless!" But quoting scripture out of context is no substitute for class analysis. Of course revolutionaries don't advise workers to fight for useless causes but neither do they justify the abandonment of struggle when it is not forced on them by the objective situation. Had the SWP read the same text a little more carefully they would have found an accurate condemnation of their politics by Lenin.

C.W.O. PUBLIC MEETINGS

★Sheffield. Tuesday October 19th.
"The Fight Against Unemployment"
C.V.S. House 69 Division St.
7.30 pm

★Edinburgh. Saturday October 9th.
"After the Falklands War:
The Class War"
Trades Council Club, Calton Hill.
7.30 pm

C.W.O.

Unemployment, inflation, war in the Falklands;
now's not the time for sitting around and doing
nothing.

I would like to find out more about the
C.W.O. ... ☐

I would like to help in the activity of
the C.W.O. ☐

Name

Address

Send to: C.W.O. PO Box, 283 Clarence Drive,
Glasgow G12.

At the time of writing the Royal College of Nursing has rejected the latest 7.5% offer. However, the demoralisation caused by the union's sabotage of the fight and their rejection of sympathy strikes means it is only a matter of time until a settlement around this figure is reached.

Was Lenin a Scab?

We have pointed out in the past how "the Left" in general follows the trade union bureaucracy, and how left wing shop stewards always end up doing the same thing as right wing officials, no matter how sincerely they might want to oppose them. (See Workers Voice 2) Most of them will use familiar arguments about "the national interest", or the fact that the firm is in trouble etc., to justify negotiating wage cuts and redundancies. The Socialist Workers Party do better than this. They quote Lenin to defend their record of capitulation. An article in Socialist Worker (31 July) entitled "Stopping retreat turning into rout" explains how, in order to keep trade union organisation intact, it is necessary to cross picket lines. As they say that this a time of class retreat, socialists must know "on what issues to fight and on which to draw back. No steward no matter how good can win every battle with management."

The article goes on to say that "the leadership" (i.e. the SWP) needs to know how to compromise: when to sell out workers interests, when to tell them to go back to work, and when to cross picket lines. The Wandsworth dustmen recently struck against job losses. A mass meeting voted for all out action, and dustmen picketed the depots of all Wandsworth's manual workers. Amongst

"Every proletarian ... notices the difference between a compromise enforced by objective conditions (such as lack of strike funds, no outside support, extreme hunger and exhaustion), a compromise which in no way diminishes the revolutionary devotion and readiness for further struggle ... and a compromise by traitors who try to ascribe to outside causes their own selfishness (strike-breakers also enter into compromises!), cowardice, desire to toady to the capitalists, and readiness to yield to intimidation, sometimes to persuasion, sometimes to sops, and sometimes to flattery on the part of the capitalists. (The history of the British labour movement offers especially many instances of such treacherous compromises...)" (Left Wing Communism p.64)

The capitulations the SWP makes in the economic struggle today are but preparations for the greater service they will attempt to perform for capitalism in the future struggle of the working class for political power.

The British labour movement is still full of toadies, traitors and scabs.

Those who have been conned into thinking that the SWP is either socialist or revolutionary must re-examine its theory and practice and abandon it if they are to join the struggle for the formation of a real international revolutionary vanguard of the working class.

WAR

1982 will go down as the year which illustrated the truth of the Marxist analysis of present day capitalism - that the historic alternatives for the working class are revolution or war.

In the absence of a determined struggle in defence of their own interests, the British working class was unable to prevent even a 'little' war - although the speed with which the 'Falklands spirit' disappeared shows the way ahead.

In the Middle East, the division of the working class into national sections was (and is) the precondition for war - a war in which the working class could only lose.

However, the CWO is not a pacifist organisation. In order to make wars a thing of the past, the working class must take power on an international level. The road to power is a road of struggle, and this struggle will often be violent. But, in this struggle the working class will be fighting for its own interests, and not for the interests of this or that section of the bourgeoisie, in a war in which only the enemies of the working class can triumph.



This leaflet was handed out to workers in Glasgow advertising one of the public meetings against Britain's war in the South Atlantic which we held at the height of the crisis.

LEAFLET:

THE FALKLANDS WAR SHOWS ONCE AGAIN - CAPITALISM MEANS WAR!

