

WORKERS VOICE

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Inside:
Iran-Iraq
Israel

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BRITAIN

BOSSES' ATTACK CONTINUES

In our last issue (Workers Voice 8) we noted with satisfaction that the response of the working class in Britain to the post-Falklands situation was to tread the path to struggle once again. At that time transport and health workers were engaged in bitter battles with the government, battles which shared positive features (solidarity actions for example). Since then the wave of militancy has crashed on the rocks of union sabotage and fear caused by the deepening crisis. The hospital workers have been manoeuvred by the bosses and unions into a futile merry-go-round of token actions which inevitably led to their defeat. And the strikes on the railways and public transport had already been defeated when WV8 went to press.

Since then the retreat has continued. In October BL workers voted to accept a pay deal of less than 5% for the next two years, and in November the miners voted against strike action to achieve a 10% wage deal and against redundancies. Since then the Coal Board has produced a hit-list of 100 pits that may be closed. Plans for further redundancies in the steel industry were announced in October. The ISTC has managed to channel opposition into a campaign to blockade steel imports and get "community support" for steelmen. In Scotland the ISTC organised a meeting addressed by clergymen and Tory MPs against the cuts: meanwhile 2 500 jobs have vanished in the Scottish division of BSC in the last month without a fight. Vauxhall workers have been persuaded by their union to accept a 5% deal, and shop stewards at Ellesmere Port are now flexing their muscles - to campaign against imported GM cars from Spain. After Thatcher's Falklands comes the economic chauvinism of the trades unions.

It is true that not all is negative. At the time of writing it looks as if water workers may take action over

their claim, and Fords workers have rejected the company's 'first round' offer of 8%. But the general picture is that the revival of class struggle in the summer and autumn has petered out, and the bosses' offensive of wage cutting, productivity increases and large scale unemployment is proceeding with marked success.

For those who believe that the experience of the immediate struggles of the working class will lead it towards a revolutionary understanding of its general needs and tasks, the present situation must be depressing indeed. The "experience" of the failure of militancy to produce the goods has not led to an awareness of the need to destroy capitalism. The "experience" of union sabotage has not led to "autonomous" proletarian organisation. BOTH have led to pessimism and passivity. The majority of workers still believe that the crisis will go away in five or maybe ten years, and till then they will just sit it out. The minority who feel this is not the case see the alternative of capitalist war, and feel helpless to halt it.

We repeat again. The awareness of its historic tasks comes to the working class through the raw material of its global and historical (not immediate) experience, re-fashioned and restored to it by the communist party. The strengthening of the ability of the party to carry out its tasks, is the

real contribution to be made in turning the working class from passivity to passion. The workers will need to go through a veritable purgatory before they are able to assimilate the perspectives of the communists, who must be present in every fight against the crisis, on the economic and political fronts. Defeats, massive defeats like that experienced in Poland may be necessary in order to grind all the illusions out of the proletariat. But such defeats (like 1905 in Russia) are not final. Neither will war erase the working class from the historical field. It did not do so in the Falklands, and has not done so with the Iran Iraq war where the working class on both sides are carrying on a magnificent fight against the war. The outbreak of more generalised wars, or even a full-scale imperialist confrontation, will not signal that all is lost. Wars have been the springboard of revolutions in the past and to exclude this possibility today is simply pacifism.

In the present, difficult period communists must rise to their tasks, and make preparations for the confrontations which lie ahead. The leaflet reproduced on pg 2 which was distributed in October/November, is printed as an example of the contribution we are making to try and ensure that from its defeats the working class will learn the lessons necessary for its emancipation.

BRIXTON THE FIGHT GOES ON

The uprisings in Britain's cities in the summer of 1981 terrified the British bourgeoisie into introducing a whole new series of measures to control the unemployed, e.g. youth "training" initiatives etc. They also terrified them into savage repression. Recent figures, cited in the Guardian showed that over 700 are still in jail in Britain after the savage court

sentences - far more than in martial law Poland! The government report cited in the Guardian also exposed many of the media lies about the riots. True the vast majority (78%) of those jailed were over 21, but less than 50% were black, and about half were actually in jobs. Far from being simply black jobless,

Cont. on p2

BRIXTON: The Struggle Goes On

those involved in the riots came from a much wider stratum of the young proletariat. Shortly after the publication of these figures, the ghettos were again in the news.

Although police repression has managed to prevent riots this year reaching the levels of last year, the violent struggles of the unemployed and underemployed have continued. There is no doubt that the media have been covering up these struggles. There was a serious disturbance in Tottenham at the same time as the Brixton riot on the first of November - the police station was attacked by unemployed youth. This riot was given one mention by LBC radio news, then suppressed. Another example is Liverpool, where there have been many riots since last year.

Riots in Brixton (which is only two and a half miles from Whitehall) have only been contained by the development of a massive special police force armed with CS gas, water cannon and lethal plastic bullets which have killed dozens in Northern Ireland. In fact the Special Patrol Group has been strengthened since last year by the new Metropolitan Police Chief Newman who was brought in specially from running the Royal Ulster Constabulary for the task.

Nevertheless, the pressure of the decay of London caused the long-awaited and inevitable riot on November 1st. The Front Line area of Brixton is a typical inner-city slum of old terraces surrounded by newer housing estates. The worst of these terraces are inhabited by squatters, both black and white.

The solution of the local establishment, Labour, Tory and SDP, is to send in the bulldozers. The demolition of the Front Line area is part of the council's futile plan to turn Brixton into a more commercially-viable area, by building supermarkets and wider roads, reducing the already inadequate housing supply.

The inhabitants organise spontaneously and learn political lessons, albeit negative ones, about the Labour Party and their other enemies.

The *Financial Times* (10th Nov) commented that the first response of the Front Line squatters to the threat of demolition was to march on the Town Hall and present their demands peacefully.

"Only after these actions had produced no softening of the authorities position - the squatters maintain that they had been promised there would be no demolition before alternative premises were found - did the first petrol bomb fly".

Unemployed youth are learning. Those who believed that Labour was somehow 'not as bad as' the Tories have been rapidly disillusioned. Last year, the rioters were prepared to talk to Ted Knight and not the police. Now, they're beginning to realise he's one of them. As he openly admitted in the *News Line* which supports him (2nd Nov), he cooperated fully with the Tories and the police to attack the unemployed squatters.

"We had agreed with the police that there would be a token presence while the evictions took place". (*News Line* 2nd Nov).

The Workers Revolutionary Party, who produce *News Line*, support Ted Knight, and thus clearly show that they are enemies of the working class. Similarly, the rest of the Labour Left who call for more police 'accountability' are simply preparing for more cooperation with the police along the lines of Lambeth's police-community liaison committee, which the police have simply used to find out the information they need, and to put out propaganda with the blessing of leftist councillors. All of this is part of the softening-up process which a sophisticated police force needs as an essential part of its preparations for more repression.



The Revolutionary Communist Party and its front group Workers Against Racism rigorously oppose this, but instead fall into the trap of reinforcing the Tory media's attempt to divide unemployed workers by portraying their struggles as racial struggles. Just as the racist press always try to portray riots as being caused by blacks, WAR and the RCP talk about the riots as 'black people' and 'the black community' defending themselves against police repression, which according to the RCP's emphasis, is only aimed at them. But the mythical 'black community' is simply an ideology which unites black workers and unemployed with black members of the exploiting classes. A press release by WAR 3rd November typically fails to mention workers or the unemployed at all, but instead states "...we wholeheartedly support the right of black people people to fight back against the police".

