

# WORKERS VOICE

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**COMMUNIST  
WORKERS  
ORGANISATION**

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## 1984: More Marches More Missiles



## More Sacrifices More Struggles

The first batch of US missiles is now installed in Europe. From Italy to West Germany cruise and Pershing II missiles face their Russian SS20 counterparts in Eastern Europe. The Russian and American empires are now set for both "conventional" and nuclear battles in the "European war theatre". And throughout Europe the protests of the pacifists have failed to prevent this new danger.

### Greenham Common and Pacifism

Nowhere is this clearer than at Greenham Common US airforce base where the New Year opened with the government's announcement that the cruise missiles there are now "fully operational". The Greenham women's peace camp hasn't embarrassed the government into changing its mind about deploying cruise. This isn't surprising. The "symbolic protest" at Greenham is symbolic of this system, not a way to change it.

On a trivial level, blaming the present build-up to war on "male violence" is based on reactionary sexual stereotypes: the naturally aggressive male and the naturally passive female, thinly disguised as the naturally pacifist female. (They seem unaware that two of the most famous British feminists, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, were fanatical recruiters for the 1st World War.)

Secondly, the Greenham women and the

"peace movement" in general nourish the general belief in "Western democracy". Though a thorn in the side to governments in Western Europe, the antics of the disarmers are tolerated. Their demands, however, are ignored. So long as the interests of the state are not threatened free speech is allowed to have full reign. The peace protests serve as harmless safety valves where the pacifists can let off steam. At the same time the mass media can portray "extra-parliamentary" political activity as the work of a minority of irresponsible weirdos. This reinforces the idea that "ordinary people" can do nothing to prevent war and this should be left to governments and politicians who "know about these things" and who after all, like everyone else, do not want war.

Most important though, the pacifists draw attention away from the real cause of war which is rooted in the world economic crisis. They say that war is a question of morality and wrong ideas: if only politicians would change their ideas (and give us jobs instead of bombs) then we could end war. The "peace movement" likes to think of itself as having the rational solution to the problem of "national defence". Nuclear disarmament would provide for a peaceful future for each nation. "We are the real patriots" claim CND. But patriotism means defending the national capital and 20th century history has already shown that world

war is the natural outcome of defending one's "own" country in periods of world economic crisis.

The protests of the peace movement not only cannot prevent war, they are part of the drive towards it. From news reports of the women at Greenham, through a nuclear holocaust soap opera like "The Day After", to t.v. inquiries as to whether 16 or 32 million Britons would die in a nuclear attack, the message is the same: war is a scourge like a natural disaster. It is futile trying to prevent it. When the 3rd World War begins with "conventional weapons" we ought to thank our lucky stars and breathe a sigh of relief.

This is all part of the psychological build-up for workers to acquiesce in the most horrific butchery humanity has ever seen.

Revolutionaries are sometimes criticised for their "pessimism" and are accused of doing nothing to prevent a 3rd World War. But our recognition that world war is inevitable under the present system and our exposure of the real role of the peace movement are only one half of the story.

### The Real Reason for the Arms Build-Up

The root cause of the world-wide moves towards war today is the economic crisis which springs from falling profit rates. All over the world government managers and private bosses need to boost profits by producing more goods more cheaply. To do this they are forced to invest in ever-more advanced machinery so that fewer workers produce more goods than before in the same period of time. As the proportion of capital invested in the workforce - the people who actually produce profits and wealth - is reduced in relation to money spent on new technology and machines, profit rates decline. When capitalism can no longer produce profitably it needs to devalue existing machinery and plant and reduce the value of labour power (i.e. workers' wages) to create the conditions for a new cycle of accumulation.

Today's worsening crisis, which is hitting all countries, although at different levels, makes the imperialist struggle for control of markets and areas of strategic influence more severe. The economic war amongst the rival capitalist states is becoming more intense, competitiveness is the watchword everywhere, nobody can afford to lose an important market and each has to try to win new ones at the expense of his rivals.

The bosses' search for "competitiveness" means they have to find ways of cutting production costs. Companies are "rationalised", whole industries and national economies are "restructured". The first victims in this process are the workers who are asked to make sacrifices (i.e. to accept lower pay, lower dole and social security benefits, harder working conditions and productivity increases, etc.). At the same time tens of thousands are expelled indefinitely from the production process. (In the EEC alone more than 12 million are currently unemployed.) It is these austerity measures which are the real

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# Stockport Messenger: THE LESSONS OF DEFEAT

## ■THE CLOSED SHOP: A FALSE ISSUE

The dispute between the NGA and Stockport Messenger boss Eddie Shah which hit the headlines before Christmas has quietly petered out. All political shades of capitalism, from the Trotskyists to the Tories have presented this strike - resulting from the sacking of six workers - as a battle for the closed shop. Whilst the right-wing pour out their hypocrisy about "freedom for the individual" the left-wing call upon workers to defend the closed shop as essential to working class organisation.

In the case of the NGA it may appear that the closed shop is an important weapon for defending workers' interests. Print workers for the big Fleet Street newspapers command higher wages than their provincial counterparts and the NGA has so far been able to slow down the introduction of new technology which in the capitalist system can only mean redundancies. When the bosses have introduced new machines the union has managed to restrict the new, less skilled jobs, to its own members. This has meant that the NGA has kept its relatively strong position which allows it a substantial say in how bosses introduce and deploy the new technology.

But the strength of the Fleet Street workers is not based upon the closed shop but rather the kind of job they do and the extreme competition amongst Fleet Street bosses.

The newspaper industry is vital to our rulers for putting over their view of the world. The moulding of "public opinion" through the mass media is an essential part of capitalism's domination over the working class in the 20th century. What's more, the cut-throat competition amongst the big newspaper groups means that each one is afraid of a prolonged strike by its workforce. For the big newspapers a few days' loss of sales can mean the difference between profit and loss. For these reasons the bosses fear a confrontation with the print workers. This has been the real source of the workers' strength. Outside of Fleet Street print workers do not have the same muscle and this is reflected in their wages which are often no higher than average.

In the long run though, the impact of competition in Fleet Street will provoke further automation and more redundancies. The NGA leaders know this. What they are trying to ensure is that the union survives by overseeing the phasing-in of the new technology and continuing to control the workforce by restricting the operation of new machines to NGA members. A sudden mass drop in membership would mean a real loss of the union's financial assets and an end to secure jobs for union bureaucrats. The NGA is fighting to survive by maintaining as high a membership as possible through the closed shop.

But is this fight the same as a fight to defend the working class as the left-wing press says? A brief glance at recent history shows this is NOT the case. NGA members obviously haven't escaped the decline in real wages that all workers have experienced over the last ten years or so. Jobs HAVE been lost. Like all other unions, the NGA has accepted substantial redundancies in the name of 'realism'. Like all other unions, the NGA takes the same standpoint as the bosses: the need to rationalise and increase competitiveness to keep up profit rates. And so, like all unions, the NGA accepts there must be some redundancies and "increased productivity". What it's trying to do is avoid being wiped out in the process. It's not concerned with leading a real fight to defend workers because a real fight will have to be a simultaneous struggle throughout Britain, not just against one particular boss's or firm's attacks on its workers, but against ALL job losses, ALL productivity deals. NO union would call for such action because NO union puts the interests of the whole working class above its

own survival. And to survive the unions must do their part to prop up the bosses' system of wage labour and production for profit. They must try to control the workers, hold them back from militant mass struggle by pitting them against each other and distorting the issues. They must try and persuade us that a certain amount (how many?) of lay-offs are unavoidable. They do this because the bosses' system is also THEIR system. (This is why it's not remarkable that Eddie Shah was also a member of the NGA.)