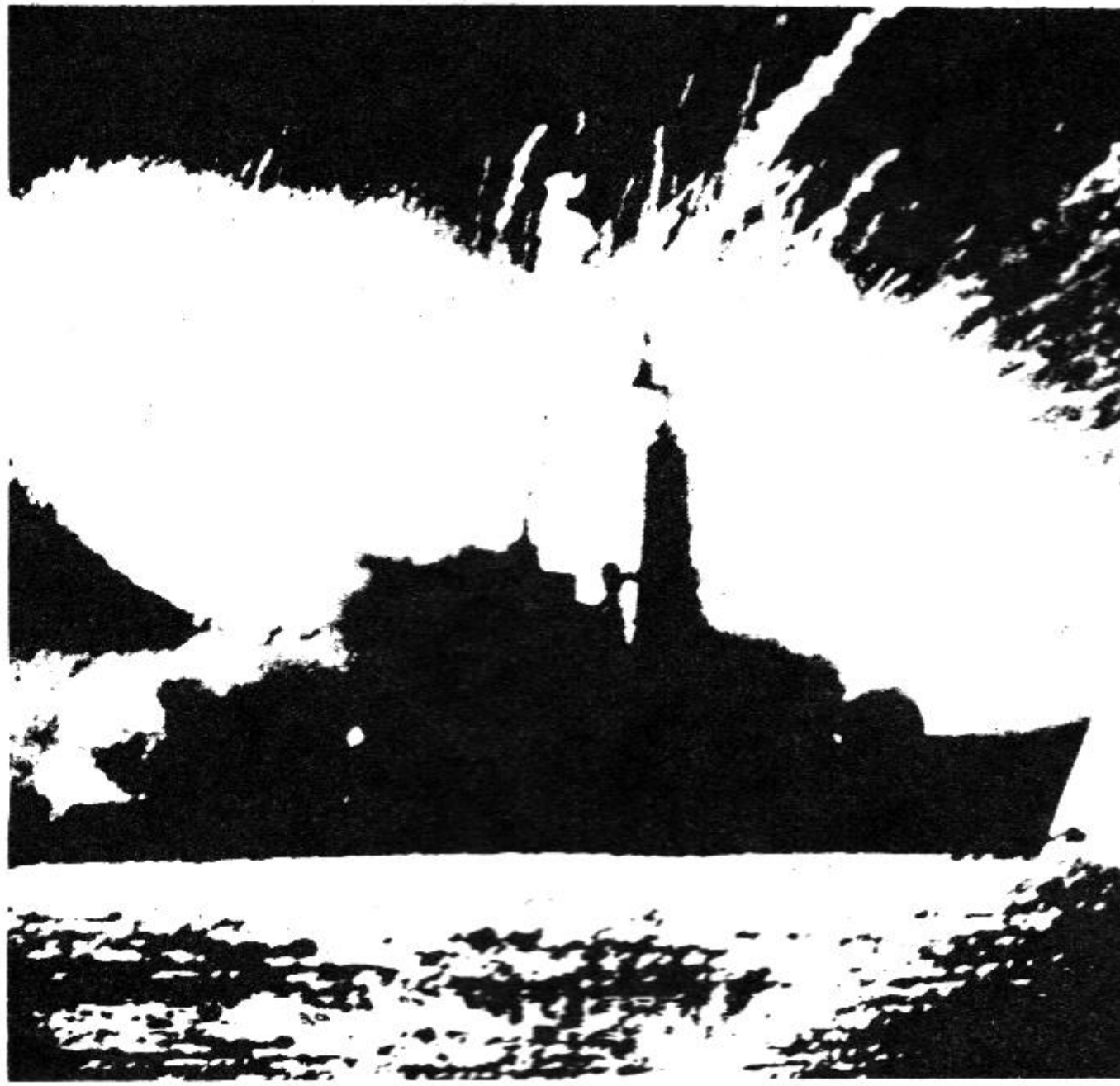
As British and Argentine forces face up to a bloody fight for the Falklands, what socialists have said for decades is again proved correct - THE ONLY PEACE THAT CAPITALISM OFFERS IS THAT OF THE GRAVE. Already hundreds have died, and even if this war is settled, others will break out tomorrow. In the Middle East war rages between Iran and Iraq. Russia invades Afghanistan, South Africa invades Angola. Capitalist wars have killed over 100 million people since 1914.

Why does capitalism mean war?

Wars are not caused by mad dictators or 'accidents' or human nature, but by capitalism. Marx demonstrated long ago that capitalism means economic crises. It tries to solve these by attacking the workers through inflation, unemployment etc. The bosses also struggle with each other for markets, raw materials and areas of investment more fiercely in a crisis. Sometimes they do this peacefully, but as the crisis worsens, more and more by WAR. War also helps turn the workers anger away from the crisis, from inflation and unemployment, by deflecting it onto foreigners and whipping up national hysteria. The Falklands war is no accident, but an effect of the crisis, and part of the build up to capitalism's final solution, World War 3. "Guns or butter" said Hitler and today the bosses offer us the same choice.

Since capitalism means war, the fight for peace is a fight against capitalism. In other words - a fight for socialism. In the era of neutron bombs and chemical warfare, World War 3 means the destruction of civilisation. Socialism or barbarism! That is the choice facing the working class and humanity.

All those, like the Labour politicians, union leaders and CND campaigners, who argue that capitalism can be disarmed and peaceful are lying. The antics of Foot, the Pope and others cannot save us from a holocaust. And when the chips are down, all these people will back war, as their forerunners did in 1914 and 1939. Against all these whining hypocrites and fakars, we say; The only war worth fighting is the CLASS WAR. Hear the case against capitalism and its hellish round of wars; hear the alternative - revolution against the bosses east and west. Come to our public meeting.



Falklands Balance Sheet

The re-taking of the Falkland islands was a major military and propaganda victory for the British ruling class. The victory was also achieved without damage to the interests of US imperialism, which at first seemed threatened by the conflict with Argentina. The latter remains a member of the US bloc, chastened for its attempt to break the rules of bloc behaviour and as militarily and economically bound to the US as ever. Despite some wild talk by Galtieri and the Junta, there was never a prospect of Argentina moving towards Russia. The Russians themselves were so clear on this that they used the conflict to try and force down to their advantage Argentina's asking price for its grain, rather than trying to make practical capital out of their verbal support for Argentina's "rights".

Militarily the whole operation was a success for Britain, and in the first naval battle since World War II many lessons were learned which will be of great use when the "real thing" comes. For example, the vulnerability of ships to missiles like the Exocet was dramatically revealed. The need for a massive combat fleet was shown and in future arms spending will undoubtedly be directed by all the NATO allies towards this away from single-minded concentration on massively costly projects like Trident.

In propaganda terms, also, the ruling class achieved some success. There is little doubt that, after initial hesitations, the policy of Thatcher and co was seen by the mass of the population, including the working class, not as a transparent move to deflect attention from the economic crisis, but as a legitimate defence of democracy against fascist aggression. Although some workers refused to call off their struggles (e.g. Hawker-Siddley workers in Bristol), these were minor problems for the ruling class. And although the Falklands mood of national unity began to evaporate once the war was over and reality began to intrude (eg rail and health strikes), the ease with which the ruling class mobilised for and carried out the war was a significant, though not final, setback for the working class, and a step towards World War 3.

The war posed great problems and responsibilities for communists. The biggest political crisis in the UK for 25 years, it proved the validity of everything the CWO has said about the course of capitalism towards war as a solution to its crisis, and the role which the various parties and trades unions would play. If it was a dress rehearsal for the ruling class, it was also one for the CWO, which responded to the war by our most sustained campaign of action against the capitalist war via our press, leafletting, fly-posting and public meetings. The slogan was for class action against the capitalist war. The CWO took a consistently revolutionary defeatist position on the war, calling for opposition to both regimes in

Britain and Argentina, and for working class unity and action against the war.

SOCIAL CHAUVINISTS TO THE FORE.

Communists haven't always opposed all wars conducted by capitalism. Our attitude has been defined by the world interests of the working class in particular historical situations. Marx and the First International supported the Northern capitalists in the American Civil War, because they were progressive - that is, their victory would lead to the abolition of slavery in the Southern states. But after the formation of the major capitalist states in the nineteenth century, as capitalism began to develop towards imperialism and to show that it was no longer a progressive social system, communists began to evolve a position of opposition to all sides in any capitalist war.