Against this populist rubbish, we say that black workers need to unite with white workers, and that trying to organise struggles on the basis of racial oppression DIVIDES the working class and UNITES black workers with black shopkeepers, capitalists, etc. There are black bourgeois in Brixton just as there are white bourgeois, and the role of communists is to divide society along CLASS not race lines. In a recent meeting organised by black bourgeois 'community leaders', WAR's leaders were subjected to racist abuse by these people, but have failed to denounce this, and this is the inevitable result of the populist, frontist politics which WAR and the RCP support.

In spite of all the bourgeois and populist propaganda to which the proletariat of this area is subjected, there is an opportunity for communists to take advantage of the total disillusionment with the attempts of the major bourgeois parties to run Lambeth. We say Brixton needs political groups, not front groups based on anti-racism or similar reformist ideologies. There is an opportunity for communists to organise and propagandise in the inner cities of Britain, and to prepare politically for the social explosions which clearly lie ahead.

STEELWORKERS LEAFLET

As the capitalist crisis continues to batter the world's steelmakers, BSC have announced another series of closures and rationalisations. The workforce is to be cut from 94 000 to 69 000. The following leaflet was given out at the Scottish & Northern English factories.

No to BSC redundancy plans! Give the bosses cold steel!

Once again the British Steel Corporation is planning massive redundancies in the steel industry - probably as many as 25000. Once again the unions, like the ISTC are waging a phoney opposition to these plans. The unions did nothing while Cambuslang and Corby were turned into ghost towns. And they will do nothing as the same fate threatens Motherwell and Rotherham. A one day strike, (at the weekend to minimise disruption to the bosses) and lobbies to parliament will do no good, and are designed to let off steam.

Workers beware!

Workers, remember the role of the unions in the 1980 steel strike, when they divided private steel workers against state steelworkers, and wasted workers energy in a useless picketting campaign. The only way to have won then was to have spread the strike to the working class as a whole, especially transport workers. When this began to happen - when the Liverpool dockers took supporting action - the ISTC called off the strike and settled for a deal that opened the way to the slaughter of thousands of jobs; 50 000 have been made redundant since then. The unions also spread the illusion that

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it's the Tories who are causing job losses, forgetting the fact that from 1974 - 79 under Labour 30 000 steelworkers went 'down the road'. The unions have also boasted that the reduction in manpower in the industry since 1945 (from 250 000 to 100 000) has been achieved 'without conflict'. Labour and the Unions serve the bosses interests, and can not save steelworkers jobs.

The way ahead:

International working class unity

There is only one way for steelworkers to win their fight, and that is to spread the struggle. This means linking up with other workers who are fighting against the capitalist crisis - e.g. the hospital workers. The only way an all-out steel strike can win is if it spreads to other sectors of the working class. It also means linking up with steelworkers in the EEC and internationally. It means learning from the Belgian steel workers who last year got redundancies postponed after demonstrations in Brussels which turned the city into a battlefield, or the French steelworkers who derailed trains and burned down their bosses headquarters.

Steelworkers have to fight or die, there is no scope for retreat. Workers at Singers and Talbot found that piecemeal acceptance of the bosses and unions' 'survival' plans didn't keep their plants open. Neither will any compromise with MacGregor & the BSC that the ISTC dream up.

The fight against the capitalist crisis must become a fight against capitalism! As the crisis gets worse it is clear that the only prospect is another world war. Workers who see this must organise into factory groups in order to fight and convince their workmates that communism is the only solution to the capitalist crisis.

RUSSIA

AFTER BREZHNEV; THE EASTERN BLOC RE-ORIENTS

Nationalist rejoicing in Gdansk, nationalist mourning in Moscow. The release of Walesa in Poland, and the death of Brezhnev in the USSR in the space of a couple of days in mid-November, gives us reference points round which to organise a survey of the current problems and strategy of the Russian ruling class.

Russia's development as the main global rival to US imperialism came as a result of the forced capitalist industrialisation pursued by Stalin in the 1930s, and the subsequent expansion of Russia's sphere of influence via the crushing of the rival German imperialism in Eastern Europe 1941-45. In the decades following, Russian power and influence grew. Economic development, admittedly from a lower base, was faster than the USA's in the 50s and 60s. With enforced lower living standards this enabled the development of a military potential which roughly equals that of the USA (compare the puny Soviet navy in 1962 at the time of the Cuban crisis with its global presence today). Soviet influence also proliferated in these years, reaching its height in the late 60s and early 70s with successes in Chile, Vietnam and Angola etc.

But the onset of the world economic crisis, which has not spared the state capitalist bloc, has severely weakened the position of Soviet imperialism. Though militarily the equal of the US, the Russian economy is only 60% of the magnitude of its rival. Thus, it has less to fall back on, and additionally its global sphere of influence from which to draw compensatory profits is less. A weaker imperialism, it has seen its influence shrink as crisis-ridden client states switched to the economically more powerful USA - the supreme example of this is Egypt after 1973. Even in its own 'buffer zone' in Eastern Europe, signs of restiveness have emerged amongst elements of the local ruling class and social disorder involving the working class (e.g. in Rumania and Poland). Elements in both countries have sought a more pro-western orientation. To all this was added the decided shift of China from a neutralist to a pro-US position after the end of the Vietnam war. Unable to provide the economic largesse to paper the cracks, the USSR saw its diplomatic position steadily worsen in the last decade. In addition the Soviet economy was moving into deeper crisis: growth rates of only 1 - 2% and four bad harvests put pressure on living standards and on funds for arms expenditure. The Kremlin therefore viewed with dismay the apparent inevitability of another round of re-armament given the re-orientation of US imperialism under Reagan towards a collision course with the USSR: a collision the US leaders feel confident they can survive.

This explains why Russian policy toward Europe became so solicitous in the last few years: Russia dreams of breaking the unity of the US bloc by a 'Finlandisation' (neutrality) of Europe. On the one hand they try to tie the western European countries to the USSR via economic incentives (e.g. participation in the construction and fruits of the Siberian gas pipeline). On the other hand they are waging a campaign against the acceptance of Cruise and Pershing missiles on the part of the various European NATO countries. It was these desires above all that restrained the Russian's hand in Poland and prevented a situation like Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, which would have made the Europeans accept any US political-economic diktat.

And to a certain extent Russia has scored a limited victory over the USA in relation to Poland, symbolised by the release of Walesa. It is not only that Jaruzelski has restored capitalist order in Poland, and dealt a crushing blow to Solidarity - witness the total failure of the strike in October on the 2nd anniversary of the Gdansk agreements. Discontent in Poland has become marginalised and privatised, and the release of Walesa posed no threats. The release of Walesa also symbolised the failure of Reagan's sanctions campaign against Russia, which was observed little, if at all, by the EEC countries. In relation to the boycott of the Siberian pipeline, the USA has had to make a humiliating climb-down and virtually end sanctions. This does NOT mean that the EEC countries are breaking away from US domination. They have used the limited room to manoeuvre which their position in the blocs allows them, in order to advance their own specific economic interests. The US has been forced to give in to these to preserve bloc

hegemony and especially to ensure the acceptance of its military plans. The Russian dream of 'Finlandisation' will evaporate as the new US missiles arrive in 1983.