## ■THE REAL ISSUE: WAGE CUTS

When Shah attempted to replace his workforce with cheaper, non-union labour, the left joined in chorus for a fight to protect "basic trade union rights". Undoubtedly his actions were a real attack on the working class. His introduction of new technology meant he could employ workers without the traditional skills and pay them lower wages. However, this issue of wage cutting which could have been the basis for a real working class fight was diverted by the unions into a fight for the principle of the closed shop.

## ■NGA'S FAKE MILITANCY

The closed shop issue has allowed the NGA to take a radical stance whilst minimising the risk of the struggle getting out of union control. The NGA was certainly concerned that the break of the closed shop would mean the introduction of new technology was getting out of their control. This would put the union's future in jeopardy. For the NGA the issue became self-preservation by preserving the closed shop. This meant sabotaging any steps towards a real fightback by the workers, as the following NGA actions show:

- \* The calling off of the Fleet Street walk-out which, by hitting the bosses in a particularly sensitive area, could have put pressure on Shah to back down. Instead action was concentrated at Warrington where it had little economic effect and could be broken up by the police.

- \* The mass picket on the night of November 22nd erupted into a militant display of class violence after the union loudspeaker van was smashed up by the police, preventing union officials from keeping the picket under control. The union then condemned the workers' attempts to prevent Shah's vans leaving. The next day workers were called away to a union rally in Manchester, leaving the way free for the delivery vans to leave.

The sequestration of NGA assets by the Court of Appeal was ordered due to the union's failure to call off "secondary picketing". This had a double edged effect that was not entirely disadvantageous to the union. Whilst the union obviously didn't want to lose its funds, the threat of further court action allowed the NGA to appear as a radical force against the bosses and the state. The union was then able to appeal for moderation in a strike which was getting out of control. A similar process was at work in the manoeuvrings of the TUC over the question of "solidarity" action. The majority decision of the TUC general council not to support the NGA created the impression of a real division between right and left unions, the latter genuinely representing the interests of the workers. The NGA uttered dismay at the TUC's decision but in reality was only too relieved to call off the strike and retain its credibility by blaming the TUC. "Without TUC backing what can one union do?" asked the NGA bosses. This didn't worry them in 1970 when the NGA left the TUC to register under the Conservatives' Industrial Relations Act. In terms of putting up a real fight the



The state on the offensive as the police attack pickets at Warrington

whole issue of TUC support is a red herring.

Now that the NGA has publicly announced its intention to "abide by the law", thus safeguarding its funds, Shah has triumphantly announced a victory for "the rights of the individual". What this means is that he can continue to undercut wages in Stockport and sack anyone who doesn't accept this while the unspoken and unwritten agreement is that the Fleet Street bosses won't be challenging the closed shop there. For the NGA and the bosses this is a suitable compromise. For the working class it is yet another example of how the unions divide the class and undermine the struggle from within. Yet another skirmish lost in the guerrilla war to maintain jobs and wages.

## ■THE LESSONS

This strike can be compared to that at Grunwick's or, more recently, to the strike at Aire Valley Yarns in Yorkshire. In all cases the struggle has been one of union recognition against an ultra-right wing section of capitalism which is unable to see, or take advantage of, the benefits of trade union discipline on the shop floor. In such struggles the left can pull out all the stops in its militant slogans. Workers are called upon to fight for their "basic right" to be in trade unions, but ultimately, trade union or no, the employers go ahead with their wage cuts and redundancies, leaving workers isolated and demoralised.

The basis for a really united fight was at the Stockport Messenger itself. If the NGA workers there had demanded that new workers, whether union members or not, be paid the existing rate for the job then the real issue of wage cuts would have been exposed. Had the new workers joined such a fight and had the Stockport workers not seen the Fleet Street solidarity strike called off, then the divisive tactics of Shah and the divisive policies of the union could have been overcome.

Once more the necessity of breaking loose from the union framework has been clearly shown. What's more, the fighting ability seen on the Warrington picket lines shows that the tide of class anger is beginning to rise again. But workers' instinctive resistance against the bosses' mounting attacks can't be turned into an all-out working class fight until they realise that trade union boundaries and the whole method of trade union struggle work against them. It is the basic task of those of us who want to see a united fight to develop this awareness inside the workplaces and remove one of the main barriers to a wider struggle.



# NALGO Sabotaging the Struggle

On 7th December, NALGO's "day of action", some CWO members working in local government produced and distributed the following leaflet to council workers on strike in support of residential social workers.

The residential social workers' claim for a reduced working week and unsocial hours payments had been at "arbitration" for two years, and some of the social workers had been on strike since September. NALGO refused all along to call an all-out strike of social workers and channelled their militancy into heavily stewarded marches, rallies, lobbies and a "day of action". Many social workers became disillusioned with the way the union conducted this action and, like the miners with their overtime ban, felt this long, drawn-out struggle did more to reduce their pay packets than it did to win their claim. So by the time a union ballot was held about refusing to work outside the hours of 9 to 5 many didn't support it because they had already been demoralised. The union then recommended a return to normal working and told the workers to rely on yet another "independent enquiry". In some areas the strike nevertheless carried on (and still does at the time of writing) but the workers felt isolated, sold out and worn out by the union's leadership of the struggle. Although they censured the national executive for its handling of the dispute, they did not think of taking the struggle into their own hands.

The CWO welcomes the strike action of some sectors of social workers, as we did that of the hospital workers two years ago. In fighting to improve their pay and conditions care workers are beginning to act as part of the working class. They are destroying the Florence Nightingale fairy tale. They are no longer accepting the lie that their individual dedication can compensate for poor wages, overwork, decrepit buildings and lack of materials. When they strike the ruling class attacks them viciously. From the hysterical shrieks of the Sun that they are "child killers" to the headmasterly reproof of the Guardian the message is the same. They are blamed for any harm that occurs to those they are paid

to look after. The real killer, however, is the capitalist system, for it has no interest in the survival of those who will never work - the physically and mentally infirm, the very old. Care services are luxuries for the capitalists, so when a crisis comes so do the cuts. And workers will not forget that the Callaghan government of 1975-9 began the cuts which Thatcher's government carries out with such enthusiasm. Both Labour and Tory apply the logic of capitalism to the social services.

This struggle shows that the care workers like the hospital workers, can have no faith in the fake solidarity of NALGO "days of action". In fact such token actions are a sign that workers are already defeated. It shows that their struggle has already become the property of the union. With defeat staring them in the face, many of the care workers are beginning to blame NALGO's leaders. But the fault lies not in bad leadership: the NALGO bosses are only doing what unions everywhere are doing. Unions exist in order to negotiate with the government and bosses so they try to keep the class struggle under their control. This is why unions try to settle disputes quietly but sometimes appear more militant in areas where workers are likely to fight. If the union doesn't put itself at the head of such struggles then it runs the risk of being rejected by the workers.

NALGO's "day of action" therefore, despite much muttering, saves its reputation as a representative of the workers' interests but as the crisis deepens, as the standard of living falls, the day of reckoning draws nearer. Then health and care workers will not only be defending their own jobs and conditions but also the social wage of all workers. This is the condition for a real solidarity which will dissolve all artificial union boundaries in waves of mass strikes. In the meantime it is the task of communists to prepare for this moment by establishing a stronger presence amongst workers in order that they become more aware of the need to dictate the conditions of their own struggle and not to leave it in the hands of the unions.

## Leaflet

## NALGO'S Day of Inaction

NALGO is asking its members to strike for 24 hours in support of the residential social workers' parity claim. Many council workers are wondering how this action will benefit either themselves or the social workers.