It was the Bolsheviks who first put forward the position of "revolutionary defeatism" in opposition to the prevailing mood of patriotism among the European socialist parties in the First World War. This means that socialists under no circumstances defend their own country, but work for its defeat by encouraging strikes and revolution against the ruling class, paralysing its ability to make war.

It was left to the left wing of the Communist International to continue this revolutionary tradition. The total opposition of the Italian fraction of the left led to its unique opposition to Stalin's policy of forming a Popular Front with the bourgeoisie in Spain. In the Spanish Civil War, defence of democracy was the prelude to the anti-fascist crusade of World War II, in which the 'communist' parties helped to mobilise the workers behind US, French and British imperialism on the pretext of fighting fascism. Again, the remnants of the Italian left took a revolutionary defeatist position and with the formation of the Internationalist Communist Party in 1943 the tradition of opposition to both imperialisms and internationalist revolutionary defeatism was carried on.

Today we can see clearly the signs of the build-up to World War III, just as the Spanish Civil War was part of the preparation for the last imperialist massacre. We must prepare by opposing all the war preparations of the bourgeoisie of every country, whether under the banner of fighting fascism or anti-colonialism. Tomorrow, chauvinism of the right and left will be used to mobilise workers for World War III.

In World War I Lenin denounced those social democrats who supported the war and who told the working class to fight for the aims of the bosses. He called them social chauvinists: socialists in words, chauvinist in deeds. When the war between Britain and Argentina broke out over the Falklands all sections of the left in Argentina played a chauvinist role, showing that they were simply left varieties of Argentine capitalism. A statement from the main Trotskyist group in Argentina stated,

"The war, if there is one will mean more hunger for the workers and the people. However, this will not deter the Argentine workers and ourselves.... Without giving the slightest political support to the government, we will form part of the military camp of the dictatorship in the fight against the British Imperialists." (Published in Socialist Organiser 6/5/82)

But Galtieri's gamble was not an attack primarily on British imperialism, but against the working class of Argentina, which in the spring had begun to organise strikes and demonstrations against the Junta. To support the military camp of the dictatorship can only mean proclaiming "social peace" for the duration of the war - in other words, supporting the interests of the ruling class. This was exactly what the Argentine CGT (equivalent of the TUC) did when they called off all strikes and proclaimed their support for a regime which was soaked in workers' blood. These chauvinists were not alone: the Argentine Communist Party supported the Junta, touring Europe to organise support, while the Monteneros guerrilla group volunteered to come back from Cuban exile and fight for the Junta that had all but exterminated them!

The British left was not to be outdone in

Middle East; Reagan and Begin's New Order

The Israeli invasion of the Lebanon demonstrates that the so-called peace initiative of the USA - the Camp David agreements between Egypt and Israel - was not a step towards any idealised general peace settlement. Instead it was a prelude to the establishment by force of American domination in the region to the exclusion of any competitors, specifically Russian imperialism.

The Israeli state has accomplished at one swoop the virtual destruction of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the humiliation of Syria. And this has been accomplished because it coincides with, rather than contradicts, the interests of US imperialism and its Arab allies. It has also done so with the undoubted complicity of Reagan and the US government, who continued to ensure the massive flow of arms and aid to Israel during its adventure - help that ALONE guaranteed its success - despite issuing diplomatic censures over Begin's "excesses" in order to save the face of the disoriented and passive Arab ruling classes.

PAX AMERICANA

The line up of forces in the Middle East was favourable as never before to the "final solution" of the Palestinian problem and the parallel eradication of Russian influence in the area. The Begin regime was in a precarious political situation. Its parliamentary majority was in danger and it was faced with an inflation of astronomical proportions, growing unemployment and a strike wave. Like Galtieri in Argentina - but with more aces up his sleeve - he saw the defusing of social unrest as being achieved through a successful foreign war. A war which Palestinians and the Israeli masses would pay for in blood and gold (a forced loan of 5% on wages, bearing no interest and repayable in the future with worthless inflated currency is to pay for the war).

But unlike Galtieri, Begin chose his enemy and moment well. The Camp David agreement brought the Egyptian ruling class the return of Sinai, which Begin delivered over, forcibly evacuating the Jewish settlements made since 1967. More importantly, it provided Egypt with 15 billion dollars of US aid, including 5 billion on arms. This was to be used to control one of the threats to the Egyptian ruling class and US interests - Russia's ally Gaddafi in Libya. And for the extended policing role foreseen by the US for Egypt in the Red Sea/Gulf area, especially important after the destabilising of Iran. The assassination of Sadat by Islamic fundamentalists and the coming to power of Mubarak brought no change in Egypt's policy that could worry Begin or Reagan.

With Saudi Arabia in receipt of the US AWACS system (ultra-sophisticated weaponry), and also edging towards signing the Camp David agreement, the prospect of the oil weapon being used to curtail Israeli expansion was removed from the scenario it had occupied in 1973. Add to this the continuing war of attrition between Iran and Iraq which effect-

ively demobilised them both. This left Syria as effectively the only Arab state which might supply possible opposition to the annihilation of the PLO. And Syria itself has been torn by internal social convulsions, limiting its capacities to intervene.

The Lebanon has been the main operations base of the PLO since their eviction from Jordan in 1970. The Lebanon itself has progressively disintegrated from a state to a series of mini-states run by rival Phalangist, Druze, Muslim and Palestinian private armies and the central government is unable to exercise control. The intervention of the Syrians in 1976 to try and stabilise the situation in the Muslim-Christian civil war failed to restore any semblance of central authority. In some areas of concentrated Palestinian refugee settlement (e.g. Beirut) the PLO had a secure base from which to operate against Israel. The Israeli invasion of the Lebanon was dedicated to the destruction of this base and to clear away the last obstacle to a Pax Americana. By an operation of terror directed against the Palestinian refugees and the Muslim masses in general - leading to 600,000 refugees and 30,000 dead and wounded leaving aside the barbarism of Beirut - the Israelis have achieved their objective of the evacuation of the PLO from the Lebanon. They also seem set to erect some form of puppet "buffer" state in the Lebanon, or at least a Phalangist enclave in the southern part.

With the puny Lebanese army swept aside, the real military weakness of the PLO and its Syrian ally revealed, and the silent complicity or noisy impotence of the various Arab states, the Israeli ruling class now has a renewed breathing space in which to advance its interests. Provided, that is, that those interests co-incide with those of US imperialism which has financed (3 million dollars a day), sanctioned (the annexation of Golan and the bombing of Iraqi nuclear reactors in 1981) and now is actively policing with its imperialist allies, Israeli expansion.

