

# WORKERS VOICE

- Belgian Fightback
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**COMMUNIST  
WORKERS  
ORGANISATION**

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## U.S. UNLEASHES DOGS OF WAR!

If further evidence that the economic crisis of world capitalism is pushing the world's rulers towards war were needed then the events of the last few weeks have given us it. What is most significant is the fact that the imperialist super-powers now openly declare that they are locked in mortal combat in every area of the globe. Today there are over forty local wars going on around the world. This in itself might be nothing new but the fact that Russian and American intervention in them makes them permanent is. Any one of them could spark off the final "Armageddon", which would really be "the war to end all wars".

### AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

But the favourite trigger point for a 3rd World War must still remain the Middle East. It is now clear that the lorry bombs in Beirut which killed nearly 300 French and US troops on 23rd October sparked off the US invasion of the tiny island of Grenada on the morning of the 25th. By ordering this invasion Reagan wiped out the damage which these bombings had struck to his aggression policies on a world scale. Without the demonstration of America's armed might in Grenada the US Congress would probably have called for the withdrawal of troops from the Lebanon within 60 days. The invasion was a practical demonstration of the American cliché that "nothing succeeds like success". And "success" was easily (though rather too bloodily) bought by rolling over a small island like Grenada. This was all part of Reagan's publicly proclaimed get-tough policy, or "counter-offensive" against "the empire of evil", the USSR, which he has announced he will fight anywhere in the world. Having spurred on the French to get deeply involved in Chad, having sent marines to Grenada, Egypt, Honduras and the Lebanon, having carried out a mock invasion of Nicaragua and just about to deploy Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe, there is no doubt that Reagan is not merely talking.

### RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM

And equally desperate is the other great imperialist power, the USSR. Its invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 was the first direct use of Russian troops beyond the areas



U.S. Marines  
Grenada today. Where tomorrow?

of influence carved up between the USA and the USSR at Yalta in 1943. Russia has always been desperate to ensure a neutral or friendly buffer zone around it, and Afghanistan is like Syria on its southern flank. But the Kremlin leaders feel increasingly insecure since Russia, like every other country, is in acute economic crisis. They cannot solve their internal economic problems, let alone compete with the West to win over the regimes in charge of the peripheral capitalist countries (like Angola and Zimbabwe). Today even a pro-Soviet regime like that of Machel's in Mozambique is turning to the West to rebuild its economy. Despite Reagan's propaganda, the USSR has actually been retreating on a world scale. Its main success in the last ten years has been in de-stabilising areas (like the Horn of Africa) to prevent Western influence getting stronger. The shooting down of the Korean airliner by the Russians in the Sea of Japan last month

shows just how desperate Russian imperialism is becoming.

### LEBANON CIVIL WAR IS IMPERIALIST WAR

Perhaps the area where the USSR has suffered most in the last forty years is the Middle East. After making the blunder of supporting the establishment of Israel in 1948 (because they thought it would be anti-Western) they lost their influence in Iraq and Egypt whilst being unable to prevent the humiliation of their clients in Libya and in the PLO. The lowest point of Russia's fortunes in the area was reached last year when the Israelis forced the PLO out of Beirut and humiliated the pro-Russian Syrian forces in Lebanon. (See "Reagan and Begin's New Order in the Middle East" in WV 8.) In fact, if it had not been for the economic and social crisis in Israel itself then Begin would probably have driven Syria from Lebanon. (See "Israel: New Conductor, Same Old Music" in this issue.) Since then, as we repeated in the last Workers Voice, Russian military aid on a level never seen before has been pouring into Syria. It was to counter this, in the face of the withdrawal of the Israelis to southern Lebanon, that the so-called "international peace-keeping force" was sent into Beirut. But these doves of peace soon showed they were dogs of war by attacking from land, sea and air the pro-Syrian Muslim militias which are threatening to overthrow the pro-Western Gemayel government. The so-called civil war in Lebanon is in fact a stage in the development of a world imperialist war. In this sense it is just the same as the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 or the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, which were curtain raisers to the world wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45.

### WORLD WAR THREE?

What is happening in the Middle East, in Central America, in Chad or in South East Asia all raise the spectre of a new world imperialist war. As we have argued, since 1979 international tensions have risen to new heights and in every crisis there lurks the possibility of a more general conflict. Increasingly the preparations are being made. The fact that there was virtually no anti-war resistance to the Falklands war, the fact that mounting casual-



# BELGIAN WORKERS FIGHT BACK

An uneasy peace has returned to Belgium's streets after the September strikes in which over a million workers brought the country to a halt.

The actions of the Belgian workers can teach workers in Britain a few lessons. Belgium has a Right wing government which, like Britain's, has held down wages whilst inflation is running at 8%. It had already got away with a wage freeze and its 15% unemployment rate is the second highest in the EEC. However, when the government tried to cut public spending by cutting bonuses and holiday pay to state workers the strikes broke out.

Once again, as we see all over the world, the unions tried to prevent real class action (see the articles on France and Britain in this issue). The *Financial Times* (23.9.83), a mouthpiece of the British ruling class, revealed (naturally without realising it) exactly what was going on,

"Since September 9th the strikes in Belgium have paralysed the bureaucracy, brought public transport to an almost total halt, shut schools, ... and let rubbish accumulate in the streets. Yet they started spontaneously." (our emphasis)

This isn't the full story. The unions had been negotiating with the government for over a month about these attacks on the working class (involving a wage cut of over £2 a week on average). It was only when the workers were finally informed what was going on that the strikes broke out. A typical case was the railway workers in Charleroi. They stood to

lose bonus pay, and when they expressed their anger in workplace meetings on September 9th the unions reluctantly agreed to a strike ... in October! The unions always claim that this gives them a chance to "negotiate" but in fact it means that the workers are dispersed, the anger dies down and some patched up settlement in the bosses' interest is sorted out. But this time neither the railway workers nor other state workers, who belong to a variety of different unions, were conned. They immediately walked out. And it took a great effort by the unions involved to catch up with them. The *Financial Times* again:

"To regain control of the strike union leaders were forced to co-operate more closely than they have done in the past."

Behind the unions was the government in the person of the Minister of the Interior who accused them of being weak because they had no control over their members!

So in a few brief days of the Belgian strike the real function of the unions was fully revealed. To restore social peace, class calm and to sell the government's policies as the "only reasonable settlement" to the workers. The *Financial Times* concluded with a lesson for the bosses everywhere:

"If governments in general are to learn anything from the events of the past fortnight in Belgium it is, perhaps, that tough economic measures affecting the monthly pay packet cannot be introduced cold. The ground needs to be prepared. The measures when they are agreed need detailed and frequent explanation."



"Back to work, lads!"

And whose role is this? In modern capitalist society this is precisely the function of the union.

The Belgian bosses have made a tactical retreat, but with the capitalist crisis worsening daily, as it is everywhere, (bankruptcies, for example, have risen 20% in Belgium this year they will be back with more vicious, if more subtle, attacks.

The lesson for the working class is that the spontaneity which produced the strike is not enough. Conscious political action to attack union efforts to get a return to work on the bosses' terms must be made. This requires the development of a communist party within the working class, inside workplaces.