The answer is that it won't. This strike has shown yet again the role of the trade unions in sabotaging workers' struggle. Not only has NALGO refused all along to call an all-out strike of residential social workers, but they are collaborating with management to employ "suitably qualified temporary staff" as scab labour. And NALGO leaflets demanding "an end to the exploitation of the social workers" say that this means "the same working conditions as other local government staff". There are, however, a lot of local authority workers around who would deny that their working conditions represent an end to exploitation!

The fact is that all workers are exploited, and as the crisis of capitalism deepens we are being forced to accept lower wages and worsening conditions. As the pool of unemployment deepens we are told we should be grateful to have a job at all. Here once again we see the trade unions attempting to divide the workers section by section. We must reject all notions that any sector (social workers, nurses, toothbrush makers perhaps) are a special deserving case whose claim we can support whilst neglecting our own.

Trade union "solidarity" means empty gestures. The "Days of Action" in the health workers strike served only to confuse and demoralise the workers involved. Real working class solidarity, however, was recently demonstrated by 20,000 Barnsley miners who spontaneously walked out in support of a victimised colleague, while the union apparatus did all it could to get them back to work.

The way to show solidarity with the social workers is not to accept NALGO's dictates, but to refuse to accept the poor pay and conditions in our own sections. We must not listen to management and the unions when they say that our interests are the same as those of the company or government body we work for. Their aim is to get as much work as possible for as little pay as possible. Their interests are totally opposed to ours.

Management tells us they cannot afford to pay us more. That is not our concern. We must show that we are not

## positions of the C.W.O.

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

\* Trade unions and shop stewards cannot defend the interests of the working class.

\* The struggle for communism cannot be waged through Parliament, but must be carried out through workers' councils with recallable delegates.

\* The working class can only come to power through the creation of its own political party: the international communist party.

\* The capitalist system is in crisis and irretrievable decline. It can only offer inflation and unemployment and it cannot be reformed. The only choice for the future is war or revolution:

BARBARISM or COMMUNISM

## ★ New Address

- CWO, P.O. Box 145, Head Post Office, Glasgow
- BM Box CWO, London WC1N 3XX
- CLES/CWO 23 bis Rue de Fontenoy, 59000 Lille, France

15F from French address

£1 from British addresses

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## APPEAL FUND

□ The deepening of the crisis and the corresponding aim of communists to deepen their interventions in the working class, means an increasing burden on the financial resources of the C.W.O. We are totally dependent on the contributions of our members, supporters and sympathisers, practical and financial.

□ We appeal to our readers to help us in any way they can. Any donations, large or small, will help maintain and broaden our work.

□ If you agree with the ideas put forward in REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES and WORKERS VOICE, help to extend our work with a SUPPORTERS' SUBSCRIPTION of £10 to receive all our publications.

□ An even more welcome contribution to our work would be to take copies of our press (e.g. 5 copies on a sale-or-return basis), or bundles of leaflets for distribution.

□ In addition, we welcome all comments on our political positions, and will reply to all letters received.

## DONATIONS

Without the donations of comrades and sympathisers all the political activities carried out by the CWO would be impossible. We naturally appeal for further help but in the meantime wish to gratefully acknowledge the following: CP:£150, AD:£150, MM:£76, DGP/KC:£45, ER:£15, POL:£20, RL:£10, PT:£4, Y:£4



# CUBA



## PAWN OF IMPERIALISM

Cuba in the twentieth century is a perfect example of how imperialism causes stagnation in the economies of industrially less developed countries. It is also a perfect example of how "national liberation" from imperialism is impossible today. All that these weaker economies can do is change from one imperialist master to another (from the USA to the USSR or vice versa).

In fact in the last 100 years Cuba has been a colony of three empires, since it was only in 1902 that it became "independent" from Spain. This independence was, however, more formal than real since Cuba had won its "independence" as a result of the Treaty of Paris which ended the Spanish-American War of 1898-9. No Cuban was present at the peace conference.

### Under the heel of the USA

Until 1902 Cuba was occupied by US troops who left when the Cuban government agreed to include the following clause in "independent" Cuba's constitution: "...the US reserves and retains the right of intervention for the preservation of Cuban independence and the maintenance of stable government...". In other words, modern imperialism had arrived in Cuba. Although no longer occupied by foreign troops Cuba was a colony of the USA in all but name. Before 1933 the US Army was to enter Cuba on at least 3 occasions.

The US soon began to feel the economic benefits of "our Cuban colony". In 1903 Cuba was also forced to sign a trade treaty which worked entirely to the benefit of the US. Cuba was allowed to sell sugar (which then, as now, provided over 80% of its earnings) at 20% below the US sugar tariff whilst the USA was allowed to sell to Cuba a whole range of goods at a similar reduced tariff. The effect of this treaty was to force Cuban capital into total dependence on the world price of a single crop whilst cheap US imports prevented the growth of local industry. It wasn't long before Cuba began to pay the penalty for this. By 1910 the cheaper Cuban sugar had pushed all other sugar (which had to pay the full US tariff) off the US market. For Cuban sugar this meant that further increased production only lowered its world price (since the extra would be sold on the world market), ensuring that the sugar industry would never greatly improve its investment returns. Only the extra demand for sugar from the Allies during World War One (1914-18) prevented a crisis breaking out immediately. When the war ended the demand for sugar collapsed and so did sugar prices. So too did any hopes of an independent Cuban capitalism. By September 1921 78% of the Cuban sugar industry and the banks which had supplied them were in the hands of US banks and corporations. But instead of cutting sugar production in order to raise sugar prices (the obvious course from the point of view of Cuban capital), these US monopolies increased it. This lowered the world price of raw sugar (thus hitting Cuban producers) but these banks

and sugar companies also invested in refined sugar and so cheap raw sugar was in their interest, even if it did make Cuba poorer. Cheap raw sugar helped to increase profits for refined sugar investors. This is a perfect example of how capitalist imperialism works all over the world, where raw materials are bought below value and then sold back to the supplier as finished goods with grossly inflated prices. Cuba provides another example. Before 1959 there was no canning plant on the island so fresh tomatoes and fruit sold by Cuba to the US often returned there in tins at inflated prices.

### The 1933 'Revolution'

These sort of policies by US imperialism led to the rise of Cuban nationalism and to state intervention in the economy. In 1926 the dictator Machado introduced an Act to limit the production of sugar. Whilst this pleased the local Cuban capitalists (since it raised sugar prices and thus their profits) it threw many Cuban sugar workers out of work. And when the US raised the tariff on Cuban sugar in 1929 sales to the US fell and led to even more unemployment and starvation. In 1933 the result was a popular insurrection, led by sugar workers, which overthrew Machado. A mass strike throughout the whole island led to workers seizing 36 sugar mills and even establishing a "soviet" at the Senado mill. However, lacking the leadership of a revolutionary party, the workers fell under the leadership of the Stalinist Popular Socialist Party (PSP) which contented itself with calling for an 8 hour day and legal unions. The Cuban workers missed their chance to seize state power but the insurrection itself highlights how workers' interests in the 20th century are NEVER the same as their bosses, even if they have the same nationality.

As the working class had exhausted itself in the earlier struggle the army, under Batista, was able to seize power and workers were driven into the mills and fields at the point of the bayonet.

Batista didn't rely on the stick alone. He recognised the leadership of the PSP over the unions as the best way to prevent the class struggle from getting out of control. At the height of the Stalin-Roosevelt alliance Batista even included, with the apparent blessing of his masters in Washington, two leading members of the PSP in his government.