The relative success of Russian policy in Poland, and receding threat of intervention has given the Kremlin a welcome 'free hand' elsewhere. Shortly before his death Brezhnev made a speech admitting the failure of détente and hinting at new anti-US military and diplomatic moves. Pressure from hard-liners in the Party and Army has led to the accession of ex-KGB man Andropov to head the Russian state, and his early utterances have indicated a continued switch away from attempts to do deals with the 'imperialists' (i.e. the USA). Even under Brezhnev renewed contacts with the post-Mao regime in China had taken place in an effort to 'normalise' relationships, and it looks as if Andropov will make this his first priority. Chinese disillusion with the US has grown. Failure of the 'open door' to US economic influence to produce any miracles in the stagnant Chinese economy, as well as renewed arms sales to Taiwan, and encouragement of Japanese re-armament has alarmed Peking. The pro-US decade of Chinese policy appears to be ending, with efforts to pursue a more 'neutral' course, involving a partial reconciliation with Moscow.

The warm reception given to the Chinese delegation at Brezhnev's funeral shows that the USSR will not hesitate to seize the chance to wear China away from the USA. The advantages would be enormous: an end to the threat of 'encirclement' and re-deployment of 1,000,000 troops where they are more needed. But apart from the 3,000 sq. miles of Asia in dispute, Russia's pacification of Afghanistan and support for the Kampuchean regime stand in the way of a reconciliation. Karmal and Samrin would have to be thrown to the wolves to achieve a reconciliation with Peking. As the weaker imperialism, Russia would prefer to advance its aims piecemeal, since it fears the costs of a global confrontation. But as its options narrow, it will strive to secure the most favourable diplomatic and military situation for a confrontation which is capitalism's only answer to its crisis. But though it may pass through defeats in struggle and even limited wars, the working class still has the potential to assert its revolutionary potential. In this sense, though defeated and mislead, the magnificent struggles of the Polish working class are a beacon to the world proletariat.

For a complete explanation of the development of state capitalism in Russia read:-

REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES No19
"Theories of state capitalism"

Available from the group address 75p p&p



C.W.O. PUBLIC MEETING

THE FIGHT AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

7.30 p.m.

Tues 14th December

Room 31 Lambeth Town Hall Brixton.

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Battaglia Comunista

3

THE CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONALIST
COMMUNIST PARTY (BATTAGLIA COMUNISTA)

The Congress was held in Milan at the end of October and was attended by delegations of the PCInt. from many Italian cities, as well as by a delegation from the CWO.

The Congress was the first to be held since the 4th Congress in 1970 and its chief function was to debate changes to the 1952 Platform of the PCInt as well as to adopt theses on the period of transition between capitalism and communism, imperialism, the tasks of communists today, and to approve a new international initiative by the PCInt.

The Congress began with a commemoration of Onorato Damen who had died three years previously. He, though still in prison in 1942 had been the principle force behind the foundation of the Party and he had held the Party firmly on revolutionary principles (eg. on Russia, the unions and the national question) at the time when Bordighism threatened to introduce a new opportunist strain into it in the 1948-52 period. (See RP16 for an appreciation of Damen's contribution).

The party had been founded at the height of the Second Imperialist World War and was the only organisation to emerge in that conflict which echoed Lenin's revolutionary defeatism of World War I. It is a further testimony to the clarity of the PCInt. that its Platform of 1952 had remained largely valid despite thirty turbulent years in the life of Imperialism. The changes which were introduced at the Congress were of a tactical nature (on the possibility of "revolutionary parliamentarism"). A new version of the Platform will appear shortly in Italian, French and English.

As part of the process of regroupment the CWO was invited to make contributions on every aspect discussed by the Congress. We approved the perspective of the PCInt for international work which saw the 4th International Conference as a new departure from the previous three. Discussion had tended to focus on whether there was a leading role for the party, but the latest conference began to tackle seriously the tasks of revolutionaries today. Within this framework was approved the powers given to the PCInt EC to develop their 1977 initiative and prepare to start an international bureau to coordinate the work of communists who support the international conferences.

Similarly a great deal of agreement was expressed on the passivity of the European class struggle at the present time (one FIAT worker told the Congress that participation in strikes in FIAT was down to 10-15% which was the lowest in memory). Delegates also expressed agreement with the CWO on the need to work within the unemployed and to link their struggles with those in the factories.

There was a lively exchange on the Period of Transition where the idea that the party should go into opposition in the event of counter-revolution was discussed. The CWO expressed the view that we could not see how this was possible except via the massacre of the most class conscious proletarians and it was not a matter which history was likely to leave us a choice about.

Delegates returned to their sections with the perspective that we must prepare for the deeper class conflicts which lie ahead once the present lull in the class struggle ends.



For over two years the armies of Iran and Iraq have been locked in combat in the Persian Gulf area. Both states claim to be "anti-imperialist" and both are using this slogan to justify the most ferocious oppression of their own wretched proletariat, to tie them to their war chariots. Millions of workers and semi-proletarians are being murdered, maimed and starved for the greater glory of the butchers of Baghdad and the torturers of Tehran. Against all the lies, deceptions and prevarications the following article supplies a coherent analysis of the conflict and outlines the position of the proletariat - international class solidarity.

In the Gulf - a Jihad for Capitalism

In Sept. 1980 after a series of border skirmishes, full-scale war broke out between Iran and Iraq. President Saddam Hussein claimed full Iraqi control of the Shatt-al-arab waterway at the head of the Persian Gulf and demanded Iranian evacuation of strategic islands in the Straits of Hormuz at the Gulf's mouth. In other words he wanted control over the most important oil route in the Middle East. Taking advantage of the internal upheaval in Iran and its isolation from both imperialisms, Iraq demanded autonomy for the Kurds, Baluchis and Arabs inside Iran. On the other side Khomeini called for the overthrow of Hussein as "an enemy of Islam" urging Iraqi soldiers to desert the "imposed, inhuman and illegal regime of Baath". Both sides accused the other of being the agent of imperialism. As the war has gone on, Iran has represented itself as defending the "Islamic Revolution" against attack from outside imperialist aggressors, whilst Iraq has presented itself the "Arab nation's front-line state". But just as in the Falklands war, we have to go beyond the propaganda of each regime in order to find the real reason for the war between Iran and Iraq. A materialist analysis of the situation inside the two states reveals the real cause of the war.

Economic Crisis and Destabilisation

Capitalism's world economic crisis is having the same effect on jobs and living standards in countries like Iran and Iraq as it is in the rest of the world. By 1980 both countries had experienced massive and sudden drops in oil revenues (since the 1973 oil crisis) unemployment had begun to take on huge proportions and workers' already low living standards were cut drastically. In Iran initial measures by the Islamic Republic to win the impoverished masses over (increases in the lowest wages; rent reductions, cheaper electricity, etc.) have either remained paper decrees or were almost immediately swept away by rampant inflation and unemployment (officially 25%). When the war broke out the governments in both countries were using every means to stop strikes but still faced the threat of growing popular unrest. In Iran the Shah's secret police SAVAK was reformed as SAVAMA at the end of 1979. It has been used with the army against autonomist movements (especially the Kurds). In Iraq, where the majority are Shia Muslim but the government party is of the Sunni sect the regime immediately saw the Shia Islamic Revolution as a threat to itself. The fear of the spread of the 'Islamic Revolution' in the Arab states has led Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states to provide Iraq with £4000 millions every 6 months, and both Jordan and Sudan have sent troops. In Iraq itself the leader of the Shia party was hanged in April 1980 and 15,000 Shias were expelled to Iran.