THE PALESTINIANS

The Arab ruling classes have shown that they are incapable of defending the dispossessed Palestinian masses. Most of them fear the pro-USSR leanings of their nominal organisations (PLO, El Fatah and their Syrian "protectors") and many benefit hugely from the reserve army of Palestinian labour which the stateless refugees provides them with. But the weakness of the PLO unless supported massively by an Arab or an imperialist power was also clearly revealed in the siege of Beirut. The PLO espouses a nationalist and interclassist ideology (i.e. bourgeois) and seeks the unity of all classes of Palestinians and the support of the Arab states and sees itself as the future Palestinian ruling class. The PLO is, therefore, resolutely against the one policy that could have stopped Begin in his tracks - a class policy among the Palestinian workers in Israel and the occupied Gaza and West Bank, a

policy for their unification with the Israeli workers (seen by the PLO as "enemies") on an anti-capitalist basis. Such a struggle could have spread to the Arab states (whose "security" the PLO does not wish to threaten), and could have found an echo in the working class further afield. Without such a perspective the Palestinians and the masses in the Middle East in general will continue to be grist in the mill of imperialism.

The way forward is,

- by calling and working for a policy of class unity between Palestinian and Israeli workers,
- by calling for strikes against the effects of the war by Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories (of whom there are 1½ million and of whom 70% are wage labourers) and by Israeli workers in a unified struggle,
- by calling for fraternisation with the Israeli army by the dispossessed Palestinians while recognising their right to defend themselves against Begin's holocaust,
- and by recognising that neither the imperialist powers, the Arab ruling classes nor the PLO can do this

THIS IS THE ONLY WAY THAT COMMUNISTS CAN GAIN A CREDIBILITY AND INFLUENCE

- + FOR CLASS UNITY OF ISRAELI AND PALESTINE WORKERS AGAINST THE WAR.
- + FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE STRUGGLE TO THE PALESTINIAN DIASPORA AND AGAINST THE ARAB RULING CLASSES.
- + FOR FRATERNISATION OF THE PALESTINIANS WITH THE ISRAELI TROOPS AND MUTINIES IN THE ISRAELI FORCES.
- + AGAINST THE NATIONALISM OF THE PLO AND THE PALESTINIAN RULING CLASS.
- + FOR THE FORMATION OF COMMUNIST CADRES AMONGST THE DISPOSSESSED PALESTINIAN MASSES.



chauvinism by the Argentine left, though some of them disguised their chauvinism with "internationalist" rhetoric - by supporting Argentina! The British trades unions loyally supported the war effort, as did the Argentine CGT. COHSE called off their industrial action in the hospitals for a week as a "mark of respect" for the dead. The T&GWU called off a national dock strike due to begin on 10th May to aid the war effort. The NUS encouraged seamen to volunteer for active war service, and jingoistically called for the Tories to "finish the job" quickly. Other union leaders went on record by denouncing the stupidity of the Tories - since they had not armed Britain well enough and cut too many jobs in the arms industry! The pacifism of the Labour Party also quickly evaporated, and it supported the British war effort, as it had done in World Wars I and II, and in subsequent occasions. Foot and Co's criticisms of the Tories were that they had not acted quickly enough or built enough warships to nip the Argentine fascist aggression in the bud. The Labour "lefts" opposition to the war was nothing but spurious

pacifist phrase-mongering illusions that "negotiations" in the UN can remove capitalism's drive to war. And Benn himself made clear his defence of capitalist society when he said, "...the nation will respond to a call to arms to defend a foreign invasion, or repel those who have successfully occupied a part of our country" (The Times 29/4/82).

This was echoed by the pacifists of CND who had recently called out 250,000 people to demonstrate against Trident. They were conspicuous by their absence on the tiny demonstrations against the Falklands adventure. Their pamphlet "Beyond the Cold War" in fact echoes current Pentagon/Kremlin thinking in favour of conventional weapons against nuclear ones. "We are the real patriots" says Bruce Kent and their lack of opposition to the Falklands war lines up CND with the social patriots of the Labour Party and Trades Unions.

Most of the far-left in Britain, particularly the various Trotskyist groups, noisily announced their support of Galtieri - the WRP, RCP and others all took this line. Workers' Power, for example, in their statement

of 4/4/82 revealed their anti-working class chauvinism clearly,

"In a conflict over the islands we are for the victory of the Argentines despite their political regime... and despite the fact that this clash... is undertaken for demagogic reasons, i.e. to head off mass revolt against the dictatorship."

In other words, they are for the crushing of the Argentine working class. Some groups like the SWP, after an initial flirtation with support for Argentina, moved towards a pacifist position, i.e. of being opposed to both sides, but without calling for any working class action against the war, and while chiding the CND and Labour left for their inactivity and failure to "give a lead".

The total inability of these groups to adopt an internationalist perspective on such a stupid little war, confirms that when a real war comes along, they will be at best useless and irrelevant, and at worst active supporters of one or other group of capitalist hangmen.

I.C.C. : The Danger of Monasticism

In *Workers Voice* 6, "WR: Miseries of the Organisation", the CWO analysed the crisis into which the International Communist Current (ICC) had been recently plunged, and tried to show how this crisis stemmed from its political ambiguities and confusions, specifically on the role of the communist party. Neither the ICC, nor those who left the organisation and have since drifted into the political void, replied to those fraternal criticisms. The ICC instead launched a counter-attack, arguing that the CWO was subject to an even more dangerous crisis and was riddled with confusion and opportunism (see *World Revolution* 51, July '82). With trepidation we scanned this analysis - but have to report ourselves unconvinced; rather, this and other recent ICC pronouncements have convinced us that they are drifting ever further from reality, and are in danger of heading for monastic isolation.

WHOSE OPPORTUNISM?