## U.S. UNLEASHES DOGS OF WAR

•Continued from pg 1

ties in Afghanistan has not provoked a social crisis in Russia and the fact that Reagan has won overwhelming support in the USA for his lies about why he invaded Grenada show that our rulers can be fairly confident that they can manipulate "public opinion" in their direction in support of any war. And they are already doing it. In the talks to limit nuclear weapons (the START and INF talks) both Andropov and Reagan have been manoeuvring. Each has been offering us arms reduction proposals which favour their own side (like Reagan's "Zero Option" or "build-down" programme). The aim here is like that of Hitler in 1933. When France refused to disarm immediately to German levels at the Geneva Disarmament Conference he was free to walk out of the Conference and at the time he was reckoned to have been wronged. In order to prepare workers for supporting "our side" the NATO countries are trying to get into the same position. This propaganda build-up is a reflection of the increasing belief by politicians and the military in both camps, not just that a third world war is winnable, but that it is unavoidable.

The main factor though is the economic crisis. At present the capitalist crisis engulfs the whole world and Russia (which is no less capitalist because the state rather than private firms exploits the working class) and its bloc (e.g. Poland, Hungary) are increasingly feeling its effects. However, the ruling classes in both Eastern and Western blocs, whilst preparing for war, still hold out a fading hope that the crisis can be solved economically by yet more austerity measures aimed at the working class. However, this illusion will not last for ever. The present crisis is grinding to its

inexorable conclusion, just as in the past capitalist slumps found their only "solution" in a new world war (which, by destroying workers, commodities and plant, enables accumulation to begin again on a higher level). This time, however, the cure is as bad as the disease.

### THE WORKING CLASS SOLUTION

So, after over a decade of lowering living standards, destroying the means of satisfying human needs, increasing unemployment, homelessness and starvation, the final misery capitalism has to offer is war. This cannot be prevented by CND marches. 2 millions marched in European cities on the weekend of the events of Grenada and Lebanon. Who noticed them a few days later? CND didn't oppose the Falklands War. Its leader, Monsignor Bruce Kent proclaims that "We are the real patriots" since they are arguing not against the cause of war but against some of its effects. CND's precursors were no more successful in the past than they have been today. Both the Neutrality League and the Peace Pledge Union disappeared the day war started in 1914 and 1939. However, by joining them the middle class can satisfy their consciences that they have put up an intellectual protest before they go and fight for Queen and Country.

Nor can we trust in Her Majesty's Opposition, the Labour Party and their trades union movement. In the Grenadan crisis the Labour Party has made a great song and dance about US actions because the US has ignored Britain ("a blow to national pride") and because it gives the Russians a propaganda card by reveal-

ing that when Reagan decides to get tough the US is no more interested in leaving weaker states to determine their own destiny than Russia was in Afghanistan. This of course, the Labour Party realises makes it harder to drum up working class support for the West. In both world wars Labour and the trades union have supported their own governments and Labour, it should not be forgotten, initiated the development of the British nuclear bomb.

Neither CND nor the Labour Party can prevent, or in fact really wants to prevent, another imperialist war. That task must fall to the working class itself. Only the working class has the power to halt production and to fighting every small decision of the bosses can help to give other workers confidence that "their" bosses can be beaten. Yet fighting effects of the capitalist crisis will not be enough. Indeed, rising levels of working class resistance to more austerity and unemployment could even provoke the war crisis as the bosses realise that their austerity policies have failed to overcome the crisis. At this point the answer cannot be to give up the fight but to extend and deepen it until the battle to defend living standards turns into a fight against the state itself. Only the working class has the capacity to wield the one sure weapon which can lead to the removal of the threat of imperialist war - and that is a communist revolution which will destroy the forces of the old state (including the armed forces) and pave the way for a new society without the national frontiers and rivalries which lead to war.



# THE STEEL CRISIS IS A CAPITALIST CRISIS!

## CWO Leaflet

### Ravenscraig: After the MacGregor Plan...?

Nowhere is the stupidity, the irrationality of the capitalist system better seen than in the crisis in the steel industry. In a world in which two-thirds of its people lack the basic necessities of life because the areas they live in lack houses, roads, railways and many other things we in the heartland of capitalism take for granted, we see the steel bosses closing down plant after plant. In Britain alone 110,000 steelworkers have been sacked since 1974 and BSC's capacity has been reduced from 22 million tonnes to 15 million tonnes a year since 1979. Our rulers tell us that there is no "demand" for steel. But there is a great demand for steel in Africa, Asia and Latin America. They too need buildings, bridges and a whole host of other steel based products.

In the steel industry since 1974, Germany, France, Italy and Britain have lost 231,000 jobs. The bosses tell us that this has now made the industry "slimmer", "leaner", and ready to be more "competitive". In June BSC achieved a kind of record. It reduced its losses to only £1 million a week from £8.6 millions in January. In October its losses again rose to £3 millions a week. And if the "rationalisation" and "restructuring" has made the industry more competitive, why is MacGregor proposing to cut jobs at Ravenscraig? Why, also are the same four countries mentioned above planning to further reduce capacity and sack another 90,000 steelworkers by 1986? Some recovery.

And echoing the bosses' call for restraint we find the unions. If they are not telling workers to be "realistic" (i.e. to accept the bosses' arguments) whilst they negotiate jobs away, they are whipping up localist or nationalist feeling by saying that cuts should be made elsewhere. Whilst they do this the bosses shut down more plant because the workers don't put up a united fight. Shotton, Llanwern, Corby, Consett, Port Talbot and Scunthorpe were just as much victories for the bosses as Blenheim, Waterloo, D-Day or the Falklands.

But let the unions babble their reactionary slogans about "import controls" "quotas", "tariffs" or other curses about German or Korean workers, the steelworkers of Europe have shown in the past that they are not simply the cannon-fodder of the capitalist class. At Denain and Longwy in 1979 the French steelworkers, by burning the bosses' offices and bulldozing police stations, frightened the bosses into temporary defeat by winning a reprieve. But today a further offensive is being prepared. We must not repeat the mistakes of the past. We have had enough of lobbying MPs, marches in capital cities, waiting for union orders and all the rest of it. Steelworkers, like all other workers, have to unite across national frontiers and translate the spirit of Longwy-Denain onto an international level. Only then can we begin a fight to replace the capitalist idea of "demand" (i.e. profit) with the communist idea of need. Only then will new technology mean more leisure and not more lay-offs.

The leaflets we are publishing here show two basic aspects of our work - the need to fight the nationalist lies of the bosses and the need to reveal how the unions defend the present system better than they defend the workers. It is essential that with our small forces we attempt to get these messages over as widely as possible. to counter the effect of the capitalist mouthpieces. Any reader who would like to help give out these or future leaflets should write to the nearest address.

The capitalist media machine has ceased baying about the proposed MacGregor Plan. A plan which aimed at halving the size of Ravenscraig and turning it into a supplier of raw materials for the American steel industry. But to any amongst who you who have heaved a sigh of relief, we warn you to be constantly vigilant! The bosses will be back with further schemes to increase exploitation.

