

WORKERS VOICE

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CRISIS AND BARBARISM

In his Budget speech Lawson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, spoke for all factions of the ruling class - from the CBI to the 'serious' Labour Party daily The Guardian - in talking of an economic recovery. The figures for the last quarter of 1983 would seem to confirm it. With GNP at 3.5% in the US, 3% in Japan and 2.5% in Britain (even ahead of West Germany's 1.5%) the pundits tell us that 1984 has opened up an era of growth. Perhaps the economists and politicians are whistling in order to keep up business "confidence" (since, not understanding the material mechanics of their own economies they can only fall back on psychological explanations)? However, the truth is rather different. First of all, these percentage growth figures represent growth on production levels which had fallen in the previous 5 years. Second, this growth is fuelled by the huge balance of payments deficit run up by Reagan's government. By the end of the decade the US could have a balance of payments deficit of 400 bn dollars - double the record deficit of 1983. This deficit is caused by the high value of the dollar which makes European goods cheaper for Americans to buy. But the good life for Americans is beginning to recede. Not only are nearly 10million Americans unemployed but, as Milton Friedman, the leading "monetarist" has noted, the last decade has been unique in that the average American's purchasing power is lower than it was at the beginning. The world economic "recovery" is a house built on sand. It is based on massive borrowing by the US government. At the moment the interest costs on the US Federal Debt are at 28% and are forecast to rise to 49% by the end of the decade. Sometime this will have to be paid for and when the bill is presented the real depth of the present crisis will strike the home lands of capitalism and all talk of recovery will be silenced.

In the meantime the brunt of the crisis is being felt by the world's poorer nations. The US, which produces about 35% of the world's GNP, has continually lowered its "aid" payments to the World Bank until today it only pays 25% of the total budget. The

immediate result is a cut in agricultural aid programmes to drought-ridden areas like sub-Saharan Africa - a death sentence for millions. However, arms sales to these less developed countries are booming. Although for capitalism as a whole arms production is no solution to its economic crisis (since arms produce no new value), an individual capitalist unit can stimulate its economy by arms sales to others. And the US leads in gross terms though France leads the world in arms sales per head of population. It has sold Iraq \$5bn worth since the Iran-Iraq war began and capitalist competition for sales in this area has heated up. Iraq's arms suppliers have risen from 3 to 13 and Iran's from 5 to 17. 70% of Russia's arms exports go to the "Third World"; 56% of the USA's. So whilst the advanced states lament the deaths of hundreds of thousands through hunger and war and while they condemn the use of poison gas they are piling up the weapons of destruction as just another way of exporting the misery of the crisis to the peripheral areas. Misery, starvation and war are all that the capitalist system has ever brought to these areas. But the starvation which afflicts $\frac{2}{3}$ of the world, and the 40 or 50 wars which are scattered round the globe only represent the future which capitalism has to offer us all.

WAR SIGNS

There have been plenty of signs recently in Britain that war preparations are underway. Not only have we seen the installation of Cruise missiles, the incitement of national chauvinism at every opportunity, increased political restrictions on members of the armed forces, but we are having it spelt out for us that the "democratic rights" of the citizen hold only insofar as there is no risk to the state. And the acknowledged area of risk is widening. The events surrounding the government's banning of trade unions at one of its intelligence headquarters (GCHQ) are not significant for Thatcher's "attacks on the unions" nor even for the unions' indignant response that their "patriotism" has

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MINERS STRIKE MUST BE WON

Every worker, every internationalist, every communist must automatically support the struggle of the miners against Macgregor's plan to make 21,000 miners redundant. In this struggle they are once again, as in 1972 and 1974, leading the fight of the whole working class in Britain against the aim of our rulers to make us pay for their crisis. But whereas the earlier strikes were for wage rises to keep pace with inflation, today the miners are fighting for their lives as Macgregor attempts to do what he did to the steelworkers, 50% of whom lost their jobs.

Once again miners have shown fantastic militancy and a lot of ingenuity in pursuing the struggle actively rather than waiting for the strike to peter out into defeat. Flying pickets and convoys of slow moving cars on motorways to cause traffic congestion have led to enormous police reinforcements scurrying the length and breadth of the country. In doing this they have scratched through the shallow veneer of "democracy" of the capitalist state. Police armed with riot gear, road blocks, restrictions on movement of persons, arrest "on suspicion" of being a picket (4 miners were arrested in a pub near Mansfield simply because they were miners), all these are simply the tip of the ice-berg of repression which the state has lined up against workers if their struggles become genuine efforts to win and not polite preludes to the professional negotiations of the union bureaucrats.