The ICC are incapable of going beyond declamatory poses and fine phrases in their political work; their trumpets, they seem to believe, will bring the walls of capitalism tumbling down. Although they are belatedly beginning to concede that the occasional "sincere militant" might be drawn into leftist organisations (compared with their previous melodrama of a unified bloc of machiavellian devils), they still condemn anything other than hurling insults at the leftists as opportunism. Thus, when the CWO some years ago defended the idea of capitalist decadence against a criticism we received from the Maoist group COBI (see *Revolutionary Perspectives* 10), or when we now turn inside out and demolish the arguments of the Trotskyist RCP (in *Workers Voice* 7), in order to attract and win over the "sincere militants" within them, the ICC accuses us of opportunism. We have again and again in our Platform and in our theoretical and agitational publications, stated our view that these leftist groups are objectively counter revolutionary. However, it is imperative to expose the arguments of these groups and defeat them if we are serious about the prospect of winning over the "sincere militants" (who comprise virtually the majority of the membership of leftist groups). Hysterical denunciations, so beloved by the ICC, are no substitute for clear argument.

The ICC also accuses us of confusion on the class nature and role of the trades unions, despite a plethora of published statements which clearly demonstrate that they are vehicles of the bourgeois state, including such articles as "Trades Unions - Enemies of the Working Class" in *WV* 2, which not only stated this, but also took every argument to the contrary and refuted it, in a historical and theoretical manner. If the ICC can't understand this, the leftist bookshops which refused to sell the issue certainly did!

The ICC claims to have a 'framework' for distinguishing between communist and counter-revolutionary organisations. This amounts to nothing more than saying that some are 'clearly' proletarian, some 'clearly' bourgeois and some are confused. We, on the other hand have continually stated - but without the flourish of vacuous resolutions - that proletarian groups defend the independence of the working class from bourgeois organisations and institutions through the class party, and reject the pseudo socialism of nationalisations and self-management. The ICC found our article on the RCP "too fraternal", but what of their own record?

- when the International Communist Party (Programma) succeeded in launching an English language publication, *WR* denounced it as the fruits of a bourgeois organisation "not of our movement".
- when Combat Communiste and Union Ouvriere first appeared in France RI (the French section of the ICC) denounced them as "abortions of the left wing of capital".

- on the other hand, when outfits like the US Libertarian Workers Group (which supports the Sandinistas in Nicaragua) appear, they are hailed as proletarian, and *Solidarity* which supports its Polish namesake receives the same baptism in ICC holy water.

From this we can see that the ONE criterion the ICC has for being "fraternal" to a "proletarian" group (despite the incidental support it might have for unions, national liberation or self-management!) is that group's total confusion on the questions of the party and the Russian Revolution - the KEY political questions of our epoch. Hatred of the Bolsheviks and all their works (a view disowned by the ICC themselves) seems to establish any group as 'proletarian' in their eyes.

When we come to the question of the unions, we should remind the comrades of the ICC that the ritual incantation of their bourgeois nature gets us nowhere unless we also have worked out in advance a programme for intervention in the class to outflank the unions. Need we remind the ICC of their total capitulation to the CGT (French union) organised attempt in 1979 to deflect and disorient the steel workers' struggle in France, and their call for workers to participate in and support a march organised for that purpose? (For our critique of ICC intervention in the French steel strike see "Intervention in France" in *RP* 15) Or their baptism of committees organised by leftists and stewards in Italy during the hospital workers strike as an "autonomous proletarian movement"? We could multiply instances (e.g. their support for the movement to support IRA hunger strikers), but these should be enough to jolt the shortest of memories. Whatever mistakes and tactical miscalculations the CWO may have made - and, as the ICC state, these have been openly admitted - NONE have matched the above mentioned ICC practice of 'purity' in theory - and capitulation in reality, followed by furtive disavowals.

WHITHER THE ICC?

Followers of the ICC/CWO polemic over the last few years may have noted a change in its content. For the CWO this has seen a shift in emphasis, from criticising the ICC's confusions on the state, the transition period, economics, etc, to criticising their confusions over intervention, demands, violence etc. On the other hand, the ICC's original critique of the CWO - that it was "too theoretical", too obsessed with economics, "academic" etc, has been stood on its head: now we are being accused of the very opposite - lack of theoretical work, frenetic activism, party building and so forth. This change of tack is more important for what it reveals about the ICC than about the CWO.

The ICC's perspectives formerly envisaged a parallel deepening of the economic crisis, rise of the class struggle and growth of the ICC. This optimistic view has been shattered in the face of reality - set backs for the class (e.g. in Poland), successes for the ruling class (e.g. over the Falklands) and consequent crisis in the ICC. *WR* 52 shows some signs of beginning to appreciate the real situation and balance of forces when it states "the world bourgeoisie is on the offensive". Astonishingly, the ICC now admits that the British steel strike, which at the time they portrayed as a great victory for autonomous class action, was "isolated and defeated". (p.8 In usual ICC fashion this is "slipped in" to a text without acknowledgement or analysis of their previous mistakes.) In the face of the shattering of their perspectives, the ICC is now openly hinting at its future path - towards monasticism and the revival of "fraction" work, i.e. theoretical elaboration without parallel intervention in the class and organisation building.

In Britain we have clearly seen this retreat since their splits last year. The ICC has virtually abandoned intervening at meetings and demonstrations (where they have been conspicuous by their absence). Neither have they made any attempt to take part in important class battles (e.g. the BL strikes last year), and their total

failure to wage a systematic campaign over the Falklands in the class confirms our analysis.

An article advertising the ICC's text *The Communist Left of Italy* (which we shall fully review in a future issue) in *WR* 52 indicates theoretical justification for a retreat into "fraction" work. For confusions this text can hardly be paralleled in the history of the ICC. Consider the following statements from the same paragraph:

"It is of course a truism that there is a 'permanent need for the party' ... the party (can) only exist at certain stages of the proletariat's historic struggle." (p6)

This exemplary confusion seems as good a starting point as any to criticise the article.

The Conditions for the Formation of the Party

It is wrong to say, as the ICC do, that the party can only be formed when it has the potential of becoming a mass organisation: this would mean that the formation of the Communist League in 1847 or the Bolshevik Party in 1902-3 had been mistakes, since they were and remained tiny organisations. The conditions for the formation of the party are the achievement of political clarity and the drawing of the lessons of a particular epoch, and this had been broadly done by the time of the formation of the Internationalist Communist Party (PCInt) in 1943. (For an account of the Italian Left and the formation of the PCInt see "The Italian Left and the Permanent Need for the Party" in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 19.)