### Cuba before Castro

After 1933 government intervention in the sugar industry also increased in order to keep farmers, businessmen and the sugar mill workers happy. In 1950 the World Bank described what was happening in the Cuban sugar industry as,

"... perhaps one of the most elaborate patterns of government control ever imposed on an industry short of actual

# 25 YEARS OF

On January 1st 1959 Castro came to power in Cuba. On Jan. 1st 1961 he gave a defiant speech. In it he said that invasions like that of the "Bay of Pigs" were "an attempt to destroy the independence" from US imperialism. The two articles here show how imperialism has meant for Cuba in the last 25 years. The

nationalisation."

Nationalisation didn't happen because the sugar owners still dominated the state, and in any case the Cuban ruling class didn't want to annoy the USA. However, profits were no longer what they were for the US monopolies and because of increased government control they cut their investment in the sugar industry by half and sold half their mills to Cubans.

According to Cuba's nationalist leaders, this transfer of ownership should have stopped much of the profits produced by Cuban workers from going out of the country. This should have ended the 30 years of economic stagnation and led to industrialisation. But it didn't. The Cuban ruling class did get more profits, but not enough to make it worthwhile investing in new productive industry. They could not compete with the prices of US goods. Further, the US wouldn't allow Cuba to run up a national debt - an essential part of all industrial revolutions. In the 1950's all US loans were repaid within 30 days. So instead the local capitalists used 60% of their new income to buy houses in West Havana and Miami. Cuba became a playground for US millionaires and the Mafia set up gambling dens and brothels all over Havana. The rampant corruption of Cuban politics and the wealth and luxury of Havana contrasted markedly with the life of the vast numbers of rural unemployed in the sugar industry. They only worked when the sugar harvest (*zafra*) was on. The rest of the year was called the "dead time" and for many this was literally true.

### How Castro changed Cuba's Master

Castro's take-over ended all this. In 1959 Castro didn't claim to be a socialist. In fact rather the opposite. The Programme Manifesto of the 20th July Movement and Castro's speech at his Moncada trial are specifically anti-socialist and anti-working class. He said the Cuban worker, "... should not be alien to the fatherland's sorrows and should abandon his class isolation and negative passivity..." He went on to say Cuba's ideology "will not be something imported from other places" and set out his creed as "democracy, nationalism and social justice". By "democracy" he meant that of the USA (he quoted US Presidents Lincoln and Jefferson with approval) while his nationalism included a "doctrine of constructive friendship" with the USA since "it is improper in America to use the word 'imperialism' ". On a trip to the USA in May 1959 he said,

"I have clearly and definitely stated that we are not communists ... The gates are open for private investment that contributes to the development of Cuba."



Castro adopted 'Socialism' when America failed to supply aid.

Castro was, and is, a nationalist, in essence a typical South American demagogue. How then did he decide to call himself a "Marxist-Leninist" on December 2nd 1961?



# CASTRO'S CUBA

January 1st 1984, to celebrate 25 years of "socialism" in Cuba, Castro made a speech in Grenada would not prevent Latin American countries from gaining "national independence" and have different tasks. The first examines what "national independence" from the US means and the second answers those who claim that Cuba is "socialist" or at least "progressive".

## CUBA IS CAPITALIST

For Marx communism or socialism (he used both words) could only come about in a society of abundance, of material wealth. In it goods would be distributed on the principle of "from each according to his ability; to each according to his need". On the other hand, the chief way in which capitalism can be recognised is in the use of wage labour. For Marx "wage labour pre-supposes capitalism". All the so-called socialist societies of today, from the USSR and Eastern Europe through China, Albania and Vietnam keep this central feature of capitalism.

In every society which pays wages the workers produce surplus value. In other words they are denied the full product of their labour. These societies, no less than the West, are thus exploiting societies - in short, capitalist societies. It's true that the state rather than an individual is the boss but this in no way changes their capitalist nature. As Engels wrote a century ago, "... the transformation ... into state ownership does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces ... The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine ... The workers remain wage labourers ... The capitalist relation is not done away with." (Anti Dühring pp329-30)

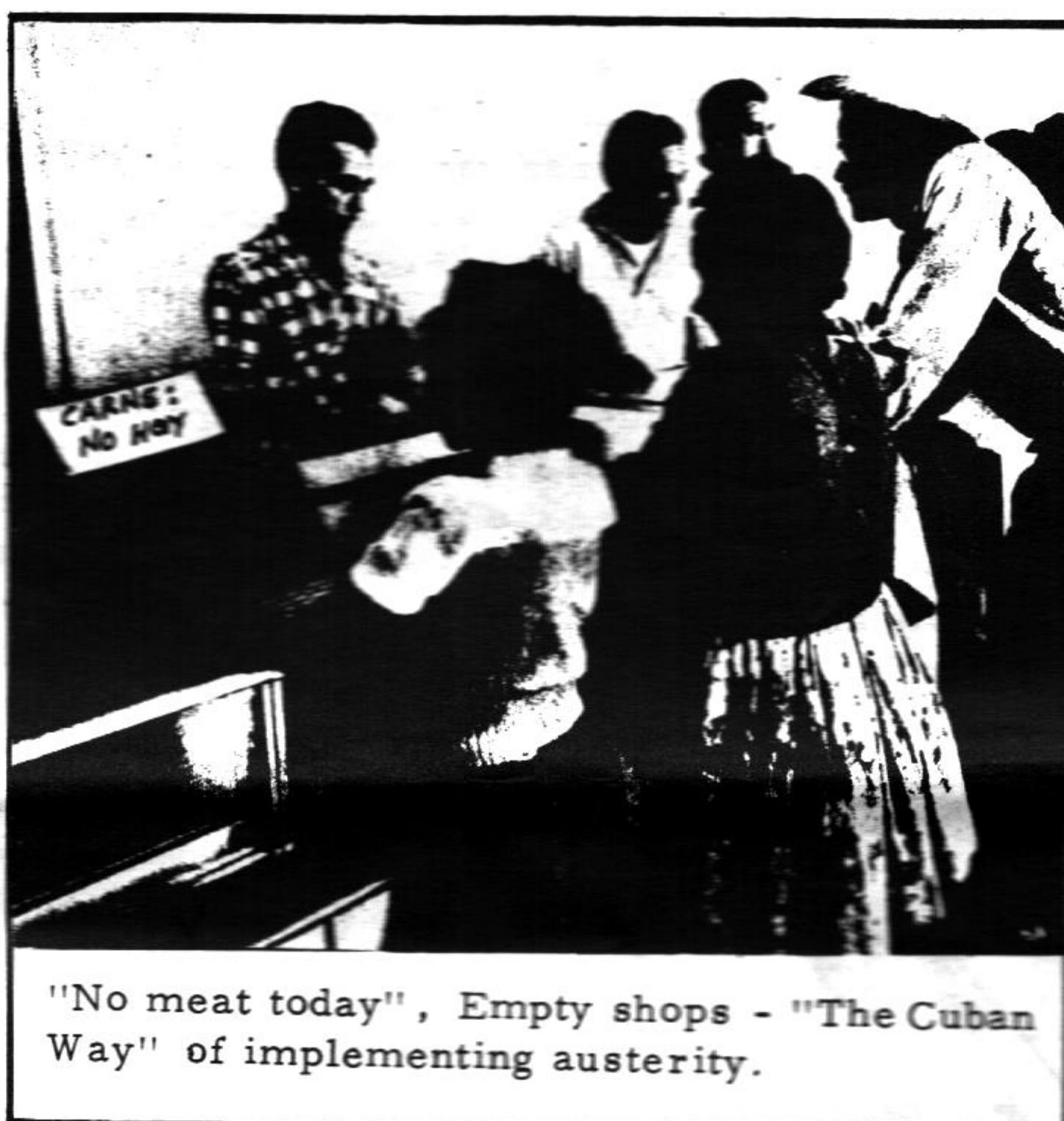
Many will therefore agree with us that the USSR, China, et.al. are state capitalist but when faced with its tropical version in Cuba they begin to show doubts. They argue that it's "different", that it has features of "real" socialism or that it has to be defended because it is "progressive". Such fantasies of the left can easily be dispelled by looking at the facts.