But neither regime can provide an answer to the real cause of the mass discontent - the capitalist crisis. Like the Argentinian junta and the British government, the Iraqi and Iranian regimes sought to divert mass inter-

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

nal discontent onto an external enemy. Nationalism, Islam and "the struggle against imperialism" are the propaganda props in a war which has cost thousands of lives, widespread destruction and the creation of millions of refugees. On top of this there has been vast destruction of machinery and plant (especially oil installations in Iran) while both sides have increased conscription of workers for the battlefronts to fight each other in a war which is not of their making and in which there is nothing for them to defend. For workers in both countries away from the front the war has meant only ever-more vicious exploitation. In Iraq official inflation is 20-45% and workers had a 20% wage cut earlier this year. The response to this blatant attack was widespread strikes, notably in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul and Sulaymaniyah which the government bloodily crushed with the army and airforce killing many workers (see Teaflet). In just one year alone 3000 workers have been executed inside Iraq - not counting those killed at the front. But militarisation of the proletariat has not gone unopposed. Up to 60,000 unemployed have been deported to Iran for refusing to "fight for their country against Khomeini's terrorists".

Inside Iran the situation is no more stable. The cost of the war has led to even more privation for the workers. Last year, then-President Bani-Sadr announced that inflation was 27% but admitted that for the "poor" the rate was even higher. Bani-Sadr himself warned that "unemployment, political instability and lack of law and order" could lead to "widespread social and political tensions" in the country.

This war which has dragged on for over 2 years and which is on a much larger scale than the Falklands skirmish reveals the basic material function of war for imperialism. War is not just a useful diversion policy for governments faced with the intractability of the economic crisis, it is ultimately the only way capitalism has of "solving" this crisis. By destroying living labour power (that is, by enlisting workers into huge armies to kill each other) and the 'dead labour' of all those workers whose labour power is encapsulated into the machinery and plant which become the target for destruction during capitalist wars, capital is devalued. When the devaluation of capital has gone far enough, capital can once more be invested profitably and a further cycle of accumulation can begin on the basis of ruined factories and cities and a weakened and depleted workforce. The war between Iran and Iraq shows on a small scale what world capitalism's solution is to the present crisis. As the governor of Abadan said on May 14th, 1981, after the destruction of the biggest oil refinery in the world, the old refinery had been "old and worn out" and its destruction might be a "good thing" since now a new one could be built elsewhere in Iran.

The Imperialist Context of the War

Neither Iran nor Iraq exist in a vacuum from the rest of the world economy. Their fate is tied to the fate of the world economy and to the machinations of world imperialism. The fact that the heads of both imperialist blocs (US and Russia) have been prepared to maintain a neutral stance does NOT signify either Iran or Iraq's independence from the imperialist framework. All it shows is that neither Russia nor America wants to escalate the war, since, at present, this would not suit their imperialist interests. Both hope to consolidate their position in Iran and Iraq after the war; hence the

"neutral" stance. At the same time, without the open backing by Russia or America neither side has been prepared to use the full extent of its weaponry. As the war drags on, however, the more both sides (with or without their present rulers) will be forced by economic weakness and/or the need to replenish their arms supplies to return to the fold of one imperialist bloc or the other.

The reduced demand for oil as a result of the crisis has meant that the reduction in supplies from Iran and Iraq as a result of the war has hardly been felt in the western heartlands of capitalism, where oil stocks were at record levels at the onset of the war. The imperialist powers have settled down to enjoy the profits from arms sales that such a war brings. Now, both Iran and Iraq are reduced to exchanging their oil for arms or food. (Iraq has signed a deal with Brazil and France where it exchanges oil for weapons while Iran has agreed to exchange oil for meat from Uruguay.) Until recently both America and Russia have kept a low profile as far as arms supplies are concerned. Both sides have relied on other sources (e.g. France is Iraq's biggest source while it has also received Russian arms through East European routes. Iran has received Russian arms through Libya and US arms via Israel, while North Korea has acted as Iran's chief arms procurer.) Only recently, when Iran seems to be gaining the upper hand in the war (with the occupation of Iraq for the first time) has Russia been prepared to supply arms directly to Iraq in return for the release of about 200 Iraqi Communist Party members.

The Iraqi Communist Party is opposed to the war against Iran because it defends the latter as an "anti-imperialist republic". It is therefore being suppressed by the Iraqi government for calling for the Iraqi people to rise up against the Baathist regime and restore "democracy". Inside Iran the so-called 'Marxist' Fedayeen el Khalq (majority) had no hesitation about supporting Khomeini's regime "to defend the revolution and independence of the country in the face of attacks from the Iraqi fascist regime". This was the position which most British leftist groups took up at the beginning of the war. Now that the Khomeini regime's brutality has given rise to a more 'liberal' opposition within the Iranian ruling class the majority of these same leftists support this rather than "Khomeini's killings". (Bani-Sadr's "National Council of Resistance, formed with sections of the Mojahadeen (Islamic leftists) and the Kurdish Democratic Party is in exile, waiting in the wings to serve capitalism



MASS HANGINGS IN IRAN

A JIHAD FOR CAPITALISM

as an "alternative to Khomeini".) Meanwhile, the leftists continue to support Iran against Iraq.

The Communist Position: Neither Baghdad nor Tehran

But is it true that, from the point of view of the interests of the working class, Iranian capitalism is more progressive than that of Iraq and therefore demands the support of revolutionaries? To answer this question we must be clear about the nature of the present regime in Iran and the epoch in which we are living. Khomeini came to power after massive popular unrest against the Shah. This discontent had its material basis, not in religious disgust with signs of Western 'decadence', but in the declining living standards of the mass of the population as a result of the effects of the world capitalist crisis in Iran. Despite his rantings against (Western) imperialism, Khomeini's rise to power and the declaration of the Islamic Republic are not signs of a step towards the proletarian revolution. On the contrary, the Islamic Republic, from the outset, was a most dangerous and barbaric expression of the capitalist counter-revolution. As we explained at the time, despite the militancy of the Iranian working class and its crucial role in the downfall of the Shah, the low level of political consciousness and therefore the absence of a revolutionary party in Iran, meant that the workers' incipient opposition to capitalism in general remained confined to opposition to the existing government. Without a clear idea of the way forward the class struggle quickly became diverted onto nationalist and religious grounds. The workers' strike committees and factory councils were either organised by leftists (Mujahadeen, Fedayeen) or quickly came under their control. To one degree or another, all of these supported the religious fundamentalism of Khomeini and helped to promote and reinforce the myth that Islam is a revolutionary force. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Although Iran has temporarily shaken loose from the direct control of imperialism, the present regime (as well as the 'liberal' opposition of Bani-Sadr) has never had anything faintly resembling an anti-capitalist programme. Instead of western finance capital and multinational companies, Khomeini favours the local entrepreneurs and traditional money lenders of the bazaar. He is not opposed to the exploitation of the wage labour system and production for profit instead of directly to meet social needs. In no sense can the reactionary clerical regime as has existed in Iran since 1979 be called progressive.

In fact, in the present epoch of imperialism and capitalism's decline the only progressive revolution is the proletarian revolution to overthrow capitalism. "anti-imperialism" means nothing if it is not part of a clear working class revolutionary programme which recognises that the imperialist yoke can only be finally broken when capitalism itself is overthrown. This fight begins with the daily struggle of the working class against their bosses - whether local or otherwise. It is no gain for the Iranian working class that factories which once had Western managers now have Iranian bosses. For Iranian workers their plight is still the same: exploitation continues and, since Iranian capitalism is even weaker now than in 1979, this exploitation is even more harsh today.