The ICC distort history by implying that the PCInt broke with the advances and tradition of the Left Fraction and *Bilan* by forming the party in 1943. But as the ICC very well know: 1) the theoretical work of the inter-war Italian Left was not an exercise in academicism, but a prelude to the re-formation of the party and the international

2) *Bilan* was not homogenous on the party-issue and neither was it simply a forerunner of *Internationalisme* (the ICC's political ancestor). There was a tendency in *Bilan* and the Fraction that worked towards the building of the party from 1935-6 (which broadly became the PCInt) and another tendency which felt the time was not ripe (and broadly became *Internationalisme*).

It is therefore quite false for the ICC to claim that *Internationalisme* (and hence the ICC) are the true heirs of *Bilan*. And *Internationalisme*'s subsequent erratic political evolution, flirting with the fossil-beds of councilism (*Daad en Gedacht*), revision of fundamental Marxist positions on the state and the party (echoed today by the ICC), and erratic perspectives (which caused it to view World War 3 as immanent in the 1950's and the subsequent departure of its leading militant to South America for 15 years!) all contrast

unfavourably with the hard and bitter defence of the theoretical acquisitions of the Italian Left made by the PCInt (*Battaglia Comunista*) over 40 years. But the real function of a defence of a distorted idea of what *Bilan* was about, and an all too accurate picture of what *Internationalisme* was about, coupled with the highlighted quotes from *Bilan* about the need for a rejection of activism in favour of theoretical work - IN 1933 (as if nothing had changed in 50 years!) - is to prepare the way for the ICC, at a time when the historical options are narrowing to a decisive point, to retreat in practice before the bourgeoisie's assault as they have previously retreated in theory from the fundamentals of revolutionary Marxism.

APPEAL FUND

In response to appeals, some readers have taken out supporters subscriptions (£10 per year) and we appeal to others to do so when their subs are due for renewal. We have also received the following donations, and appeal to all our member supporters and readers to dig deep and send us a donation.
Walsall £20; Seattle USA £12.50; Glasgow £50; Leeds £5; Bradford £10; London £70; Sheffield £50; Walsall £50.

ITALY

REPRESSION AND RESISTANCE.

In this issue of Workers' Voice we are printing two pieces on the situation in Italy. One is a translation from our fraternal organisation the P.C.Int (Battaglia Comunista) on the bosses' assault on the "scala mobile" which indexes wages to inflation. The other is extracts from a letter we received anonymously on repression in Italy, presumably as a response to our special feature on world-wide bourgeois repression in WV 7. We are printing this as a gesture of solidarity, but would record our disapproval of the increasing vogue for anonymous productions: comrades prepared to ask us to publish should be prepared to meet and debate as well.

The continuing economic disintegration in Italy, and the fall of yet another short-lived government at the beginning of August, illustrates the precarious state of Italian capitalism. Ferocious attacks on the living standards of the working class, and increasingly brutal repression of all who resist, are hallmarks of the response of the bosses to this situation. For the working class, increasing its resistance, strengthening the class struggle, and finding its theoretical and practical weapons - the class party - are ever more urgent tasks.

Death of the Scala Mobile?

INTRODUCTION

In Italy, just as in Britain, the world economic crisis demands that workers' wages are reduced and productivity increased. In Britain we have seen bosses and government fighting any pay demand which is anywhere near the rate of inflation, forcing through massive increases in productivity and even taxing the unemployed. In Italy similar attacks have taken place. The Italian bosses organisation equivalent to the CBI, the "Confindustria", has recently torn up the agreement on indexing wages to inflation, the "Scala Mobile", which has been in force since 1975. The state sector bosses were quick to follow suit. In its place a new flat rate limit of 16%, which is still below the rate of inflation, has been imposed. This is, of course, an upper limit and most workers will get less. In addition the ending of the contract system means it will have to be fought for on a factory by factory basis. Over the last few years there have been huge increases in productivity (Fiat was the first European car factory to use robots) and massive redundancies. There are now officially 2 million unemployed - approximately 9% of the workforce.

We are publishing below an editorial from "Battaglia Comunista", paper of the Internationalist Communist Party (PCInt) which clearly shows the similarity between the attacks faced by British and Italian workers. In particular it exposes the assistance given to the Italian bosses by the unions.

THE CONFINDUSTRIA REFUSES TO DISCUSS CONTRACTS AND THE UNION THANKS THEM

The unions have agreed, in the course of the last year, to the implementation of all the objectives closest to the capitalists' hearts. The first and probably the most important has been achieved with the acceptance of the famous 16% limit. With this limit, increases in wages are in fact rendered independent either of increases of productivity or of inflation. Increases in productivity are entirely pocketed by the capitalists and this is in a period of technological revolution. The facts on increases in productivity in the last year speak

Torture in Italy

From an Italian
in London

We have experienced in Italy the formation of a social movement which over the last 14 years has continually contradicted capital. This movement has created fear in the state and dread in the hearts of the bourgeoisie, and consequently a merciless repression which aspires to a level seldom before imagined. The fact that in Italy there are now 3,500 political prisoners shows a political will to strike at and destroy these antagonists.

The class character of this repression is clear: those who have struggled in the factories, in the schools, and in the metropolises are persecuted; police operations follow one another in an increasing spiral; an entire generation of revolutionaries has been criminalised. Dozens are arrested on mere suspicion of conspiracy and thousands of comrades have disappeared, victims of a hearsay increasingly absurd. Now show trials are being staged in which every communist is accused of having been a terrorist! The strategy of the bourgeoisie is one of criminalising all comrades on the basis of a suspicion.

A special clause called "Article 90" has been introduced into prison regulations in order to permit psychic destruction of those imprisoned by means of total isolation. Added to this practice of psychic destruction in recent months has been the systematic use of torture,

for themselves; in Italy we are reaching Japanese levels of productivity.

The doubling of productivity which has taken place in the last decade is striking, especially if one compares it with changes in pay. The last year has seen Italian wages hardly keep pace with the nominal level of inflation which is itself far below the real level. The unions are, without a shadow of a doubt, the architects of this state of affairs. They allowed management to rid itself of the surplus manpower due to re-equipment of the productive machinery, without even striking a blow. At Alfasud, according to company figures, after redundancies had been imposed on thousands of workers, 600 vehicles per day were produced. In this they have reached a level of production almost equal to the factory's potential - something which hasn't happened since the plant was built. At Alfa the union has also been the true architect of the agreement to throw 6000 workers out of the factory. Again the union, by signing the pledge in respect to the 16% limit with the government and the Confindustria, has in fact broken completely a method of managing contracts which was deeply rooted. In practice the limit cancels category contracts or limits them by force since it places equal and insurmountable limits for all categories independent of the situation of the individual industrial sector.