The plan has been shelved because the US capitalists didn't want to increase the level of steel imports, not because the British Steel bosses have turned kind-hearted. And both sets of bosses feared the militancy of Motherwell and Fairless steelworkers. In spite of the blood-letting since 1980, the bosses know that there is still fight left in the steelworkers. Workers, you must draw the lessons of the defeat of the 1980 steel strike, which opened the way for the job losses which followed. The defeat of the steel strike demoralised the entire British working class and allowed the Tories to take on and defeat the class section by section.

It is necessary to expose the allies of the bosses in the steel strike and in the redundancies which followed. The ISTC helped the bosses in their dirty work by:

1. Giving the bosses weeks of advance warning of the strike so that they could prepare their plan.
2. Preventing effective picketing and the blockage of steel movements.
3. Weakening the workers by withholding strike pay.
4. Dividing steelworkers against each other. By refusing to link the demands of state to private steel workers, and turning each section against the other, the union prevented the workers from uniting against the bosses.

Since then the ISTC has co-operated fully in the run-down of the industry "in the national interest". The role of the trade unions today is to contain and derail any struggle against the bosses - from Novo Sibirsk to New York, from Buenos Aires to Tokyo, they are agents of capitalism within the working class.

From Bill Sims right down to the level of the shop stewards, the union apparatus is hand in glove with the management. Look at the disgusting episode of MacGregor himself and the local ISTC bureaucrats recently oozing sentimentality, "a man's a man for a' that" at a Burns Supper, while thousands of steelworkers were being thrown on the scrap heap. But we, the workers, have no common humanity with the bosses. They are our enemies. We have no reason to even talk to them now. They have nothing to offer.

The ruling class everywhere is becoming more and more desperate as they recognise their complete economic and political bankruptcy. Their insane system of production for profit and competition is dragging humanity close to the precipice of a third world war.

Workers, prepare yourselves for the great struggles which lie ahead. There can be no more retreats, since you are all aware that there is nowhere to go. If the MacGregor Plan is resurrected it must be fought by electing strike committees from the shop floor, independent of the unions, and spreading the struggle to steelworkers elsewhere and to the entire working class. In particular, all movement of steel must be stopped in a strike. This can be done only by appealing directly to transport workers, not by picketing stockholders or empty steel works. It is no coincidence that the ISTC called off the 1980 strike just when Liverpool dockers had voted to stop handling steel imports. What they fear most of all is the spreading of the struggle to the entire working class. Even if this plan is dropped others will be floated. The BSC is trying to persuade the bosses to close the 'Craig altogether. Let the flare from the slag that lights up the night sky serve as a beacon of hope for the workers of the entire area.

In the meantime workers can arm themselves politically for the struggles ahead by forming groups of international communists in the workplaces. If you agree with what we say, contact us to support our work.

Make the struggle to defend the 'Craig the beginnings of the anti-capitalist fight back of the whole working class!

## INTERNATIONAL LEAFLET

WE ARE UNDER ATTACK ALL OVER EUROPE

BOSSSES AND UNIONS WANT TO DIVIDE US NATION BY NATION  
DOWN WITH NATIONALISM! FOR WORKERS INTERNATIONALISM!

Workers of Europe

The world capitalist crisis is getting worse. Neither the "free market" policies of Thatcherism and Reaganomics nor the "left wing" policies of "socialists" like Mitterrand (France) or Craxi (Italy) can control it.

As in 1912-13, as in 1929-30, every branch of production has been hit. Last year there was no world economic growth at all. In some countries (e.g. Italy) production has actually fallen. The drop in steel production is typical.

Despite being technically capable of providing enough steel for the whole world, capitalism is forced to reduce production. Why? Is it because our class brothers and sisters in Asia and Africa don't need railways, bridges or houses? Of course they do! They desperately need materials like steel. But their needs count for nothing because the demands of capitalist profit don't answer to the needs of humanity. And just as Africa and Asia can't afford steel, neither can the big steel users in the European countries (like cars) because they are themselves in crisis.

In 1980 Europe produced 126 million tons of steel. Today its quota is fixed at 89 million tons. The capitalists thus must reach an agreement to sell less, with the following results:

1. **Job cuts** According to EEC plans hundreds of thousands are due to be laid off. (Over 4 million have already been laid off.)
2. **Cut-throat competition** between countries is increasing as each one tries to defend the interests of its own ruling class. Each one wants to keep the biggest share of the market for itself and cut its production as little as possible.
3. **Nationalism** At the same time as trying to reach agreement about production cuts, every government (whether Right or Left) is unleashing its political and trades union servants in a campaign of support for "the national interest". In every country trades unions and political parties are protesting that the cuts for their country are "excessive", "unjust", or that the workers in other countries are suffering less. Over the last 3 years we have seen unions calling for "their" plants to be saved at the expense of other workers. It happened this year in Genoa in Italy. It happened in 1979 in France. It is happening today throughout the British steel industry.

WORKERS! COMRADES!

This nationalism and localism delights the ruling class. It smooths the way to the war which the world's imperialist rulers are preparing under our very noses.

Steelworkers, like all other workers, don't have any reason to defend their bosses. A defence of jobs and wages cannot be made by workers lining up alongside their own rulers as the unions want us to - by demanding that comrades in other countries or cities lose their jobs.

For workers, for the unemployed, for the underemployed, there is no other solution but to fight against lay-offs, against nationalism and localism, and against the solution capitalism is preparing to its own crisis: imperialist war.

Twice before capitalism has shown the whole world that if the working class doesn't launch its own class war against its rulers then imperialism will be unleashed in which millions of dead workers and huge quantities of destroyed plant provide the basis for a new round of accumulation of profit by the bosses.

In 1981 the steelworkers in Denain and Longwy (France) fought a splendid battle against the first effects of the steel crisis (attacking police stations and bosses' offices) but the unions soon forced these onto nationalistic grounds by blaming German steelworkers for the crisis!

This experience cannot be repeated! The steelworkers' fight, like that of all workers, must be against the nationalism of the trades unions because a real defence of workers interests can only be carried out by workers in all countries. Every union, every bourgeois party, whether openly conservative or so-called "socialist", is trying to block this road. Political organisations (like Labour) and both large and small unions are organised inside our class for this very purpose - to channel class anger into support for ruling class interests. Thus, it is up to the most politically advanced workers to organise themselves into a workers' vanguard in every country as quickly as possible. Armed with the communist programme it will allow the workers to organise themselves outside of and against unions and reactionary political parties.

In this sense the internationalist communist organisations who have signed this leaflet, and the comrades in different countries who sympathise with them, will give all the help necessary to comrades who want to join us in this enormous revolutionary task.

Communist Workers Organisation (Britain/France)  
Internationalist Communist Party (Italy)

November 1983

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# 4 Notes on Kurdistan and the Political forces in Iran

Translation from 'Battaglia Comunista' No. 11, July 1983

## Introduction

As regular readers of *Workers Voice* (and *Revolutionary Perspectives*) will know the CWO has been conducting a series of polemics against the Iranian Supporters of the Unity of Communist Militants (SUCM) based in Britain. At the same time our comrades of the Partito Comunista Internazionale (PCIInt) have been carrying out a similar task in Italy. We are reprinting here an article from their paper *Battaglia Comunista* of last July which warns the SUCM about the dangers of fusion with Komala (The Toilers Revolutionary Organisation of Iranian Kurdistan). These warnings were ignored and the fusion of UCM and Komala into what they describe as the Communist Party of Iran has since taken place. The non-communist basis of this formation will be examined in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 21 (to be issued December 1983). Here we simply want to briefly outline our policy for relating to groups like the SUCM.