The "anti-imperialism" of Iran's backward clerical regime is no reason for communists to suppose that Iranian capitalism is any more worth defending than Iraqi capitalism, and neither is the argument that Iran has "shaken loose" from imperialism due to its instability. Such a view can only lead in one direction, support for Khomeini, however, "critical". Those who

claim that Iranian workers, dragooned into fighting in the war against Iraq, are somehow defending the "gains of the revolution" should ask themselves "What gains?" and "Which revolution?" Anti-imperialism outside of a policy of anti-capitalism is merely nationalism and a basic principle for Marxists is that workers have no country to defend. The only gains from the February uprising Iranian workers can have to defend is their experience of organising to protect their own interests against capitalism in general, including the Islamic Republic. The only way such a gain can be defended is by the most conscious workers organising on a revolutionary internationalist platform to continue the class struggle against all brands of capitalism. In Iran, just as in Iraq today this must involve not only calling on workers to defend their living standards and working conditions, but also agitating as far as is possible amongst the rank and file workers conscripted into the capitalist armies to turn their guns against their officers, to fraternise with their Iraqi or Iranian brothers and to turn this capitalist war into a revolutionary civil war. In other words, the only perspective for communists in the Iran/Iraq war is revolutionary defeatism.

Any prevarication on this issue is dangerous. There is no third road, no possibility of trying to maintain a "neither support nor opposition", i.e. a centrist position, on the war. Lenin denounced those who took such a position, in reaction to Kerensky's offensives in 1917, on the grounds that the proletariat had to defend the "gains" of February, and showed that "defencist" illusions serve the bourgeoisie. In previous issues of Workers Voice we have published material by Iranian communists in exile, the SUCM (see WV6 "Unemployed Workers Massacred in Kurdistan" and WV7 "Iran: Communists Fight Back"). In these texts we welcomed unreservedly the appearance of a clearly communist group and solidified with their struggle in Iran. However, we have always stated our disagreements, e.g. we said of the SUCM leaflet in WV6 "there is some ambiguity on the cause of the Kurdish nationalists". In WV7 we quoted approvingly a statement of the SUCM "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."

However, it seems that the positions of the SUCM on the Iran/Iraq war, without ever implying support for the Islamic Republic, do side-step the issue of revolutionary defeatism. In a polemic on the war they say,

"Communists in Iran must struggle against tendencies which ... propagandise exclusively for a war against the present regime, and ignore Iraq's war and the politics served by it." (The Iran/Iraq War)

What else is this but a centrist position which could, under pressure, slide into a "defencist" one? To concentrate on Iraq's role in the war is one-sided and portrays it as the "greater evil". And although it may be correct to say that an insurrection is not yet on the agenda in Iran, this does not mean we don't agitate on a revolutionary defeatist basis now. Lenin didn't wait until 1917 to say "turn your guns on your officers" - he made this demand in 1914, not as an immediate demand, but one of orientation.

The SUCM needs to clarify its position on the war swiftly and to show that we are not academic purists indulging in the luxury of revolutionary defeatism, we are pleased to publish the following leaflet, written by Iraqi communists active in Britain, France and Germany, which puts forward a clear revolutionary defeatist position. The writers clearly understand that the Iran-Iraq war is a

war between two capitalist countries and that the reason for it lies in the capitalist crisis. Especially heartening for revolutionaries here in Europe is the evidence of revolutionaries intervening within the Iraqi working class to condemn both sides in the war from a proletarian standpoint. The evidence of growing working class opposition to both regimes under the impetus of ever-increasing austerity inside each country is welcome news for the prospect of the class struggle in the region. The standpoint of the cigarette workers in Sulaymaniyah - "Neither Saddam, nor Khomeini" - shows more class consciousness than that of all the pro-Iranian "anti-imperialists" put together.

Footnote.

- (1) See *Revolutionary Perspectives* No.12 'Death to the Shah or death to Capitalism' & RP No.13 "Iran - the crisis goes on"

LEAFLET

The following leaflet was written by Iraqi communists active in Britain France and Germany. It was translated from French and the translation has been checked against the original arabic. For reasons of space it has been shortened.

WAR AND PEACE AGAINST THE PROLETARIAT

War is a historical product of all class societies which have exploitation as their common basis. Capitalist war is due historically to the existence of crises which are linked to the conflict between the social character of production and the private character of appropriation. The only way to put these crises behind us is to abolish these contradictions. In war, capitalism's 'solution' to crisis capital's war against human labour - capitalism on a world scale attacks and destroys social labour - both dead and living labour - as well as the communist movement.

Consequently, in opposition to all the capitalist parties (including the "marxist-leninists"), we declare that war, wherever it occurs, is a war waged by world capital against the proletariat (c.f. the wars in the Middle East between Israel and the PLO, and in the Lebanon the Falklands war, and the wars in Vietnam, Chad and Somalia).

The Iran/Iraq war cannot free itself from the capitalist system's world domination, and like all past and present wars, it is a war by capital to try and resolve its crisis and its chronic anarchy; that is to say to maintain its system of wage slavery.

During the 22 months of the war, hundreds of factories have been destroyed, thousands of workers have been massacred and executed. There have been price rises, tax rises, increases in overtime and cuts in purchasing power. These have been carried out in the name of the fatherland, in the name of the Arab nation, in the name of Islam and imperialist aggression. All the imperialist political parties and tendencies, including the "Marxist-Leninists" have managed to camouflage the true nature of the war. For the Marxist-Leninists, the cause of the war is the "lack of democracy" the lack of "political liberty", of "popular power" or

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Dialogue with our readers

Over the years the CWO has received comments on our published views from readers and sympathisers. Some of these we have printed, and all serious ones we have replied to. The last few months have seen a marked increase in such comments and criticisms, and in this issue of WV we are publishing some of the more recent correspondence we have received. In this way we hope to make available to our wider readership some of the dialogue we are holding, and also to encourage those readers themselves to write to us. Hopefully a dialogue with our readers will become a regular feature in WV, and will show that while we are prepared to defend our positions, we are also prepared to take criticism and accept it when it is valid.

Falklands

Dear CWO,

I would like to take issue with your attitude, as expressed in WV 8, that the Falklands war was a 'major military and propaganda victory for the British ruling class' and a defeat for the working class. It seems to me that the fact that the war was fought at all is an indication of the latent strengths of the working class in Britain and in Argentina. You say that the war did not damage the interests of 'US imperialism' on the basis that the defeat of Argentina did not drive the Argentine ruling class into the arms of Russia.... Your abstract notion of 'capitalism' which you derive from Marx is fine from the point of view of economic analysis and the historically necessary job of distinguishing this mode of production from previous modes, but it is a limitation if you try to use it to explain actual political events. In other words although capitalism may need wars, actual living capitalists and the governments who represent them are by no means over enthusiastic about wars for the very good reason that wars often have a lot of unforeseen consequences like giving rise to revolutionary movements as in Paris in 1871, Russia 1917, Germany 1918. So entering into a war is a gamble for a ruling class and only entered into when there is no other option. In this case of the Falklands war the 'no-other-option' for Argentina was the scale of opposition to the Galtieri regime. An Argentine victory would have done wonders for 'Social Peace' in South America. As you rightly point out, the war effort united all opposition forces in Argentina behind the regime. The military defeat must have destroyed this consensus, even if this is not immediately apparent. This demonstrates the nature of the gamble for Argentina.