The fact that the unions do not for a minute think they should not carry out this task is demonstrated by their behaviour towards the categories of workers who have concluded contracts after the agreements of last June (1981). These categories (almost all in the public sector) have signed agreements with the bosses within the stipulated limit. The unions have, however, pledged themselves to revise these contracts in accordance with the agreements which have been reached between the Confindustria and the Government during the period when these contracts are valid. In short, the unions have signed away to the bosses, on behalf of the working class, all the bills which they are able to sign. This is notwithstanding the fact that the Confindustria refuses to begin the contract negotiations maintaining that, given the 16% limit, there is no longer room for the automatic adjustment on a sliding scale of wages.

In Italy automatic adjustments covered the wages of 60 to 65% of all workers; inflation, however, affected all workers' wages. Moreover, the sliding scale of wages (Scala Mobile), in its turn covered less than 70% of inflation. From this one can see that only 60% of all wage earners got back 70% of inflation. The remainder got bugger all. The capitalists have won out twice; firstly they have kept for themselves all the increases in productivity; secondly inflation has yielded them a further gain.

practised on anyone who is arrested for a political reason. Numerous cases of torture have been denounced by lawyers, and plenty of evidence concerning the massacres wrought by police and carabinieri in Italian jails has been brought together by magistrates. In Parliament the Minister of the Interior has categorically denied the existence of these murderous practices, though from the written statements of magistrates emerges a picture of a well-established and determined system of torture. All prisoners testify to having received kickings and punches immediately on being arrested. Then come the crueler tortures: the cigarettes stubbed out on arms; the forced drinking of extremely saline water, by litres; attempted strangulation using various methods; mysterious injections. After such treatment those arrested are taken before the magistrate and many written evidences taken by the judiciary have descriptions of the terrible physical state of those detained.

The servile Italian press has sold out to power and maintains a blackout on those facts while the Communist Party paper Unità simply speaks of "dramatic interrogations". To slam the practice of torture and to denounce the Leftist parties who support the murders is an imperative for the whole movement, outside Italy as well. It is necessary to smash the wall of silence and complicity (omertà) and to denounce this cynical and barbaric spiral. To remain in the dark means to maintain one's complicity with the torturers.

The Confindustria wastes time, postpones things, uses political developments to obtain from the government further exemptions from social taxes and assures the government of the benefits it will derive from recognising a contract as late as possible. But the unions will still be able to camouflage the emptiness of their contractual proposals, mobilising the workers, not with the content of the contract, but the fact that the contract has been recognised. The formal winning of a contract and imposing it on the "arrogant" and "wicked" bosses has become the prime objective. The fact that this contract was already defined a year ago by the Confindustria and the government will be ignored.

The unions will also pass over in silence the fact that category contracts have been ended by the Confindustria when presenting their achievements to the mass of workers. The winning of a contract which, in reality, was already made last June, will be displayed as a great victory to be defended. In short, the unions have as their single aim that of delivering meaningless pieces of paper into the hands of the workers, and fat profits into the pockets of the bosses.

PLATFORM

of

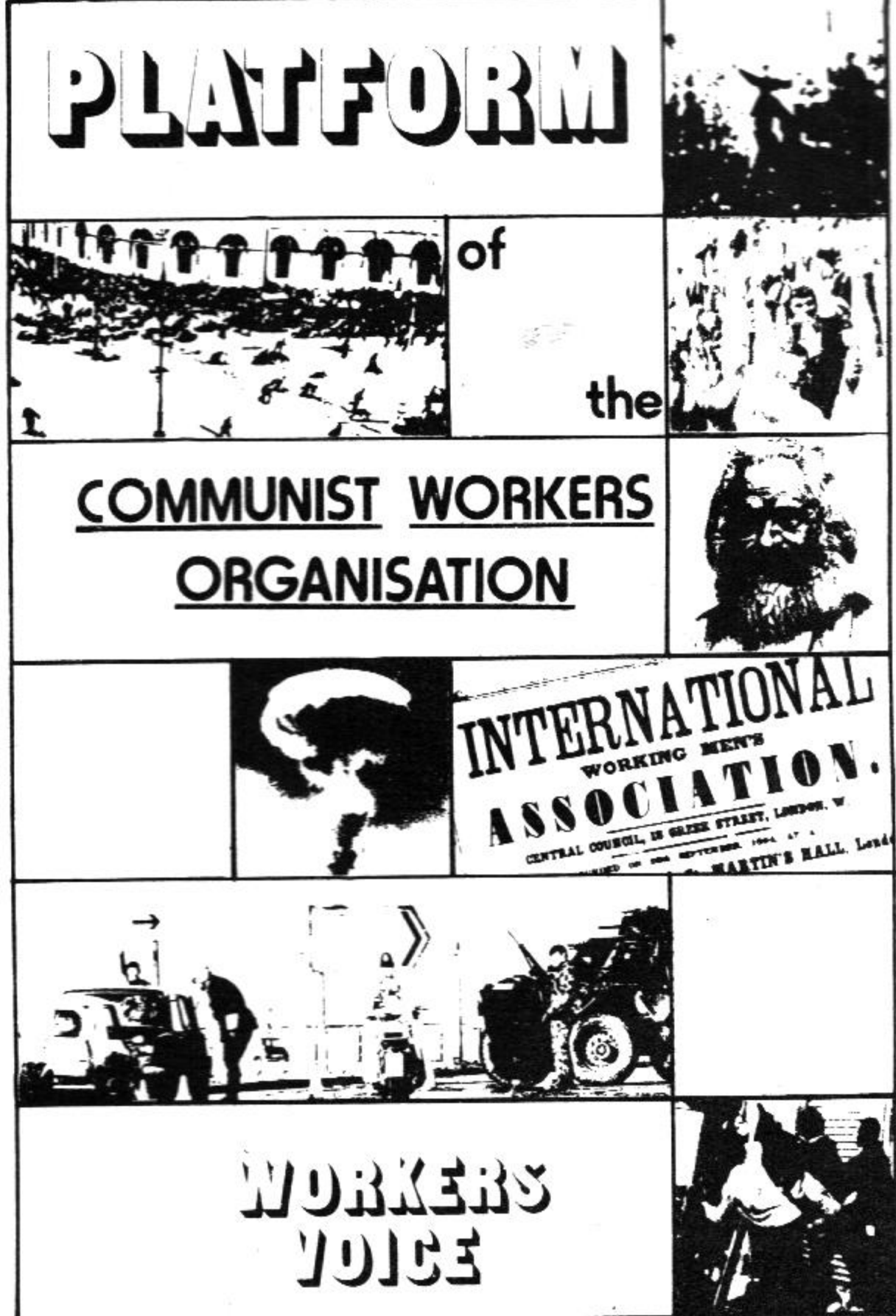
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having struck in October last, they renewed strike action in May this year. But once again union sabotage undermined the strike - the CGT union has seen to it that token stoppages do not go beyond the factory gates. After 13 days of those token stoppages which did not involve the whole workforce simultaneously (e.g. when body workers stopped working, trimmers kept working and vice-versa...), the hardening of attitude proposed by the union was a three hours token strike!