It is clear that the present desperate crisis of world capitalism will give rise to many social revolts (such as that which overthrew the Shah of Iran in February 1979), particularly on the peripheral areas of capitalism. Such revolts will lead to crisis in the traditional bourgeois organisations, particularly those on the left like the Stalinists, Maoists and Trotskyists. These will follow their theory and merely act as the supporters of another type of capitalist exploitation - state capitalism. The wider the class movement, the more "radicalised" will be their response in an effort to control it, in order to lead it towards their type of capitalist domination. It is the fundamental task of communists to fight these counter-revolutionary forces inside the working class.

On the other hand the same social upheavals will give rise to new and immature political groups. Only a fully-convinced spontaneist could believe that these groups will spring into existence defending the communist programme in its entirety. It has taken long enough for communists in Britain to understand the nature of the failure of the revolutionary wave after the First World War - and we were not without the help of comrades in other European countries. It would be incredible to think that groups from peripheral areas (like the UCM), cut off from the European communist tradition, would be able to cut through the entirety of counter-revolutionary politics overnight. What attitude should European communists then adopt to these groups?

To begin with, it seems sterile to present the problem in terms of whether these groups break "class lines" on any issue. Apart from the fact that these groups have arisen in areas with no Left Communist tradition, where to possess a copy of *Capital* could mean instant death, communists in Europe have failed in over a decade to establish a *cordon sanitaire* between them and the bourgeoisie by this method. Clearly groups like this which are breaking from the counter-revolution will carry some of the hallmarks of leftist thinking. However, the social convulsions which give rise to them creates a situation of movement in which, under the impact of events and the detailed criticism of communist tendencies, their initial positive steps can be pushed further.

Each case will have to be judged on its merits. We would obviously treat a tendency which is formed by announcing its adherence to a bourgeois force like the 4th International in the same way as existing representatives of that tradition. But in the case of less defined groups where movement or confusion (or both) is clearly discernible it is our duty to assemble detailed and

lengthy arguments against all the weak points of their Platform or Programme. If we fail to draw these groups into debate we will achieve nothing.

What is the alternative to this approach? Basically these can be summarised in two ways. There are those who maintain that these peripheral areas can be written off as places where communist groups can be established and therefore, by definition, any group which appears there must be counter-revolutionary. Then there are those who claim that as communism can be achieved spontaneously by the working class then communist minorities will be formed spontaneously in peripheral areas. Thus, for both these views any confused group which appears deserves only the briefest of denunciations whilst we wait for history to take its inevitable course.

We reject these approaches as idealist and undialectical. We reject too those childish spirits who have baited us as opportunist. We have made NO CONCESSIONS to the mistakes of these groups. What we have done is to address ourselves to the roots of their errors and to patiently research developed critical replies. This is not opportunism or selling out to the counter-revolution but the height of political responsibility. The process of criticism enables the class nature of an organisation to be revealed but there are no such processes in denunciations.

Finally, though it is not the purpose of this article to draw up a balance sheet of the debate with the SUCM, we wish to make it abundantly clear that the method we have adopted towards them is precisely the same method we shall adopt in all similar cases in the future. We will not be diverted from trying to gain the widest possible hearing for communist ideas in every area of the globe by the infantile jibes of "pure" sectarians.



Kurdish nationalist guerilla  
"There can be no solution to the misery and oppression of the Kurds without a victorious revolution of the proletariat of Iran."

Once again, by uncovering a little of the tangle of the political alliances and tools of the USSR, we discover the really shameless and sinister policy of the imperialist powers. Up until two months ago the "communist" party of Iran, the Tudeh, the direct and passive agent of the Kremlin, worked within the government forces of the Khomeini regime, while at the same

time Iranian Kurdistan was subjected to one of the most violent and bloody attacks of Khomeini's troops. (Now the fortunes of the Tudeh are over and its leader has been shot in the internecine struggles for power in Iran.) At the same time the USSR is intriguing with the Kurdish nationalist party and arming it against the Islamic regime. In short, it is taking the classical stance of one foot in either camp, ready to side with whoever emerges victorious.

The KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party) is now part of the National Council for Resistance, which includes the bourgeois and petit bourgeois forces which are working for the replacement of the Islamic regime with a Democratic Islamic Republic. The purpose of the NCR, as is clear from its programme, is the suppression of the revolutionary movement and the continuation of the dominance of imperialist capital in the region.

And so the front of the forces that are preparing to manage a new bourgeois regime is spreading. In this case, what will happen in Kurdistan? Probably the administrative autonomy demanded by the influential Kurdish religious chief, Ezzedin Hosseini will be granted. The same sheikh declares:

"We want to speak our own language in addition to Pharsi. Not only at home but in the offices and in the schools. We would want to manage our own regional economy according to our own demands, to choose our own local authority instead of having to accept that sent by a government, completely foreign to our culture and way of life."

Nothing so extraordinary or complex about that. Autonomy in economic management - what does it mean in reality? If, as has happened in Iraq, he is talking about leaving certain decisions concerning economic policies of capital in the region to the bourgeoisie and latifundia Kurds, there is nothing in the world to prevent a Bani Sadr, for example, from conceding it. But it is neither possible nor conceivable that a bourgeois Iranian government could concede to the Kurdish masses the possibility of deciding via mass organs the social and economic destiny of the region. Only a proletarian government, founded on the basis of the direct organs of power of the mass of workers and in the context of the proletarian dictatorship, could, by its very nature, "concede" to the Kurds the most complete parity of rights on this question, by means of its own process of centralisation. But this is exactly what the National Council of Resistance wants to avoid.

The backwardness, the poverty, the oppression of the Kurdish masses are both the conditions and the product of the domination of capital in Iranian society, analogous to the destruction of the economic fabric of the South during the capitalist unification of Italy. There can be no solution to the misery and oppression of the Kurds outside of a victorious revolution of the proletariat inside Iran.

And this is a crucial point for the communist movement, Iranian and international, which has not been fundamentally grasped - either in Iran or in the so-called European revolutionary "milieu". The same Komala which recognises in its documents some essential pledges, tends to forget them in its actual policies and in its perspectives for action. Komala writes the following (Resolution of 2nd Congress of March 1981):

"The proletariat is conscious that it cannot negate its destiny at one of the junctures and arenas of revolutionary democracy. The Kurdish resistance movement cannot ensure victory over the bourgeoisie in the sense of transforming the relations of production in the region of Kurdistan. The liberation of part of the proletariat in Kurdistan is not possible without connection with the whole proletariat (in Iran)"

They must develop from here a policy of strict autonomy from the NCR, from the KDP, through effective preparation (in political cadres, in programmes, and in ways of relating to the masses of workers) for direct encounters with the forces of the bourgeoisie. What will happen if and when the Khomeini regime gives way to an Islamic Democratic Republic along the lines



of Bani Sadr and his NCR? What will happen if Komala remains more or less clearly demarcated from these forces? What will happen is that Komala will find itself forced to choose between a coherent support for such a regime or a dramatic change of course (always difficult, let's remember) with consequent loss of its mass following, involving at that point defeat and the dispersal of the organisation itself.