POLICING THE STRUGGLE

It's not often that workers show the determination demonstrated by the miners but it is always the unions who act as the first line of defence for the capitalist state by their policing of the class struggle. The methods they use to do this are numerous. At the moment Scargill finds it convenient to call for "legality". While the police are breaking the bosses' laws by stopping the movement of miners, and whilst Macgregor finds it easy to brush aside bureaucratic delays in his haste to close pits down, "King Arthur" is busily calling on miners not to clash with police and scabs whilst he gets on with the important business of going to the High

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OR WORKERS' REVOLUTION

MINERS' STRIKE (continued from page 1)

Court to discuss whether miners' pension funds should be invested with the NCB's competitors.

The NUM is no different from any other union. Even in this struggle, where miners' militancy in some coalfields forced local executives into reluctantly issuing a strike call, the union has been carrying out the policy of "divide and rule". Over the last three years the union has weakened the miners' struggle. In February 1981 Welsh miners came out as soon as they heard the plan to shut down 20 pits but were ordered back by the NUM. They ignored it, as did miners in Kent and Scotland. However, Scargill told Yorkshire miners that he had received "assurances" from the NCB and they stayed at work. The strike collapsed after a few days thanks to this divisive tactic. Then it was Scargill who needed police protection from angry Kent miners when he arrived at NUM headquarters in London. The NCB closed 12 pits shortly afterwards. This episode has been repeated in Scotland (Kinneil, Polmaise) and Kent (Snowdown) with similar results.

Scargill's attempt to use the miners for his own political ends is another indication of the way the union controls the struggle. Scargill sees the NUM as a means to "bring down the Tories". Miners' militancy is O.K. so long as they forget about their own interests and limit their fight to calling for a Labour government. In the 1974 strike this tactic was successful as it allowed Scargill and the bosses to pretend that there was an alternative to the economic crisis which was eating away at living standards. The militant-sounding Scargill conveniently forgot that it was the Labour governments of 1964-70 which started the massive redundancy programme and closed 200 pits. And, as any miner will tell you, living standards and job security under Callaghan did not improve as Scargill had promised.

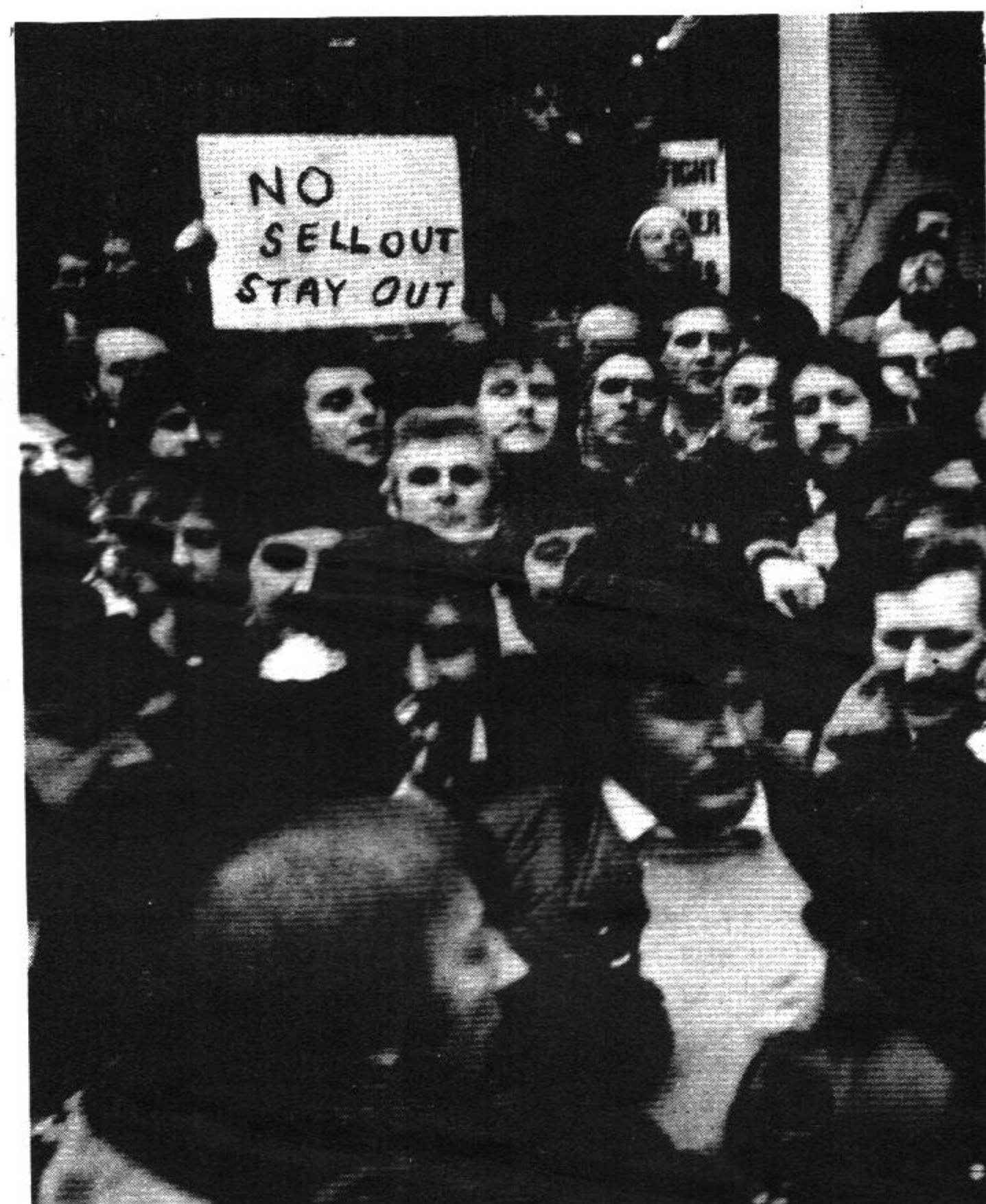
The legacy of Scargill's antics has been to divide the miners in the different areas from each other and has led to a growth in strength of the union leadership over the rank and file. This isn't simply because the NUM has "bad leaders" but because it is a union. Like all unions, it exists to negotiate the terms at which wage labour sells itself to capital and thus it exists to support the very nature of exploitation itself. This is why unions always seek to keep struggles "official" i.e. under their control because if a widespread struggle develops outside of the bounds