From the point of view of the British ruling class there are several points which I consider you have missed. Firstly, the Thatcher government must have been pretty desperate for a way of whipping up chauvinistic support for itself to embark upon such a venture whose 'success' was by no means guaranteed. What would have been the political and social consequences if 'Britain' had been defeated? Certainly the fall of the Thatcher government, possibly a great deal of turmoil besides, from which radical movements would have flourished. It is easy from hindsight to talk as if that war could have had no other outcome, but I am not convinced that that is the case.

G.P.

Dear Comrade CP,

Although we would stick by our view that the Falklands war was a victory for the British ruling class and a defeat for the working class, it is clear that this was both a qualified victory and qualified defeat. The "Falklands effect" quickly wore off as the economic crisis deepened even further despite the attempt of the media to prolong the chauvinist orgy (fleet return, victory parade, funerals etc). Similarly, the derailment of the class struggle proved to be only temporary, as we pointed out in WV 8 "From the Falklands War to the Class War". However, to ignore the fact that the bourgeoisie did stage and execute the war without working class opposition, would be foolish. It shows we must redouble our efforts to show the alternative to the full-scale holocaust in preparation.

You seem to see a contradiction between our saying that war is necessary for capitalism, and the view that war is a gamble for capitalism. There is no contradiction. War is a gamble, as 1870, 1904, 1914 etc show. But it is nevertheless a necessary gamble, both to deflect the dis-

content of the working class and to destroy and devalue capital in order to prepare for further accumulation. Of course, only one of the gamblers can win, and both are therefore taking a calculated risk, one, as you say, they will take either when forced to by economic/social crisis, or when they feel the balance of forces is favourable.

And this is where we must disagree with you. Galtieri gambled because he had no option, Thatcher because the dice was weighted in her favour. It is not just that, Exocets excepted, British military might was far in excess of that of Argentina (and economic might if the war proved to be long and costly). Britain had the economic and military co-operation of NATO behind her, and only the US invoked the Monroe doctrine (which it was unprepared to do since its European interests outweighed its South American ones) could have prevented a British victory.

But it is now becoming clear that, despite Thatcherite illusions about developing the Falklands as a prosperous outpost of "little England", the US (shown by its UN vote in favour of renewed negotiations) still aims at the long-term transfer of the islands to Argentina, as long as British face can be saved. In this sense too Thatcher's victory was 'qualified'.

Fraternally,
the CWO

RCP

Dear Comrades,

I first became acquainted with the views of the CWO a few months ago, and since then I have come to regard you as one of the very few revolutionary organisations in Britain today, and generally the positions of Workers Voice are incomparably better than those of the bourgeois left in Britain.

However, in Workers Voice 7 I was disappointed when I read the article "RCP - the next step?"

The article begins by saying that tns (paper of the Revolutionary Communist Party - RCP) has given "plenty of coverage to the way in which the trade unions sabotage workers struggles." It goes on to say that tns often advises workers to break out of the control of the union officials. Let us first of all examine this point. Take, for instance, the article "Laurence Scott in Dispute" (tns May 1981). Dave Hallsworth writes, describing a strike at Laurence Scott, Manchester where 650 jobs were about to be lost, "On 3rd May a factory meeting voted 313 to 247 to continue the occupation. Despite the employers' expectations the younger workers were the strongest supporters of continuing the action. Full-time AUEW organiser, John Tocher, argued that if the workforce gave in, every employer in Manchester would claim that workers were in breach of contract whenever they were in dispute. Sackings for strikers would become commonplace and the union would be smashed, so far so good." (My emphasis.)

Now let's look at the article "How Gormley and Scargill saved Thatcher from the Miners: the price of collaboration" (March 1981 tns). The introduction to this article says that its purpose is to find out how the Tories "got away with" the NUM's acceptance of thousands of redundancies. The second paragraph begins, "In mining, the social contract meant the offer of state funds in return for union co-operation. It meant that the NUM leadership, left and right, took upon itself, not primarily the defence of their members' interests, but the defence of the British coal industry." (My emphasis.)

Later on in the same article, it is stated "The job of the trade unions is not to try to run the mining business better than the NCB, but to protect workers' living standards". The three quotes I have cited go a little way to show that the RCP, far from exposing the union leaders, actually pretends that they can be radicalised, and it is "so far so good" if a leading bourgeois trade union official mildly complains that his union will be destroyed if the employers sack too many workers. In the second passage quoted, it is clearly seen that the RCP think that Labour's "social contract" made the NUM leaders fail to represent their members.

The RCP consciously intends to hide the fact that the trade unions in this epoch are instruments in the hands of the bourgeoisie to shackle the working class with. Further evidence of this is shown by their practical activity.

In September 1981 they organised a march to the TUC conference, begging the TUC to demand of the government for allowances to be made for the Irish peoples right of self-determination, and (if the RCP's wish is fulfilled) the establishment of a united, capitalist Ireland.

RCP is organising another march to the TUC conference, under the guise of "workers' march against racism", which in reality is an appeal to the TUC to try to organise a peaceful capitalism without racism and racial oppression. This is sheer bourgeois pacifism. In this epoch, the bourgeoisie the world over is reactionary and capitalism is in its decadent phase. Hence anyone who shows faith in the trade unions today is playing the role of a guardian of capital. And so the CWO was wrong to show any glimmer of hope in the bourgeois RCP.

In the article I am referring to, Workers Voice merely criticizes them, even though it acknowledges that "the RCP's idea of turning the unions into organisations which reject capitalism's logic.... means turning them into revolutionary organisations - something which they can never be". The main failing of the article in question is that it fails to categorically expose RCP as agents of the bourgeoisie.

Lastly, when the article analyses RCP's attitude to "national liberation" the fact that they support the Argentinian bourgeoisie should be enough to show their true nature. Also, the fact that RCP supports the bourgeois IRA unconditionally is another manifestation of their own bourgeois nature. Propaganda for the greatest unity between protestant and catholic workers should be carried out, and the need for a communist party to lead the socialist revolution of the proletariat should be stressed. Marxists, unlike the RCP, do not say that protestant workers in northern Ireland are a reactionary mass with no revolutionary potential. This is just a trick used by the bourgeois left groups in Britain, designed to accentuate the already deep divisions amongst the Irish working class. And it is something which your article didn't point out.

Communist greetings,
P.T.

APPEAL FUND

The accelerating attack of the bosses makes the work of communists increasingly urgent. Next year WORKERS VOICE must become more frequent. Rush donations to the group address or take out a supporters subscription (£10/yr) now.

Dear Comrade PT,

When we argued in WV 7 that the RCP's texts give information on how unions sabotage workers' struggles we did so, not in order to praise or excuse them, but to illustrate that they remain incapable of explaining why unions act this way, which is precisely because the unions are bourgeois organisations, which you acknowledge in your letter we did point out. The further evidence you quote re-enforces our contention that the RCP does not see the unions as agents of the bourgeoisie.

Their attitude towards national struggles and wars you also rightly point out as being anti-working class, points we also made in the text. Although it is true that we did not call for unity of protestant and catholic workers in Northern Ireland in this article (since it seemed to be somewhat of a tangent), we have repeatedly made the point elsewhere (e.g. in WV 3 "Ireland: out of the Maze").