These are two equally distasteful but inevitable perspectives if Komala (and UCM which is preparing to unite with Komala in the Communist Party of Iran) does not quickly correct its political oscillation between denunciation of and collaboration with the KDP.

For example, what sense can be made of what was said by the foreign spokesman for Komala in the English newspaper, Kurdistan News and Comment of May 1983. Ardanan says:

"Regardless of our differences with the KDP, we always insist in uniting our actions against the Islamic regime, in order to escalate the revolution. In the social and educational fields, the customs, the welfare of the people, in the field of hygiene, we have tried to co-operate with the KDP -Iran, but our offers have been rejected. Nevertheless in the field of military offensives we've held some joint operations."

Obviously here is an attempt to get mixed up on dubious grounds with a counter-revolutionary force like the KDP which hits back in the manner stated above. This is nothing but the consequence of a dangerous confusion in Komala's political and theoretical positions and forces us straight back to ask the questions we have asked in discussion with UCM and SUCM. It underlines the validity of the warnings given to the comrades of the SUCM:

"the deepening process of unification of UCM and Komala can become the basis of a regression on the part of UCM to the still largely "immature" positions of the Kurdish organisation".

We wrote that in May (Battaglia Comunista 10). Today a clearer profile is emerging of the danger of a regression to more openly opportunist positions■

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# ISRAEL

## Same Old Music New Conductor:

We are publishing here a brief article on Begin's resignation written by a CWO comrade in France. Since it was written its main themes have been confirmed.

The Israeli government is paralysed by the costs of the war. It pulled out of Beirut because it could no longer maintain the economic cost or the social cost of discontent in Israel.

The Israeli economy, despite US loans, is on the point of collapse with bank shares suspended on the stock market. The main currency, the shekel, is worthless and Israelis can no longer buy dollars (since they have been used up trying to support the shekel). In fact the Finance Minister, Aridor, who resigned because the rest of the government wouldn't accept his plan to replace the shekel with the dollar as Israel's unit of currency was only recognising the reality of Israel's economic dependence on the USA and inflation of 160% a year.

The main aim of the Shamir government though is to end index linking of wages to prices. But to do this the Israeli ruling class needs to reach agreement on how best to attack the workers. Shamir can either involve the Histadruth (the Israeli TUC) to get them to persuade workers to accept this cut or he could get a "national government" with the opposition Labour Party to impose it in "the national interest".

How the Israeli workers respond to this coming attack is of great interest to workers everywhere, since it could blow a hole through the wall of nationalist ideology for which thousands of workers have sacrificed for decades.

The argument that the resignation of Begin as Prime Minister last September was due to personal reasons isn't very convincing. The image of the "old warrior" retiring after having done his duty in the service of the fatherland is certainly an easy one but - beyond the gloss of the tributes paid to Begin by the world's rulers lies the gloomy picture of the insoluble contradictions in which the Israeli economy, like the rest of the world, is enmeshed. In fact, the expansionist policy carried on by the Israeli state for many years, especially from 1973 onwards, was just an attempt to escape the problems created by a disastrous internal situation. The various wars against Egypt and Syria were a means of deflecting the attention of the working people in Israel from existing difficulties onto the external "enemy" always threatening the country's "security": in order to break from encirclement by the hostile Arab world, the Israeli population was periodically asked to make greater sacrifices for the war effort of its own ruling class.

Far from solving Israel's internal crisis, the invasion of the Lebanon in 1982, just as was the case for previous wars, further weakened the Israeli economy. In spite of massive aid from the United States, despite the fact that Israel could dump its goods on the Lebanese markets and use local resources of the occupied areas, signs of deterioration have grown considerably. It is in this context that we must place the political change at the head of the Israeli state.

The first real tremor in the Israeli economy came as a direct consequence of the costly Yom Kippur War of 1973. In 1977 the GNP was stagnant, inflation was up to 30-40% and the trade deficit was growing rapidly (Israel needs to import most of its raw

materials). In October 1977 Begin announced new economic measures. These included a 10% devaluation of the Israeli shekel, a drastic reduction in state subsidies which maintain low food prices and a wage restraint policy which led to mounting struggles by the working class.

Despite these measures, the situation kept on deteriorating and inflation continued to rise, even going beyond the level of 100%. Then, the government changed its mind: after a period



Israeli peace protestors: unless movements for peace become movements against capitalism, they cannot prevent war.

of reduced state spending it turned, in 1979, to a policy of increased state spending in order to stimulate demand. It was now felt that re-establishing subsidies for basic products would lead to greater consumption and thus higher state incomes. But this failed because growing demand led to an import surge with repercussions on the balance of payments deficit. Inflation was still 101% in 1981. It was then agreed that it was better to go back to the "good old method" of wage restraint and tax increases.

In 1982, while the media was hailing the war deeds of the Israeli army settling accounts with the Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon, the Begin government carried out its austerity plan: VAT increases, new taxes, the price of subsidised goods rose by 5% a month and the shekel was devalued. Instead of declining, inflation rose to 131%. In addition, a forced loan was created to pay for maintaining the Israeli army in Lebanon.

None of the measures taken have improved the situation of the Israeli economy: by the end of 1982 Israel's foreign debt reached 22 billion dollars and inflation was still at a high level (130%).

The cost of the war in Lebanon has dramatically worsened the situation of the working class in Israel. The strike of the El Al workers last year showed that the local ruling class has not been able to mobilise workers behind the slogan of "national unity". This has been confirmed by desertions and demonstrations against the war. For the time being it is true that the Israeli working class has not emerged as a politically independent force, since the petty bourgeoisie has largely succeeded in transforming workers' resistance to sacrifices into a fight for "democracy", "peace", etc... But the growing deterioration in the material life of the working people in Israel will create the objective basis for a clear separation of interests between the existing classes. An essential contribution to this process of clarification will be the emergence of a revolutionary minority, which can link the condition of the Israeli working class and its struggles to the condition and struggles of all the oppressed people of the area, for a united fight against all bourgeois factions as part of the struggle of the proletariat for its emancipation on a world scale■



# LETTERS

## The Law of Value

Dear Editor

In issue no. 12 you explained the Marxian law of value. I'm currently struggling with Marx's 'magnum opus', and I found your approach to the subject very effective. However, I'm stuck with a paradox.

If the total (value of) goods produced by society over a given period are sold at their value (value measured by labour time) and the total labour expended in their production is paid for its value as labour power (i.e. value of maintenance and reproduction of labour); then it follows that the value of goods produced is greater than the wages and salaries that go to make up purchasing power.

For example, let's say that total consumer output of society for a given period is T. Let T be subdivided into the following elements: value of constant capital Xc; value of wages/salaries Yv; value of surplus Zs. Then,  
 $T = Xc + Yv + Zs$ .

But the total purchasing power is only equal to Yv.