of the unions it could lead to a challenge to the system itself. Unions are thus the real police force of the labour world. The NUM is perhaps the most dangerous union of all since, although miners often carry out real struggles, largely beyond the immediate control of the union, the leadership always manages to reassert control just when it seems that the struggle is taking on a life of its own. This was most clearly seen in the events at the pits in north Nottinghamshire in the first week of the strike. Then the pickets mounted a campaign of military intensity against the forces of the state which threatened to engulf the police but then the area NUM leaders in Nottingham and Yorkshire patched up a deal which led to Nottinghamshire miners joining the strike for 2 days (until after the ballot). The loss of momentum this produced on the pickets and the breathing space it gave the police (who drafted in reinforcements at a cost of £300,000 a day) who could prepare new tactics (road blocks, summary arrest, etc.) enabled the NCB to keep 38 pits working.

THE WAY TO VICTORY

To overcome these manoeuvres, miners must formulate precise demands about what the strike is for. If this is left vague the NUM can later say anything is a victory and call off the strike. There should be no return to work until all threatened redundancies are cancelled and the miners' pay claim is met in full. This means no return to work "pending negotiations" - there is nothing to negotiate. Miners themselves have taken initiatives in spreading the strike but they need to go further and put the running of the strike in their own hands. They should elect strike committees in every pit and send delegates to unite them in a national strike committee which can coordinate and spread the struggle.

The path to victory isn't a question of the miners alone, however. With coal stocks at power stations capable of lasting for months rather than weeks and with coal imports being brought in from Poland and Australia, it is great to see the solidarity shown so far by railwaymen, seamen and dockers in blacking this coal. Stopping the movement of coal is essential for the victory of the strike. And with the CEBG ordering oil for power stations it's clear that this too will have to be stopped. Again, this cannot remain an affair of the unions as Scargill wants it. The leaders of the power workers



Arthur Scargill in February 1981 jostled by miners demanding to know why Yorkshire was not coming out

unions have told their stewards not to support the miners but already in Scotland miners have managed to prevent power stations from getting coal. The support of the power workers themselves, however, would make the strike bite more effectively. And let's be clear about the issues at stake. This isn't just a "miners' strike" any more than the steel strike of 1980 was simply about steel. As we concluded in a recent leaflet,

"The situation faced by the miners is that faced by the entire working class. The capitalist crisis has got us with our backs to the wall. There is now no other road but to fight, and this fight must be the beginnings of a fight against the whole capitalist system. If the workers give in to the demands of the bosses for more sacrifices, more unemployment, the end result will be that they will march us off to their "final solution" to the crisis - another world war. The defeat of the steel strike allowed the bosses and their accomplices to gain the upper hand: a victory for the miners would reverse that situation. FULL SUPPORT TO THE MINERS: CARRY ON THE STRIKE TILL VICTORY!"

CWO, March 1984

CRISIS AND BARBARISM (continued from page 1)

been questioned. Of course the unions will fall into line to protect their system when the country is placed on a war footing. The significance of the GCHQ affair to the working class is more insidious. On both sides of the dispute, widely publicised by the media, the assumption that "patriotism" (i.e. national chauvinism) is a noble virtue to be put before any other interest was not questioned. Indeed it was reinforced by the unions' reassurances of loyalty and their offer to consider a no-strike agreement at Cheltenham. In other words, an offer to sacrifice the interests of workers to the interests of the state.