We feel that your real criticism of our article is not so much the above points, but that you feel we hold out hope in the bourgeois RCP. This is not the case. We feel, and we accept the criticism that the article should have said so in a more forceful and direct manner, that the RCP can never resolve its confusions and contradictions in the direction of proletarian politics. What we do feel is that the RCP, like other leftist groups, contains individuals who are questioning their politics and who can be won to communist positions. But to do this we need not simply point out that the RCP is bourgeois, but also deal with the arguments of the RCP and systematically demolish them. Invective on its own will not achieve the desired result, although it is correct that we should have made it quite clear that "radical leftism" is not within the communist framework. But though we may have omitted to state this, there is no way we feel that read closely and in conjunction with our other articles on Trotskyism (eg Revolutionary Perspectives 9 "Trotskyism and the Counter-

IRAN-IRAQ

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even lack of a "workers & peasants state" and as a result for them, it is the realisation of these nationalist and democratic objectives which could stop the war.

"Iraqi people, rise up and smash the Ba'athists. This will stop the aggression against Iran and restore Democracy." Quote from Iraqi C.P. Defence of Iran only signifies defence of the wages system of slavery. The position of the Tudeh party (Iranian C.P.) is exactly the same; that is defence of their gods, their nation, their capital.

We say, the proletariat can only realise its own class interests through its historical practice, through its revolutionary opposition to the war. The working class demonstrations and strikes which have occurred during the last 5 months in towns, both in Iran and Iraq, demonstrate the validity of this position. (During these 5 months, in Baghdad, in Bassorah, in Mossoul, in Suliamania, workers organised numerous demonstrations and strikes against the war, in order to defend their class interests. This revolutionary position by the proletariat has been met by capitalist repression. e.g. Through the use of helicopters, executions & massacres. Workers in a cigarette factory at Suliamania organised a 3 day strike against cuts in their wages imposed to pay for the war. Their slogan was "Neither Sadam nor Khomeini". This position shows a rejection of the nation and its defence. Thousands of workers in Iran and Iraq have been executed because of their revolutionary defeatist positions and have been denounced as enemies of the nation, atheists and cowards. These historical events demonstrate the necessity for communists to organise themselves. Capitalism is now trying to check the defeatist struggles of the working class and end the war. For the working class its interests lie in opposing both capitalist peace and war. Its interests lie in the communist revolution which will destroy the world capitalist system.

(July 1982)

Revolution") it can be argued that we say that the RCP is part of the communist movement. We hope this public avowal puts your mind at rest.

Fraternally,
the CWO

SWP

Dear Comrades,

I was given copies of Socialist Worker by a member of the Wolverhampton SWP. He took one of your back issues to read but his comments were, "they are just theorising. They say, 'don't have anything to do with unions, work outside them. That's stupid'. I replied that the SWP also agrees that most union leaders and shop stewards usually sell out to the bosses. I said that I was inclined to support the CWO because of their stance on the IRA and other terrorist groups. He replied, "well, we only support the IRA critically. We agree with their aims, but don't always support what they do."

If, as you predict, the present world economic crisis starts to lead to war, you can rely on all my full working and financial support to deter people from the war, in any way I can.

B.E.

Dear Comrade BE,

Thanks for your recent letter and donation to the cost of our work. We are very pleased that you like our stand against capitalist war and also our socialist opposition to reactionary groups like the IRA which divide the working class.

The comments of your SWP contact that we are just theorising may have had some validity in our early days when we were working out our ideas, but I hope are now disproved by our interventions in the working class and attempts to build factory and unemployed groups, as well as taking a practical stand against war.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

(CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE.)

7

THE PARTY

The topic was opened by a brief presentation from all three groups. There was complete agreement on the nature and role of the party. The UCM, however, placed a great emphasis on the question of drafting the party's programme, which they described as the 'main link' in the process of the formation of the party. The drafting and acceptance of their programme meant that the first decisive step had been taken towards the formation of the Communist Party of Iran. While there was agreement on the function and necessity of a programme there was disagreement about what should be included in the programme particularly over tactical issues. Discussion of these points inevitably moved back to the theoretical understanding behind the UCM's programme. The CWO pointed out that this state established by the democratic revolution was not clearly defined. At one time it was described as a situation of dual power, at another it was defined as the dictatorship of the proletariat. First it was something already happening in Kurdistan, then it was something which didn't exist anywhere but which the comrades would like to bring about. If such a state were to come into existence formalising a situation of dual power or anything apart from the dictatorship of the proletariat it would be the duty of revolutionaries to destroy it. B.C. pointed out that the transition from bourgeois rule to the dictatorship of the proletariat would necessarily be abrupt and violent. No intermediate state could exist. If such a state did exist it would be of more benefit to the bourgeoisie than to the proletariat. They reminded the SUCM that after the 3rd congress of the Communist International the slogan of Workers' Governments was put forward - a similar intermediate stage - which led to disaster in Germany in 1923 and the tragedy of the Chinese revolution in 1927. The whole concept of a gradual transition from bourgeois rule to worker's dictatorship was outside the communist programme.

CONCLUSION

The conference was a definite step forward. The fact that 1982 saw an Iranian group discussing with the Communist Left indicates both the deepening

On his views that it is stupid to work outside the unions, we tried to show in our article on BL (in WV 6) that when the SWP work inside them, they become trapped in the structure and paralysed.

the CWO

Organisation

Dear CWO

Thankyou for your letter and the material en route. You are right to say that to join an existing or form a new organisation must be an objective. In fact, I think the former course is more likely - there are not a thousand and one communist perspectives while at the same time, unlike the situationists and sundry libertarians who imagine that they can suddenly out of the blue come up with something entirely new, communists have always stressed their organic continuity with past currents. In other words, with groups as the CWO, ICC, Battaglia and Programma already in existence for quite some time, and with them more or less covering the entire spectrum within the overall communist perspective, it will be politically immature to think that a new way can be discovered and explored (and this at a time when the crisis is deepening rapidly!). Moreover, centralism is the hallmark of communist practice, not federalism.

I agree our discussion can proceed round the themes of capitalism's economic crisis and the nature and role of the communist party. From what I have read of your position on the latter, I have some disagreements with you (e.g. you say that when the party has a majority in the workers' councils, it effectively takes power 'through the councils'). My view is that there can be no dual power within the proletariat itself, either power resides in the councils or it resides in the delegates (in this case with the party having a majority), it cannot reside in both at the same time. In other words,

of capitalism's crisis and the capacity of the world proletariat.

In the discussion on imperialism the following issues were agreed:-

- 1) The Iran/Iraq war is an expression of the crisis of capitalism as the bourgeoisie moves towards world war.
- 2) Polish events were an expression of the working class' struggle to maintain its living conditions.
- 3) The Falklands war was a skirmish within the western bloc, which in no way indicated a breakup of the bloc.

In the discussion on the party agreement was reached on:-

- 1) The leading and organising role of the party.
- 2) That concrete demands must start from the material situation of the working class.

The most significant area of disagreement was the question of the democratic revolution which was discussed at length. This disagreement prevented the conference taking steps towards common political work. It was agreed to attempt to resolve this issue before calling a fresh conference.

(A Complete document of the conference proceedings in English and Italian will be produced in the new Year)



LENIN

In 1917 abandoned the programme of democratic revolution)

the party's delegates in their capacity as delegates must only be answerable to the councils, although as party members they are also answerable to the party). But I must wait until reading your material before taking up any position.