On the other hand, the portion of goods represented by Xc + Zs have to be sold to realize any profit. Who is to buy these goods?

It would seem, prima facie, that capitalism, on the basis of the Labour Theory of Value, is an impossibility!

Where am I going wrong?

R.A. Manchester

Dear Comrade

Thank you very much for your letter explaining the paradox you have reached in your understanding of the law of value. We found the clear way you have posed your problem particularly interesting since the question you ask, "who is to buy these goods?" (i.e. the goods produced over and above the value of the workers' wages) is the same one as was asked by Rosa Luxemburg at the turn of the century! Luxemburg's answer was to declare that Marx was wrong in Volume II of *Capital* when he showed that capitalism created its own market. She went on to produce her own theory of accumulation based, not on the law of value, but on the sale of goods to pre-capitalist markets - i.e. she denied that capitalism could continue to exist in a situation where there were only capitalists and workers! As you say, if the law of value can't explain how the capitalists realise profits then theoretically capitalism cannot exist (or at least Marx's analysis and the law of value can be disregarded). But, as Bukharin pointed out in reply to Luxemburg, and as the CWO has explained to modern-day Luxemburgists (in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 6), there is nothing wrong with Marx's explanation of expanded reproduction in Volume II. The problem of how capitalism realises its profits is easily solved by the law of value once the importance of the total social product being divided into two departments of production is grasped. This is probably where you are going wrong.

If, like Marx, we divide the total social product (and therefore the total surplus value) produced in a given period into Department I, producing means of production (machinery, plant, etc.) and Department II, producing consumer goods, it is clear that there must be some exchange between the two departments for both the workers and capitalists to survive. The capitalists and workers in Dept. I can't consume machinery and plant, while on the other hand the capitalists in Dept. II can't replace their worn out equipment and install new machinery from the consumer goods produced in their own department.

If we break down the surplus value produced in both departments into that part which must

go to replace constant capital (c), the part that must replace variable capital or wages (v) and a surplus (s), the total social product can be shown as follows:

Department I  $Ic + Iv + Is$

Department II  $IIC + IIv + IIS$

For simple reproduction to take place - i.e. simply for worn out machinery to be replaced, for workers to be fed and clothed and for the capitalists to have enough to live from - some of the surplus value produced in each department must go to the other department.

Thus, the constant capital in Dept. I can be replaced from the surplus value produced in that Dept. But the variable capital (Iv) and the surplus (Is) in Dept. I are no good in the form of capital equipment; they must be exchanged for consumer goods from Dept. II. In Dept. II itself constant capital (IIC) cannot be replaced while the surplus value is still in the form of consumer goods; this must be exchanged for goods from Dept. I. Thus, so long as the surplus value exchanged between the two departments is equal, then capitalist relations reproduce themselves. Marx's formula for simple reproduction is therefore:  $Iv + Is = IIC$ . You can see there is now no problem about who is going to buy the goods destined to realise the constant and surplus capital. (Although Marx didn't deny that sporadic problems could and did occur because of imbalances between the two departments).

When Marx goes on to explain expanded reproduction (i.e. capitalist accumulation) the law of value still holds. This time we must not only divide the value produced in each department into  $c + v + s$ , but the surplus itself must be examined and divided into portion A which will be used for the capitalists' personal consumption and portion B which will be used for capital accumulation. Portion B can itself be broken into two parts - the first being the surplus value which will be accumulated as capital and the second the surplus value which will be accumulated as variable capital. Thus the surplus in both departments can now be shown as follows:

$Is = IA + IBc + IBv$

$IIS = IIA + IIBc + IIBv$

and the total social product can now be represented as:

Department I  $Ic + Iv + IA + IBc + IBv$

Department II  $IIC + IIv + IIA + IIBc + IIBv$

And since the surplus in both departments is initially in the form of capital and consumer goods respectively, there must be exchange between the departments as for simple reproduction. In other words, out of Dept. I's surplus, all the goods destined to provide variable capital for Dept. I and to be consumed by the capitalists of that department must be equal in value to the goods which are to provide the new constant capital for Dept. II (but which exist in the form of consumer goods before they are exchanged). Thus,  $(Iv + IA + IBv) = (IIC + IIBc)$ . In fact Marx's model of expanded reproduction shows that capitalist accumulation is a self-expanding process in which capitalism creates its own market.

We hope this brief explanation helps you to overcome the paradox you have encountered and that you will be able to go on and deepen your study of *Capital* and the law of value which alone can provide a convincing explanation for the present world economic crisis and capitalism's historic crisis as a mode of production.

Communist greetings

## Unions and Plots

Comrades,

Received *Workers Voice* 12 ... a reading of other communist papers prompted me to go back over the ICC's 'left in opposition' stance and their whole view of the function of the capitalist state etc. For them maybe the media's phrase of the 'lunatic left' isn't far short of the mark. Their general conspiracy theories are completely unnecessary to explain the workings of the state. It is not that the roles the trades unions, leftist and Labour parties, etc. have taken/been given that lead to their present functioning as supporters of capitalism and its state. For example, much is made of the trades unions sabotaging of workers' struggles and this is presented as the *raison d'être* of the trades union movement. (Even you in *WV* 12 say that "... The aim of the march was to help sabotage the workers' struggles"). The aim of the march was not to sabotage anything, although this was how it happened to function. The aim of the march was to strengthen a certain section of the capitalist class and this, in turn, was governed by the views of the trades unions and Labour Party, which by the role they have taken could only lead the workers further astray into beliefs in reformism. There is nothing machiavellian about this. The trades union movement, within the limits set by its history, believes in reformism which in turn governs its possible options and thus leads it to support a certain section of the bourgeoisie, and in the end capitalism itself. Their vision of Utopia is only another version of capitalism. It is their belief in such ideas as the happy co-existence of the workers/bosses, "responsible" trades unionism and so on, and their functioning as "protectors" of separate sectors of the working class (a relic of the old Guild system) that is the real enemy of the working class - sabotaging the class struggle in effect but not by design. Or with the leftist parties, with their radical sounding phrases, which act as the left of capital, who do nothing but promote a view of a different sort of capitalism. Slogans such as 'the right to work' (be exploited?) lead nowhere but, in the end, to a stronger capitalism.

This isn't to deny conspiracies/machiavellianism altogether. It's only too obvious in much of what happens in the ritual of pay bargaining, closed shops, workers on the board, the Labour Party using workers' struggles, but this is all only an ad hoc basis as the many different facets of the ruling class fight for supremacy amongst themselves. Grand conspiracies are unnecessary, capitalism is too strong, too all pervasive to need them.

Congratulations on *Workers Voice* 12. It was the most readable (accessible) yet. Keep it up.

K. Aberdeenshire

Dear Comrade

Thanks for your letter. You're right to say that we mustn't confuse the objective anti-working class function of the trade unions with subjective intention on their part (i.e. by all their members). In general trade union members remain unaware that the unions' historical function as wage negotiators means that today (when the material pre-conditions exist for the dissolution of wage labour) they can only act against the interests of the workers. This is a difficult idea to get across in the abstract. However, the alternative isn't to put forward a simplistic picture of the unions acting as part of a general conspiracy by the ruling class. This won't help us to convince workers of the need to fight outside of the trade unions and, as you say, will only contribute to workers thinking that communists are lunatics.