### Class in Cuba

Let's begin by looking at the conditions of the workers. It's true that Castro ended the unemployment rate of 25-30% common in the 1950's but this has only been achieved through huge Russian subsidies which hide massive unemployment. Workers on state farms work 5 hours and get paid for 8, whilst seasonal workers get paid a full year for 6 months work. This doesn't really matter since there isn't much to buy. Castro also introduced a social security law in 1962 but by 1969 only 6% of Cuban workers had fully qualified for all pension and social security benefits because this depended on a good work record. This was further tightened up in August 1969 by Law no.225 which established work control cards for all workers. They record each

worker's background, political activity and productivity. Without it you cannot work or receive a wage. In addition it is a crime not to work (under the 1971 "Law Against Idleness") whilst increasingly labour is being militarised. Thus the tendency is to increase rather than decrease exploitation.

As a preparation for this school children are also militarised. They are sent to "schools in the countryside" which are subject to military discipline. The motto of the Ministry of Education is "Study, Work, Rifle" and the aim of its schools is to teach the virtue of productive work and of dying for the "socialist fatherland" in Africa. (There are 25,000 Cubans in Angola alone.)



But even militarisation has not succeeded in lifting productivity and 20% of Cuban workers are now on piece work whilst 50% have to achieve a production quota before getting paid.

At the same time a new ruling class has emerged. Judges, technicians and ministers get ten times the workers' wage and don't have to depend on their ration card like the rest of the population. They also have access to the fleet of 1,500 Alfa Romeos Castro bought for the use of the elite. As one Castro sympathiser has noted, this has led to "A problem whose existence has only recently been acknowledged (which) is the high degree of social tension between the labour force and the state bureaucracy". (Cuba in Revolution Valdes and Bonachea p.378)

This is an understatement since workers who go on strike are arrested in their hundreds,

Castro still wavered, but in February 1960 the USSR offered to take Cuba's unsold sugar for 5 years (at a relatively high price). Castro saw his chance. With Russian aid he thought Cuba could abandon its dependence on sugar production and industrialise. In a last desperate attempt to stop Castro taking Cuba into the arms of Russia, Kennedy launched the Bay of Pigs invasion. This ended in humiliation for the US and provoked a Cuban nationalist reaction which made Castro more secure than ever. However, Castro wanted greater military security and so he now declared himself a "Marxist-Leninist". In mid-1962 he persuaded Russia to send missiles to the now "socialist" Cuba. The withdrawal of these missiles in face of a US

whilst some leaders of striking cane cutters have been sentenced to death for "sabotage".

### Propaganda against the People

Yet to read books written by Castro supporters in the West one would think Cuba was the ideal democracy in which "the people" really take part. This is totally untrue. In fact Cuba is nearer to the fascist political model than any other. Castro is referred to as the great leader who makes six big speeches every year excusing failures (like Grenada), or setting targets for mobilisation. The much talked about "People's Power" is in fact nothing but an attempt to mobilise more Cubans behind the targets Castro sets and to give life to dead bodies like the state unions. All the real decisions aren't taken by the Cuban Communist Party (set up in 1965) but by Castro and his immediate cronies. Castro owes more to Napoleon than Marx in that he relies on nationalism and plebiscites to win over the masses (97% voted for the 1976 "socialist" constitution - Hitler got similar votes when he made himself Fuhrer of Germany).

Cuba shows clearly that socialism is not something that can be imposed by this or that dictator or group of dictators. Despite its romantic image, political mobilisation has been very much on the totalitarian model, with children drafted into the "Camilitos" (a militaristic Boy Scout movement like the Hitler Youth or Stalin's Komsomol). Even in its famous campaign to wipe out illiteracy in 1961 the Cuban state did not have educational but political goals. Like Stalin in the 1930's, Castro realised that the state's political aims would reach more people if they could read. Books used were more like political than teaching manuals, including such definitions as "economic blockade ... a state of siege imposed by imperialism (which) we have conquered thanks to the countries which trade with us." Not bad for beginners. At the end of the campaign all Cubans had to write a letter to Castro, thus getting them to recognise the new state structure and their "great leader".

### Conclusion

To those who still want to believe that there is a "socialist paradise" on earth the facts we have outlined here will seem unpleasant. No doubt some will take comfort in the view that we "must have got them from the CIA". (In fact many are taken from the speeches of leading representatives of the Cuban state.) They confirm what genuine marxists who have not sold their critical capacities to imperialism have always known. Socialism cannot be built in one country alone (as was proved first in Russia in the 1920's). And socialism cannot be imposed on the working class by a small elite trying to make capitalism work more efficiently. The tasks of the Cuban working class remain the same as before. They are the same as for workers everywhere. Only the international workers' revolution will open up the conditions for the realisation of socialism world-wide. Only then will the dictatorship of Castro give way to the dictatorship of the armed workers' councils.

The answer is very simple. Castro's main aim as a nationalist was to industrialise Cuba. But Cuba's nationalist claims had already gone as far as they could without directly attacking the aims of US imperialism. Thus, a minor land reform in May 1959 (which was less radical than the one the US General MacArthur had introduced in Japan after World War 2) led to protests and threats in the USA. This was followed by Eisenhower's cuts in the Cuban sugar quota. Previously the threat of such a cut would have been enough for a Cuban government to back down. On t.v. Castro pleaded with Eisenhower that he only wanted a "change of proportion" in relations with the US. Eisenhower refused to listen and US propaganda portrayed Castro as a "communist".

threat to start a nuclear war was a setback for Castro. More significantly, he began to realise that Cuba had not, after all, escaped the clutches of imperialism. He had simply changed one imperialist master for another. In the deal patched up by Kennedy and Khrushchev after the 1962 missile crisis Khrushchev, without consulting Castro, allowed the US to enter Cuba to make sure the missile sites had been dismantled. Castro was furious and publicly denounced Russia. He even thought of turning to China for "disinterested" aid. His economic advisers pointed out that China itself had enormous economic problems in its attempt to balance between the imperialist camps.

continued overleaf



## Russian Imperialism

So Castro found himself stuck with Russian 'aid' and like American 'aid' it came with strings. A 2.5% interest was soon added to the original interest-free loans. These state capitalist terms may sound more generous but it must be remembered that in every agreement signed by Cuba with the USSR 80% of the 'aid' money had to be spent on Russian machines and goods. These were sold to Cuba at between 11% and 53% more than Western equivalents. But it was through sugar that Cuba once again experienced the bitter taste of imperialism. The USSR doesn't really need sugar since it produces enough sugar beet. But it resells Cuban sugar at a higher price to its East European satellites and thus, like the USA, profits by unequal trade. Castro had hoped to end dependence on sugar by industrialising but Russian advisers encouraged him to develop the industry. They were encouraging him to develop Cuba's dependence on Russia. In 1964 Castro adopted his Perspective Sugar Plan which aimed to produce a record 10 million tons of sugar by 1970. It had to succeed because the Eastern bloc countries were going to "buy" 8½ million tons. If Castro was to win any room for manoeuvre he had to get as much convertible (i.e. Western) currency as possible by selling Cuba's full quota of 1½ million tons on the free market. This was why he needed 10 million tons in 1970. The Plan failed and only about 8½ million tons were produced. It was an economic disaster from which Cuba has never recovered. The effort ruined fields and mills for years after and since then the harvest has always been below 6 million tons. It has left Cuba totally dependent on the USSR, owing it 10 million tons of sugar as well as over 6 billion dollars. It is calculated that it costs the USSR \$3 million a day to support Cuba.