The workers formed a strike committee but instead of using it as a weapon to engage in a real struggle by linking with other car plant workers (the Billancourt factory and the Citroen factory) where signs of discontent were becoming more and more clear, the strike committee took part in negotiations along side with the unions and management.

Such facts are evidence of the strength of the guard dogs of the bosses. Workers can't put their trust in them but must control the struggle by themselves through mass assemblies and seek support from their class comrades irrespective of the interests of the capitalist economy. No-strike agreements will not preserve jobs or improve working conditions; they only encourage the bosses to launch more severe attacks with the help of their union accomplices.

In order to disguise their total complicity with the austerity measures of the government, the CGT has been involved in well-publicised battles at Peugeot and Citroen for an end to the company unions previously entrenched there. The resulting unionisation at these plants has been presented by the CGT as a great victory.

The Mitterand government felt encouraged to continue with its austerity programme after the success which the unions had in controlling such strikes as occurred after the election. Along with the unions the government is now planning a 1% 'contribution' from the wages of civil servants in order to 'fight unemployment', as well as implementing a 4 month wage freeze while prices continue to rise dramatically - last year inflation in France was 13.5%. In Vierzon metal workers came out against a proposed wage-freeze at the beginning of July for a few days (in contrast to the union which proposed a 1-hour token strike), but were isolated and returned to work. Unemployment, now at 2½ million, continues to rise, and in response to EEC measures to cut jobs, steel workers in the Chiers valley rose up and set fire to their bosses country house. The government is also planning to cut unemployment and sickness benefits, and to wage a campaign against 'abuse' of these benefits. Meanwhile it is striking terror into the hearts of the bourgeoisie..... by threatening to open private beaches to the proletariat. Austerity with a sun-tanned face!

Although there is disillusion after one year of the left in power, action by the working class still remains fragmentary and isolated. Many hard struggles will be fought before the lesson is learned that the left in power is just another form of capitalist rule, and the need for the revolutionary alternative is grasped. In the meantime Mitterand shows that at certain stages of the crisis a left government is the best method of imposing austerity on the working class. To austerity the answer must be - resolute class struggle.

It is now 15 months since the Socialist (SP) and Communist (CP) Alliance came to power in France, noisily claiming their willingness and capacity to fight the crisis and its evils: inflation, unemployment, cuts in social services, etc. In a previous issue of Workers Voice (WV5) we analysed the so-called 'cures' of the new government for the capitalist crisis and showed that nationalisations wouldn't solve it, but were only attempts at rationalising key sectors of the economy in the face of 'foreign' competitors. Neither would these benefit the working class. Recent strikes in the nationalised industries (mainly at the Renault car plants around Paris) and also among postal workers (PTT) confirm that a state boss is no better than a private boss.

Last autumn, strikes erupted at the Renault car factories when the government tried to go back on its promised policy of reducing the working week to 35 hours - a promise made in the election campaign. Instead they implemented a one-hour reduction. As strike movements emerged in other sections of the working class (the Citroen carplants in Northern France, PTT, railways) the government received valuable help from the trade unions who had been claiming their 'independence' from the new government. The unions involved, the CGT and CFDT, were quick to appear with their familiar sounding language of restraint, saying that any militant action might be a threat to the 'socialist' experiment in France. Finally they did their best to keep these strikes isolated and called for a return to work after negotiating (in other words, selling out the strikers) with the bosses.

In Lille, the PTT unions were forced to call a strike under pressure from the workers after having used all the means they could to cool discontent. They even organised a secret ballot to decide on a strike hoping that enough workers would listen to their calls for moderation. This was a last attempt to prevent strike action when in mass assemblies they were openly criticised for their role as 'social firemen'. The unions saw from the result of the ballot that they could no longer avoid a strike so they then called for a 24 hour 'protest'. This, they claimed, would pressurise the government into granting a significant reduction in the

working week for the postmen.

As the strike began at the sorting office near Lille, workers decided to go out and meet other postmen occupying the regional management offices but who were content to leave the struggle in the hands of the unions. A CWO member involved in the strike spoke against the union tactics, denouncing the uselessness and sterility of peaceful occupations, saying that it is no use to sleep on the management's carpet while union stewards are negotiating a sell-out. The prospect of extending the strike was then discussed and the idea of sending delegations to other workplaces was raised as well as the need to form picket lines in order to prevent mail from being transported to other places to be sorted.

Realising the danger of losing control of the strike the union stewards immediately obtained a meeting with the management and within a few minutes came back claiming that enough concessions had been made in favour of the sorting office workers to justify an end to their action. This policy of divide and rule by negotiating workplace by workplace had a disastrous effect - not only did the unions portray a sell out as a victory (many workers said they saw no real difference between a 40 hour week and a 39 hour one, when in order to have one more free Saturday they would have to work longer during the two remaining ones) but they also succeeded in splitting up the workers: the postmen felt that their strike had been used by the workers in the sorting office to win something on their backs.

Despite attempts to fight this dirty deal worked out by the bosses and their union accomplices, despite calls for solidarity with all workers, the unions took advantage of the lack of experience of the postmen in waging a strike by themselves and called for a return to work.

Even if this strike ended in defeat it proved once again that workers can only rely on their own forces and consciousness, which can develop out of such struggles, if revolutionaries intervene and propose real practical alternatives to the tactics adopted by the unions, which are only a recipe for defeat and demoralisation. This is what the Renault workers near Paris are experiencing once again. After