We also agree with you when you say this doesn't mean we can't recognise that the unions' implicit support for the existing system leads them inevitably to deliberate sabotage of the working class struggle at crucial junctures. The point is surely, that revolutionaries have to struggle against

Continued on pg 8



# Fake Union Militancy in French Postal Strike

We are publishing this letter from a CWO comrade who works in the French postal service. Not only does it highlight dramatically some of the ways in which the trade unions divide workers and the hostility with which they greet proposals for an effective fight, it also shows the need for revolutionaries to put forward alternative policies within each workplace. The fact that many workers will not listen to us at first is not so important. What is important is that communist workers stand out against the unions in the present day-to-day skirmishes with the bosses and provide a focal point for the growth of internationalist workplace groups which in turn will provide the basis for leading a real fight in the struggles which lie ahead.

Dear Comrades,

During the past three weeks I have been involved in the various stoppages at work. Some of them are still going on in the PTT (French postal service) in the Paris region.

First of all, it is necessary to stress the fact that not all postmen have struck. The movement has simply hit the sorting offices - those "on the roads" were ignored by the unions who wanted to avoid any national strike which could have threatened the government. Secondly the unions chose the most sectional aspects of the situation of the workers in the PTT (workplace problems), never mind the wage freeze of last year, the increase in taxes - the 1% tax on wages to finance job creation schemes, the 1% to fill the Social Security deficit, the 1% to finance deficits in the pension system. No mention of the fact that the increase in wages in 1982 and 1983 did not match the rate of inflation (there has been a 5% decline in the purchasing power of workers' wages this year in France).

Thirdly, action has been limited to token stoppages of 1 hour for each shift or half-shift, with the advantage for the unions that it was impossible to organise flying pickets to try to get support from other workers. Thus, workers were quite easily locked in the workplace, playing cards or football, or basking in the sun and leaving the unions a free hand to organise interminable rounds of negotiations with local bosses.

This kind of movement has hit almost every sorting office in France but not all at the same time. The Union view of how to struggle was quite well expressed by a Trotskyist (LCR) in an assembly in Lille when he said that success was dependent on 1) sending "communiqués" to the local press and radio stations to inform public opinion! 2) our capacity to negotiate! 3) eventually consulting trade unions in other workplaces about the possibility of extension and co-ordination of the movement!

From the start the unions tried to make this strike a conflict between sorting office workers and the local PTT administrator who was portrayed as an inflexible and reac-

tionary boss, not "open to dialogue"! When the strike began in mid-September the unions wanted to limit action to 1 hour token stoppages at the end of the working time. But when negotiations did not appear to "progress" they decided on picketing (1 hour alternating pickets). Then the PTT opened another sorting office in the Lille suburbs towards which all mail was directed and threatened to introduce short-time working for those in Lezennes. Faced with this threat the unions sent a joint telegram to the PTT boss in Lille asking to re-establish normal 'traffic', and told workers that it was necessary to return to work in order to avoid a lock-out.



"... workers were quite easily locked in the workplace, playing cards or football, or basking in the sun and leaving the unions a free hand to organise interminable rounds of negotiations with local bosses."

I was able to intervene a lot in union meetings I denounced the union manoeuvres, saying that 1 hour token stoppages and picketing are useless and that it was up to the workers themselves to decide on strike action if they wanted it. In fact the unions wanted above all to refurbish their tarnished image through a show of militancy in the context of elections to Social Security councils (run jointly by bosses and unions). Given the fact that their friends of the Socialist and Communist Parties are in power, they chose the most sectional problem to serve as a basis for agitation, that of "reduction" of the working week in the sorting offices from 38 to 37 hours. But this was a trick, since the PTT administration wanted to reduce the working week through cutting of the time spent in getting to the job which was formerly included in the working time.

Thus, I explained that it was necessary to include current problems in the PTT in the context of attacks by the Left government against the working class. It was therefore important to link present problems to others faced by the working class as a whole in the form of tax increases, cuts in social services, productivity increases and lay-offs. We were not facing these attacks alone, as postmen. Only by such understanding was it possible to take the struggle out of the workplace and try to establish links with workers elsewhere, not only those "on the roads", but also those of the tractor factory near Lille (Massey-Ferguson) facing the sack, or else those of the Thomson factory suffering continuous short-time working since the beginning of the year.

Obviously solidarity action could not be achieved through 1 hour token stoppages and passive picketing. It was necessary to either organise flying pickets to block the "scab sorting office" on the outskirts, or else to get solidarity action from those "on the roads", since if they struck there would be nobody to distribute the mail. Once this was done there would be a need to co-ordinate action with other sorting offices; such a task could not be left in

the hands of the unions, it was up to the workers themselves to organise this and control it.

As usual, I was attacked by union stewards as a dangerous "terrorist", as a "Red" and they were followed in this by the majority of the workforce. Just a small minority shared my perspective. Having "democratically" decided on the practical aspects of the "strike", the unions led it easily to defeat, as was predictable and as I predicted from the start. After three weeks of stoppages they called for a return to work and the bosses have enforced their plans which will increase productivity, discipline, work loads per head. The unions claim to have won since the bosses promised 2 more days off than at the beginning. But it's not a victory at all since, given the compulsory character of these days off, smaller shifts will do the work of a normal one, in fact the result is an increase in exploitation, just as the bosses wanted.

However, now that work has begun again, some of the workers who followed the unions feel they have lost in reality and have vigorously criticised union stewards. This is just a first step, but they belatedly recognised that they had been trapped and locked in by union tactics. Last Thursday the unions were attacked by workers who said that they had agreed on proposals which were opposed to the interests and demands formulated by the workers. I intervened in this meeting, drawing a balance sheet of the strike, explaining the weaknesses and pointing to the means of overcoming them by going beyond the union framework. I added that picketing was not an end in itself; to go on strike means taking part actively in all aspects of the strike, it doesn't mean remaining passive and leaving control of the strike in the hands of the unions. It's useless to close the gates of your workplace when mail is being sorted elsewhere and your workmates "on the roads" are distributing it. Further, any strike must seek solidarity from other workers in the public as well as the private sector. In the case of the PTT strike there was no co-ordination of the movement and the unions did their best to prevent any such thing. Thus, when Lille struck Amiens was working, when Amiens went back to work sorting offices in the Paris region and in Paris itself renewed strike action, a week after having been led back to work under pressure from the unions.

In short, I tried to draw the major lessons of the movement, giving political orientation to delineate working class interests from those of the unions, which are those of the bourgeoisie.

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• Continued from pg 7

trade unions inside the working class, and not just in terms of abstractions. We must be able to fight them on two fronts by:

a) exposing their sabotage (whether deliberate or not) and pointing to a practical alternative; b) undermining their outdated reformist ideas which permeate the working class and arguing instead for the revolutionary way forward.

It is too simplistic, and would discredit revolutionaries in the eyes of the working class, to turn this battle into a mere denunciation of a supposed plot on the part of the ruling class.