This shows that imperialism doesn't always operate with shopkeepers' logic. In Cuba the USSR gets returns on its investment in political and military benefits. Castro has become increasingly the faithful "revolutionary" mouthpiece of the Kremlin. In the early Sixties Castro tried to follow an independent foreign policy by promoting "armed struggle" in South America against Moscow's wishes. This collapsed in Bolivia in 1967 when Che Guevara was murdered (after being abandoned by members of the pro-Moscow Bolivian Communist Party). In 1968 we find Castro defending the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia and in 1973 he made himself particularly useful in denouncing China at the Conference of Non-aligned Countries in Algeria. In 1975 his dependence on the USSR was revealed in fawning terms at the only Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, "... no true revolutionary, in any part of the world, will ever regret that the USSR is powerful, because if that power did not exist ... the people who fought for liberation would have no place from which to receive decisive help ... (they) would have been turned into colonies once more."

But, as we have shown, Castro's Cuba is still a colony. All that has changed is the imperialist master, however much he chooses to disguise state capitalism as "socialism". Today the Cuban workers are literally paying back the "decisive help" the USSR has given Castro with their own blood. It is for the defence of the global interests of Russian imperialism that Cubans died in Grenada and continue to die in countries throughout Africa.

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# 1984: More Struggles

continued from front page

preparation for war. Each increase in exploitation means a step towards the militarisation of the economy and social life as a whole. Each attack on living standards eases the war effort of the international ruling class.

## Working Class Power: Alternative to Imperialist Butchery

If sacrifices won't help the working class and can't prevent the crisis from getting worse; if peace marches are powerless to stop war, does this mean that humanity has no alternative but to face a further imperialist blood-bath and possible extinction? The answer is NO. At the heart of a system with the highest productive capacity ever seen in history which, nevertheless, is throwing millions out of work and leaving hundreds of millions to starve in the "3rd World", there exists the working class alternative.

This is not a utopian dream. The conditions for the revolutionary overthrow of the existing system are being created by the same economic crisis which is driving the world to war. By resisting the bosses' universal call for sacrifices "in the national interest" the working class can open up the way to a saner system. The world's workers have the economic capacity to replace production of goods for profit with production to directly satisfy society's needs. By overthrowing the ruling class and establishing their own power over society, the working class will be able to free the productive forces from the existing fetters imposed by the need for profits and competitiveness. They can lay the basis for developing production in harmony with the needs of the world's population. In a communist world there will be no competition and therefore no more imperialist wars.



As yet the working class is a long way from winning the class war. Apart from the magnificent struggle of the Polish workers, in most parts of the world the bosses have been able to enforce austerity measures without any real fight back on the part of the workers. In this governments and bosses have received much useful help from the trade unions who have quickly subdued the seeds of any potential resistance.

It's therefore essential to win away the working class from the influence of the unions and left parties. We can't defend ourselves against lay-offs, speed-ups, wage cuts and lower living standards by relying on organisations which are only worried about the fate of "the national economy"; which are daily reaching agreements with the bosses on how to run capitalism profitably; which organise campaigns to produce and buy British, French ... These nationalist and chauvinist arguments are the best way to isolate workers in one country, to make them co-operate with their own exploiters and turn their anger against workers in other countries.

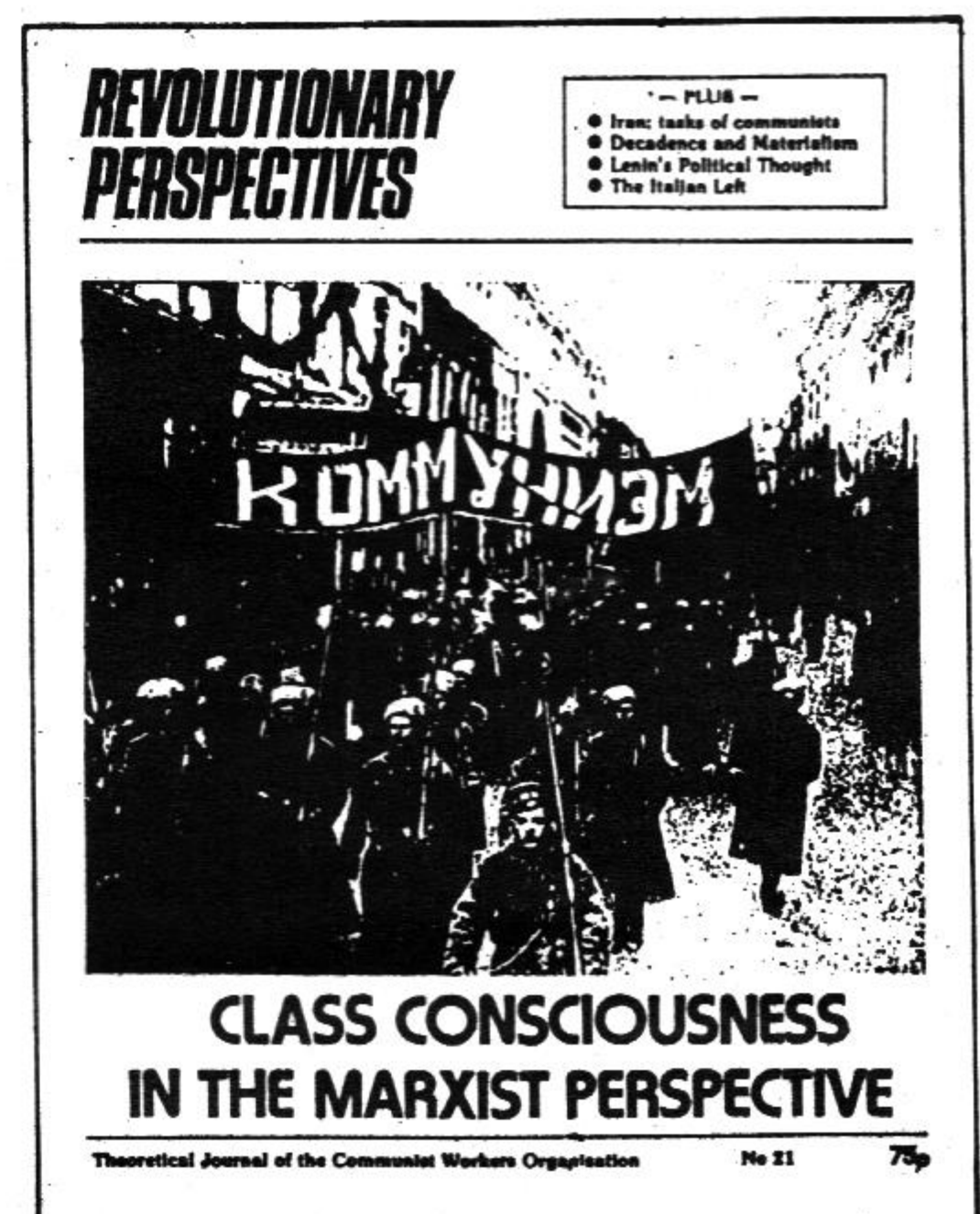
If workers are going to resist the attacks on their living and working conditions they will

have to fight irrespective of the interests of "their" bosses and "their" nation and then they are bound to find themselves fighting AGAINST the unions. But the working class alternative won't be achieved automatically, nor can it be won without a political fight.