Communist greetings,
a comrade in Hong Kong

Dear Comrade

It was reassuring to hear that you accept that there is a finite spectrum of communist politics, and that it exists in an organisational form already, and reject the search for novelties, especially, as you say, when the crisis is deepening so rapidly. The question you have to solve is, which existing group comes nearest to filling your views of a revolutionary organisation. Once you have read and discussed our material, we hope you will conclude it is the CWO.

On the question of the party. If we agree that the proletariat only seizes power (resolving dual power) when it mandates a majority of communist delegates to the councils, then the question of whether the party or the councils rules is rather nominalist. The proletariat rules, and power is exercised, by the party-delegates, through the councils. There must be some division of labour, and delegation of power, otherwise why have councils at all? Why not ad hoc mass assemblies? The contradiction surely is also resolved between party delegate or council delegate, since the party members will only accept delegation on the basis of the party's (communist) programme. And it is this, rather than to any organisation, that 'answerability' surely resides? This, however, can only be a brief remark at the beginning of a hopefully fruitful discussion.

the CWO

WORKERS VOICE ISRAEL

CLASS STRUGGLE BREAKS WAR FRONT

The invasion of Lebanon has produced a political crisis in Israel. This has been aggravated by the workers, especially the El Al airline workers putting their own interests before the interests of the nation. The demonstrations against the war, the refusal of soldiers to be sent into Lebanon to help Begin's henchmen, the widespread knowledge that the government have been lying to escape blame for the massacres at Sabra-Chatilla, all this culminated in the violent explosion of class struggle at the Tel-Aviv airport on 28th October. This is the result of the crisis of Israeli capitalism, which has reached catastrophic proportions in the national airline which last year lost 200 million dollars. For years there have been strikes against the real wage cuts caused by Israel's astronomical inflation, and job losses which the crisis of profitability has relentlessly imposed on El Al's bosses - 69 strikes in the last decade.

This decade of class struggle culminated in the occupation of the airport on 28th October by the workers and their families. They fought the police, burned buildings and vehicles, and immobilised aeroplanes. This was the workers' response to management's threat - 1,000 redundancies must be agreed or we close the airline, they said. Faced with the explosion of class struggle, in the midst of the snowballing political crisis provoked by the massacres, the government forced management to agree to talks. Of course, the talks led to a sell-out by the union which has decided to fight El Al "in the courts", in other words by appealing to bourgeois justice.

This shows the need to go beyond the unions. According to the BBC World Service, "workers over-ruled their representatives" - in other words, the unions were trying to prevent the class struggle going beyond the boundaries

acceptable to the bosses, which in this case meant preventing it altogether. It's easier for the workers in Israel to see through the unions, because of the openly capitalist nature of Histadruth, the trade union federation. Unlike the unions in most democracies, Histadruth is openly an agency of the Israeli state. It has its own farms and factories, and acts as blatantly as the unions in Eastern Europe in keeping the workers under control. And it was the shop stewards who finally persuaded the workers to evacuate the airport when Begin liquidated El Al on 25th November.

Workers in Israel have shown that they are prepared to turn against the national interest. They have shown that the perspective which we outlined in the last WV - class solidarity between Palestinian and Israeli workers - is a realistic one. It has even happened to some extent - admittedly in meetings called by the Israeli left to protest against the massacres. But such basic class responses can be torn away from their bourgeois framework, if communists intervene with a concrete strategy such as outlined by the CWO in WV 8. A correct perspective for the Middle East depends on a concrete intervention which enables communists to prove that their perspective is a realistic one. This demands defending the right of workers to defend themselves. We say that workers must defend themselves against all their attackers, they must disarm their officers - in both the PLO and the Israeli army. And they must work towards unity of their struggles across national boundaries and towards an eventual overthrow of capitalism in the Middle East.



FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

On the 2nd and 3rd of October the 4th conference of the communist left was held in London. This is the 4th in the series of international conferences initiated by Partito Comunista Internazionale (Battaglia Comunista) in 1977. The conditions for attendance at the latest conference were as follows:-

- 1) Recognition of the revolution of October 1917 as proletarian.
- 2) Recognition of the break with social democracy made in the first two congresses of the 3rd International.
- 3) Complete rejection of state capitalism and self management.
- 4) Rejection of all present communist and socialist parties as bourgeois.
- 5) An orientation towards an organisation of revolutionaries which bases itself on the doctrine and method of Marxism which it recognises as the science of the working class.
- 6) Rejection of the possibility of subordinating the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie.
- 7) Recognition of the organising role of the party in the daily struggle of the working class as well as in the revolution itself.

Three groups participated, the P.C.Int. (Battaglia Comunista), the CWO and the SUCM - supporters of the Unity of Communist Militants organisation in Iran. Two further groups were invited, L'Eveil Internationalist (France) and KOMPOL (Austria). The first was unable to attend for technical reasons, and the second made its attendance dependent on absurd conditions (prior acceptability of the texts.) The agenda consisted of two topics, 1) 'The crisis of Imperialism' focussing on the Falklands war, Poland and the Iran/Iraq war, 2) 'The role and tasks of the revolutionary party'.

COMMUNIST CONFERENCE

IMPERIALISM

In this discussion texts were presented on the Falklands war, the Polish events of the last two years, and the Iran Iraq war. In addition the SUCM presented a general text on "Imperialism and the Crisis" and another on the question of the "Uninterrupted revolution".

While there was general agreement on the analyses and perspectives of the first three texts the final two presented by the SUCM gave rise to the majority of the debate which followed. The UCM, who support Lenin's theory of imperialism, divide the proletariat into one group in the countries dominated by imperialism, who produce superprofits and suffer atrocious living conditions, and another in the imperialist countries who enjoy better conditions and some of whom form an aristocracy of labour. They see the proletariat in the dominated countries as being more revolutionary because of their wretched condition. The CWO pointed out the divisive nature of this view and rejected the implication that the working class in the imperialist countries benefitted from the exploitation of workers in dominated countries, and further rejected the mechanical link the UCM saw between living conditions and revolutionary potential. B.C. argued that the victory of proletarian movements in the dominated countries depended on the victory of the proletariat in the imperialist countries in the final analysis, and that the real problem was to link the social movement in the dominated countries to the working class movement in the capitalist heartlands.

The ICC changes its mind ...

We welcome the International Communist Current's change of position on the Middle East since we denounced their passive and almost chauvinistic position at their public meeting in London on 2nd November. In their paper, *World Revolution* 54, published in October, they criticised the CWO's 'opportunism':

"Thus, in *Workers Voice* 8, the CWO call for 'fraternisation with the Israeli army by the dispossessed Palestinians while recognising their right to defend themselves against Begin's holocaust.' What can this mean? In an inter-imperialist war, the masses have no 'right' to defend themselves." (p.3)

At the London meeting we pointed out that we call for CLASS defence, not individual terrorism. Defence against the PLO and all other bourgeois forces as well, not just against the Falangists. The ICC called this capitulating to leftism! The ICC's insistence that the revolution must break out in the advanced West first is reminiscent of the Menshevik opposition to proletarian revolution in Russia, because it 'wasn't ready'. Against this, we pointed out that revolution could break out in the Middle East first, which would paralyse imperialism and perhaps prevent imperialist war.

The result of this intervention, which was endorsed even by the ICC's supporters, has been a welcome change in position. In the November *WR* the ICC puts forward an internationalist position on the Middle East. But *WR*'s hysterical campaign against CWO 'opportunism' continues, while at the same time adopting our perspectives!

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