Glad you liked *Workers Voice* 12. We look forward to reading your comments on future issues■



# WORKERS VOICE

## Unions Sabotage Workers' Fightback. BOSSSES' ATTACK

### BOSSSES ON THE ATTACK

1980 marked a turning point in the recent history of the British working class. With the defeat of the steelworkers the bosses and the state were able to force through massive redundancies, drastic wage cuts, productivity deals, and in some cases all three. Many workers, for instance, have been told that their firm has gone bust and that they are to be laid-off. Then they find that "their" factory has been taken over by a multinational corporation which will re-employ some of them in a "similar role" (i.e. their old job) for  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the wages and longer hours (usually shift working).

There is no doubt that the bosses thought the Tory election victory was the green light to go ahead with even more savage attacks on jobs, wages and working conditions. British Shipbuilders have tried to get by without giving workers pay rises for two years. Vauxhall offered only 5% a year after a nil wage rise last year. The National Coal Board has begun threatening miners that if they don't work harder their pits will close, whilst British Telecom has revived the bosses' old tactic of a lockout to try to defeat the telephone engineers' opposition to privatisation. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

### WORKERS FIGHT BACK

What has surprised the bosses has been the fact that workers are no longer accepting these attacks as natural disasters. They are no longer listening when the bosses threaten them with the loss of their jobs. A great example here was at Sunderland Shipbuilders where 1,600 men went on strike because only some workers got a pay rise. The firm threatened them that if they didn't return to work then an order for the Falklands would be lost and they would lose their jobs. In addition to this threat went the old sob story that they were "unpatriotic" in not helping the "guys out there" (*Guardian* 11.10.83). To their eternal credit the workers realised that the "national interest" is the bosses' interest and remained unmoved by these appeals and threats. Similarly, at the modern Monkton Hall colliery near Edinburgh 1,500 men went on strike for a fortnight to show what they thought of NCB threats to sack 300 of them unless productivity improved. There have been a host of other struggles in recent weeks, from Nigg where workers at Highland Fabricators put up a fierce battle, down to London where British Telecom workers have been locked out by management. These struggles may as yet not amount to much, but in the context of the last three years they show that workers with their backs to the wall can, and will, fight back regardless of immediate consequences. Although strikes themselves won't lead to the downfall of capitalism, if workers didn't go on strike "... they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation". And as Marx went on to say, "By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement."

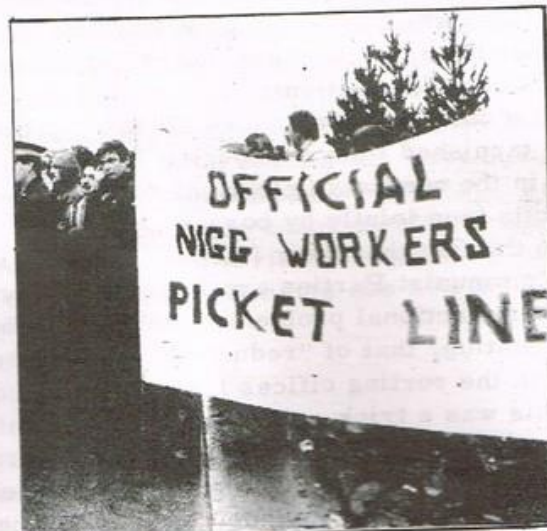
### UNIONS AGAINST WORKERS

But to start any larger movement the working class will have to break out of the union prison. We haven't heard much about the unions in Britain recently. Now that the working class has gone quiet the capitalist press obviously no longer thinks unions are public enemy number 1 and all we hear about is Len Murray advising the government on how best to keep the workers quiet. Murray recently informed us that "unions exist to prevent strikes" and the *Observer* (30.10.83) agrees:

"... union officials intervene in unofficial strikes to gain control of them and in response to the pleas of the employer who wants to reach a settlement."

In other words, as soon as workers begin to struggle then the unions stir themselves - to make sure things don't get out of hand. How unions work was shown in two different ways in the struggles of the Barnsley miners and the Vauxhall workers.

In the Barnsley coalfield 15 out of 16 pits and 15,000 miners came out in support of one worker who was transferred to another colliery after hitting a pit deputy. The strike lasted over a week and cost the NCB £7 millions. The so-called militant Yorkshire NUM area council



"...to start any larger movement, the working class will have to break out of the union prison..."

voted 67 votes to 3 to support the NCB and Jack Taylor (Scargill's chosen heir) was "unavailable" during the struggle. Meanwhile, the workers took the struggle into their own hands and when over 80 pickets turned up at South Kirby the NCB called on the police "to enforce Tebbit's Laws". The NCB was mystified.

"The Board could not understand the change of attitude among branches in the Barnsley area which had supported the decisions of their leadership for years." (*Guardian* 20.9.83)

In other words, the workers forced the bosses to backtrack by ignoring the union and showed that they are a long way from being "broken wretches".

At Vauxhall it was a different story. Whereas in Barnsley one pit had come out after another because pickets went round explaining the issues, in the Vauxhall struggle this didn't happen. To start with, 5 out of 6 workers voted for action in mass meetings round the country but then left the "struggle"

in the hands of the union negotiators. And whilst they waited the unions mobilised every tactic to demoralise them and weaken their resolve. First, the AUEW leader, Duffy appealed for a return to work and when this failed a secret ballot was carried out amongst 1,000 Dunstable lorry workers who accepted the firm's first offer. When this attempt to split the workers had little result and the workers had rejected two more offers, the stewards rigged the counting of the vote in the mass meeting at Luton to accept a "final" offer. This left many workers angry and shouting about a "sell-out".

### THE WAY FORWARD

But such "sell-outs" are part of the unions' role. They exist to negotiate wages with the bosses. If capitalism didn't exist, if the wages system was abolished, unions would have no role to play. Thus unions always want to keep the struggle for wages in their hands. In fact it was noticeable how in the "unofficial" Barnsley strike the workers not only went against the union but soon came up against the forces of the state in the form of the police. Once this happens then a strike begins to question the rule of capitalism itself. The possibility of the "larger movement" which Marx spoke of exists. In the Vauxhall strike no such danger appeared because the unions kept the strike firmly under their control.

Now workers are, as individuals, beginning to realise that the union exists to take their dues in quiet times and to pop up in strikes to act as a hindrance to the growth of a real struggle. However, individual disillusionment leads nowhere. Only a continuous, collective fight against the unions on a daily basis will enable other workers to truly appreciate the fact that unions will always defend the "national interest" against their interests, will always negotiate away jobs and real wage increases. In the last resort they will mobilise to support imperialist war just as they did in 1914 and 1939. The fight against unions is therefore a political fight - and the weapon for this fight is the factory groups of internationalist communists. By joining or forming these workers will be able to:

1. provide a centre of constant activity against the unions where lessons from each struggle are remembered and passed on from factory to factory;
  2. formulate demands which, unlike those posed by the unions, will be able to unite all workers across sectional divisions;
  3. form political education meetings with other workers to develop political understanding and skill at intervening in mass meetings so that workers do not leave the struggle to union officials;
  4. understand that every strike contains the seed of a wider struggle against the capitalist system itself.
- All this leads to the building of an internationalist communist party in the workplaces - to lead the fight to destroy capitalism for ever!

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