The economic capacity of the working class has to be harnessed to the fight for political power and the overthrow of the state. Workers will only find the strength and confidence to do this when the most class conscious elements, the communist elements, are organised to influence the day-to-day struggle on the shop floor. It is our task to press for the defence of immediate economic interests to become a more general attack on the state, where the power of the class enemy is entrenched. A communist presence is necessary everywhere where the working class is exploited. This isn't only to condemn the manoeuvres of the bosses and their trade union accomplices, but to take a practical political lead in the organising of resistance to all attacks.

In future the mass organs which workers will need to strengthen their fight (e.g. factory committees) will become the basis for working class political power. Inside these mass organs of working class democracy revolutionaries will argue for the policies of their party, policies which will be based on the international interests of the working class and not the interests of the "nation".

Both before and after war breaks out revolutionaries everywhere defend the interests of working men and women against their own national capital. Working for the defeat of our own ruling class is the only basis for a real fight against war. Those who have protested against the installation of nuclear missiles in Europe have omitted to call for the withdrawal of the so-called "peace-keeping force from the Lebanon. In Britain they "forgot" to call for British troops to withdraw from the Falklands. In France they "forgot" to call for French troops to leave Chad. It is not for nothing that the pacifists call themselves the real patriots. It is not for nothing that we call for no sacrifices from the working class - whether or not war has officially broken out.



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- READERS' MEETINGS to discuss Workers Voice and Revolutionary Perspectives are held in London, Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle.  
LEEDS Wednesday, 8th February  
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For details of meetings write to group address
- PUBLIC MEETING - Communist Workers Organisation and International Communist Current  
Topic: Class consciousness and the tasks of revolutionaries.  
LONDON Saturday, 11th February  
2.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square (Holborn Tube).



# NIGERIA Military Rule - No Solution to Economic Crisis

7

Only 5 months after a (widely rigged) general election confirmed President Shehu Shagari in power in Africa's most populous state, Nigerians are once more living under military rule. On New Year's Eve the Army (led by General Mohammed Buhari) took over the ship of state for the fourth time since Independence in 1960. The aim? - To quell economic chaos and head-off national disaster.

The immediate reason for the coup was Shagari's announcement 2 days previously of a 40% cut in imports and a 30% curb on government capital spending. This was part of an attempt to meet IMF conditions for a £2 billion loan which the Shagari administration hoped to get without the even more unpopular step of devaluing the naira. General Buhari's solution to Nigeria's economic ills which have landed it £5 billion in the red and made it just one more country that is going cap-in-hand to the IMF is simple: wipe out corruption!

In the heartlands of Western imperialism there were initial jitters at the "overthrow of democracy", not because our business men and bankers are opposed in principle to military rule but, as one banker put it:

"You run the risk with any coup that a military takeover will strain the social environment which could lead to violence. That would affect the credit worthiness of the country". (Quoted in the Financial Times 3.1.84)

However, since most Nigerians remained indifferent to the coup (which was therefore "almost bloodless") and since Buhari has no intention at the moment of doing anything more disruptive to existing business interests than "fight corruption" and force street traders to lower their prices at the point of a bayonet, Western capitalism has decided to play down the fact of military rule. To the relief of Western imperialism Buhari has promised to honour Nigeria's debts and signalled that he doesn't intend to leave OPEC.

For British capitalism the fate of the Nigerian economy is especially important. Nigeria is Britain's 10th trading partner. It is a vital market for exports and an important source of investment returns for a wide range of British companies (including Unilever, Shell, Lonrho, GEC, Taylor Woodrow, ICI, Dunlop and others). After cutting the price of North Sea Oil in February last year and undercutting Nigeria's Bonny Oil which is a similar type, the British ruling class is relieved that Buhari is trying to avoid a "free for all" by leaving OPEC and cutting Nigerian oil prices which would in turn force British oil prices down. But not only British capitalism has interests in Nigeria. The country is important for the whole of Western imperialism. US firms also invest there and Nigeria is the 2nd largest supplier of oil to the US. In addition West Germany, Japan, Italy, France and the Netherlands have companies there. For the representatives of Western imperialism whose job is to "refinance" Nigeria's debts it's not important whether Nigeria has a civil or military government, what matters to them is whether or not that government can successfully impose austerity measures on the population and whether it can protect profits.

## ■ CORRUPTION AND CRISIS

General Buhari is under the illusion that a "cleaned up" and "prudent" government which doesn't allow waste will bring an end to Nigeria's economic problems. It's true that corruption is rampant in all walks of life and that National Party politicians in Shagari's government were blatantly more concerned to line their pockets than with the public good.

But this has always been the case, whether or not the military is in power. There is no evidence that the military under Buhari will be any less corrupt than civilian officials under Shagari. (When Buhari was chairman of Nigeria's oil company under the last military government it was just as corrupt as everywhere else.) Corruption is worse now that economic crisis is gripping Nigeria but it is not the cause of the crisis and can't be solved so long as the crisis itself exists.

The root cause of the Nigerian crisis is capitalism's world crisis of profitability, reflected in Nigeria in the slump in demand for oil. Since Independence Nigeria has become increasingly dependent on oil which provides 95% of foreign earnings and amounts to 80% of government income. Far from protecting it from economic crisis and ensuring prosperity, Nigeria's oil has ensured her economy feels the effects of the world crisis



all the more severely. In the 70's when the economic "experts" favourite explanation for the crisis in the economically advanced countries was the "oil crisis" and the supposed over-pricing of oil by the wicked OPEC states Nigeria was already having economic difficulties. Her real income was declining due to the rising price of imported goods from the advanced states. Nigeria was being dragged into the crisis which has its roots in the heartlands of capitalism. In 1976 we wrote:

"Nigeria has been facing real declining income from her oil as the price of manufactured goods rises sharply. And even this fragile 'growth' can only last as long as the hiatus in the collapse of international capitalism. Further recession of the oil consuming countries on even a minor scale could wipe out Nigeria's trade surplus at a stroke." (p. 38 of "Capitalism in Africa" in Revolutionary Perspectives 6)

And "further recession" is just what has happened, leaving Nigeria with falling oil revenues and simply unable to pay for her imports. No wonder then, that since the return to a civilian government in 1979 things have only got worse. By 1980 not only oil production was falling, production of food, palm oil, ground nuts and cotton was either falling or remained stagnant. In the same year Shagari introduced a minimum monthly wage for government employees (the equivalent of £79). By mid-1982 many public sector workers were lucky if they saw even this pittance as Shagari implemented a new austerity programme. Since then the 19 state governments have got into the habit of going several months without paying their workers. Last summer Nigeria hit the headlines here when the government summarily rounded up and expelled thousands of Ghanaian workers.

This chauvinist blunderbuss has had no noticeable effect on rising unemployment. Around the same time as the Shagari government was busy deporting the Ghanaian workers it was also negotiating with Barclays and other Western banks to stave off further crisis by converting its trade debts into loans. The first instalment of the \$1.6 bn. loan agreed last June is due later in 1984 — this will be the first real test of Western imperialism's confidence in the latest military regime.

## ■ LIVING CONDITIONS IN NIGERIA

The history of Nigeria since 1960 highlights the fact that in the 20th century "independence" from colonialism may produce short-term economic growth but it cannot lead to real social and economic development, much less independence from imperialism. In 1960 Nigeria was self-sufficient in food. Today the country depends on food imports and there is a shortage of staple items. Despite being the richest country in Black Africa, the various military and civilian governments have failed to develop the economic infrastructure. For instance prolonged delays in the transport of goods are commonplace while the open sewers of Lagos are notorious travel features for Western businessmen. Piped water and electricity are unknown to the majority of Nigerians. As the low price of cash crops and the prospect of an easier urban life drives more and more small farmers to the towns Nigerian industry has been unable to mop up even this cheapest of labour. The towns of Nigeria are surrounded by the typical "3rd World" shanties of the permanently unemployed. When the crisis of the advanced countries spreads to a situation like this it takes on horrendous proportions. Increased corruption and violent crime are only one aspect of it. In Nigeria today "increased austerity" means starvation, disease, and unemployment without social security benefits for an increasing part of the population.

## ■ THE NIGERIAN WORKING CLASS

Although only a small portion of the whole population, the Nigerian working class has grown in real terms since 1960 and it has a record of militancy. In the past there have been four general strikes over the issue of national pay agreements. Since 1975 real wages have declined due to inflation and outright wage cuts. Throughout the 70's the bosses were plagued by "undisciplined" workers. In 1978 the then military government amalgamated many of the existing trade unions into the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). The aim was to try and prevent strikes and go-slows by having a single centralised body to negotiate with the government and private capitalists. The Shagari government also encouraged the NLC which divided into "democratic" and "Marxist" factions (i. e. pro-West and pro-Moscow) but it still didn't have the support of many of its 3 million members. In September 1980 the Financial Times remained sceptical about the NLC's ability to control its members so that, even with reduced wages Nigerian workers would carry on producing profits for capitalism.

"... despite its claim to have the loyalty of its members the NLC has been unable to stop the rash of wildcat strikes which plague Nigerian industry..." (29.9.80)

It remains to be seen if the further round of austerity which the latest government must surely impose will provoke a united class response from workers in Nigeria's factories and plantations. If it does it will not only be the NLC but all the other unions as well who won't be able to control their members.

More than ever it is apparent that the only course open to the working class in capitalism's economically backward areas is the same as for workers everywhere. More than ever there is a need to establish the internationalist party to co-ordinate and lead this response to its political conclusion●



# WORKERS VOICE

## 'SOCIALIST' LAYOFFS IN FRANCE

TALBOT-POISSY: ANATOMY OF A STRUGGLE

The sight of Talbot workers at Poissy near Paris throwing nuts and bolts at each other at the beginning of the year should have given some pause for thought to those who think that violence doesn't exist between workers in struggle. It also stopped (at least for a time) the plans of the Peugeot-Talbot bosses and the French government. What lay behind this fierce contest on the assembly lines?

The story is a familiar one to workers in Britain. The root of the struggle is, as always, the world capitalist crisis. Like everywhere else, France has massive economic problems. Inflation is in double figures, unemployment is rising towards the British level and there is a huge balance of payments deficit. In this situation the French ruling class, like the bosses here, must try to make the national economy profitable. In Britain Thatcher and the Conservatives are wielding the axe and trying to make Britain profitable by making the workers pay. In France the right-wing government of Giscard d'Estaing failed to cut back enough in the face of the militancy of the steelworkers. This meant the task of restructuring French capitalism has fallen to the Left, to Mitterand and the Socialist Party (with Communist Party support). And they haven't failed for the bosses. Unemployment is rising faster than ever, real wages have been cut by 10% already, old age pensions have been taxed and social security and sick pay benefits are about to be cut for workers while,

"... jobless payouts will be cut for younger and older workers as well as those previously earning low wages. Some executives made redundant on higher salaries will however benefit financially". (Financial Times 12.1.84)

So much for "socialist" France.

Mauroy's government began its term of office by announcing the need for 2 years of "rigour" (meaning lower living standards for workers). Now he has announced a year of "industrial rigour" which will include a wage freeze. In addition the Communist-led union the CGT has already agreed to cooperate in the restructuring of French industry. This "modernisation" will involve the sacking of 200,000 workers in engineering, coal, steel, ship building and printing. And this is what lies behind the fight between the workers at Poissy.

Peugeot-Talbot bought up the 28,000 man Poissy plant from Talbot (along with Chrysler UK) on the cheap a few years ago and reduced its workforce to 17,000. As we reported in Workers Voice 13,

"In the 60's Peugeot had largely based its expansion on the massive use of immigrant workers who were less skilled and lower paid. This allowed Peugeot to make consistent profits. ... But gradually ... the economic crisis began to bite ...

To keep pace with its competitors Peugeot had to modernise and reduce its

workforce."

This was last July. As we predicted, the unions (the CGT, and the CFDT which is run by the governing Socialist Party) tried to prevent any response by the workers to the planned 8,000 redundancies. But in December the workers refused to wait any longer and went on strike to defend everyone's jobs. However, the unions turned it into a strike to demand "more detailed negotiations". At this point Prime Minister Mauroy played his master card. He announced that workers sacked from Poissy would not be unemployed, but would be retrained and given a premium to buy a car to set up as mechanics, either in France or, for immigrants, in their country of origin! (This is Enoch Powell's policy of voluntary repatriation.) This brought out the divisions in the workforce. The immigrant workers rejected the money offered (£1,700 each) as pathetic. Some demanded ten times that amount whilst others pointed out that,

"There are people with degrees out of work, how can people like us expect jobs after a few months on a course." (Guardian 20.1.84)

The unskilled, mainly immigrant workers who were to be laid off occupied the plant. When Peugeot threatened to close the plant the skilled workers in the CGT called for an end to the occupation when they realised their jobs were also at risk. The riot police (CRS) were called in to support the CGT and the occupying workers were ejected.

But it was the cops of the CFDT who finished the job off. As the French paper Le Monde pointed out, the CFDT had only supported the occupation in order to control it.

"Should the unions give in, they could well be overwhelmed by their rank and file, especially the immigrants among them." (5.1.84)

However, since the CFDT's party was also the government, it was able to get off the hook. The government doubled the redundancy money and so the CFDT called off the strike to defend jobs. It has tried to save face by saying that the lay-offs should be temporary for only 3 months. This is a typical union delaying tactic to try to defuse the workers' anger and willingness to fight. We have seen it many times in Britain (see, for example, the article in this issue on NALGO). What we haven't seen here is the determination to fight lay-offs which workers in France have shown.

Even so the Poissy workers found themselves fighting each other rather than putting up a united resistance to the bosses. Without a clear strategy for a united fight the divisions fostered by the bosses and unions held sway. The events at Poissy confirm that the working class does not instinctively follow its own interests. The road to communism will have to be cleared by revolutionary militants organised in the factories to put forward a clear political alternative to workers whose anger and militancy will otherwise be misdirected onto the bosses' terrain.

## Announcement: The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party has been formed.

The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party was formed on December 10th 1983 at a meeting in Paris attended by delegations of the Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista) of Italy, the Communist Workers Organisation and supporters of both these organisations in France. The Bureau is to publish a twice yearly journal entitled Communist Review in French and English. The first edition will appear in the Spring. It will contain, amongst other things, the Platform and Rules for adhesion to the Bureau as well as an article on its international perspectives.

The formation of the Bureau foreshadows the existence of a definite revolutionary tendency within what we call the proletarian political camp. It will prove a reference point for all those forces and militants in the world who seek a real orientation within the working class and share the aim of building an international revolutionary party. The Bureau will maintain international relations with all third parties on behalf of its constituent organisations. Its main task will be to encourage communist organisations in different countries with the ultimate aim of creating a programmatically clear and centralised international proletarian party.

A more detailed outline of the Bureau's work will appear in future issues. In the meantime interested individuals or organisations who wish to read its documents should either write to the CWO or to the Bureau's central address:

BIPR, CP 1753, 20101, Milano, Italy.

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