We are all patriots now. Or else we had better be, because if we don't voluntarily accept that the interests of the state come before everything else our rulers will resort to more and more open repression. The imprisonment of Sarah Tisdall (who leaked government information on Cruise missiles to The Guardian) as "an example" shows how the flimsy boundaries of bourgeois rights and freedoms are being narrowed. The state is more and more preparing to ditch "democratic rights" and use open repression. (Witness the recent announcement of the build-up in strength of the territorial army - not so much a preparation for the nuclear holocaust as a preparation to combat civil war.) So far these

preparations are only the beginning of the process to subdue the working class, instil nationalist ideology and to establish a national war footing but there is no doubt that they will be stepped up as the real cause of war - the economic crisis refuses to go away.

THE ALTERNATIVES

The dole queues provide us with a glimpse of the future under this system. Present levels of unemployment will not fall significantly. The unemployed are the victims of capitalism's attempt to restructure its way out of the crisis. By cutting down investment in traditional areas, raising exploitation (what they call productivity), and cutting real wages they hope to have a smaller, more profitable industrial base from which to expand. At the same time they are trying to channel new investment into new "high technology" industries in which our leaders assure us "Britain leads the world". But all this is what happened in the 30s when, after the capitalist collapse of 1929, governments committed to "sound money" (i.e. high unemployment) supervised the restructuring of the national economy away from the old industries like shipbuilding to new ones like consumer goods and chemicals. But their economic butchery failed to solve the problem of

profitability as it is failing to do now. In 1939 the ultimate solution was the same as that found by capital in 1914 - global imperialist war.

However, a new 1939 is not yet upon us. In the first place the ruling class still believes it is solving the economic crisis and that once the process of restructuring is complete real economic expansion will begin again. In the second place the working class in the Thirties had not recovered from the historical defeat of the 1917-23 period when communism failed in Russia when world revolution failed to materialise elsewhere. Instead, workers in the 1930s were dragged into the anti-fascist fight, that is the fight for bourgeois democracy, for capitalism and under this slogan they were led to the slaughter in another imperialist war.

Around the world today workers are being led to the slaughter under the banner of nationalism but they are also beginning to assert their class independence in a fight-back against the effects of the capitalist crisis. In Brazil and north Africa unemployed and employed have rejected IMF inspired austerity plans (see WV11 and the article on Tunisia and Morocco in this issue) whilst riots against local austerity plans have broken out in Hong Kong.

Even in the imperialist heartlands the

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Southern Africa's Truce Means More Imperialist War

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SOVIET IMPERIALISM

In mid-March South Africa signed a non-aggression treaty with her eastern neighbour, so-called marxist Mozambique. This treaty binds each state to prevent guerrilla attacks being launched on the other from its territory. A month earlier South Africa negotiated a cease fire and troop withdrawal agreement with its north-western neighbour, Angola. This followed the latest South African invasion of the southern part of the country in January this year. As the same time the South African regime has offered to hold a conference on Namibia which would, for the first time, include direct negotiations with SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation) and it has released a number of prominent SWAPO prisoners from its gaols.

WESTERN IMPERIALISM

The events in southern Africa, like those elsewhere, can only be understood in the context of the struggle between Western and Soviet imperialism. Western imperialism wants Russian influence eliminated from the region for obvious economic and strategic reasons, and realises that in the short term this means settling the Namibian question. After the US sponsored settlement in Zimbabwe which has clearly been in US interests it seeks a similar deal in Namibia, and hopes that such a deal can be linked to the removal of Cuban troops from Angola. In the longer term it realises that the anachronism of apartheid must be abolished and replaced with normal capitalist relations of exploitation such as exist in the surrounding states. Failure to achieve this will entail a long and costly guerrilla war in South Africa with the main liberation movement, the ANC (African National Congress) which would endanger the West's enormous investments in South Africa. It would also endanger the West's strategic interests since the ANC is backed by Moscow and has close links with the SACP (the so-called Communist Party). At present a policy of "independence" for Namibia has been adopted while the longer term issue of reform within South Africa is being postponed and the surrounding areas are being forced to withhold support for the ANC.

After the Zimbabwe settlement which the South African government, acting as the agent of the US, forced on the Smith regime, the last buffer state to the north disappeared. South Africa's previous policy of 'non-interference and isolation had to be reassessed. To replace this the regime devised a regional policy whereby it attempted to use its economic strength to force its neighbours to refuse bases to the ANC and to hold the line in Namibia until SWAPO could be bludgeoned into accepting an ethnic constitution, i.e. one which would prevent it holding power. South Africa tried to get its neighbours to join a regional economic union, the proposed "Constellation of States" with reduced customs tariffs and a central development bank offering cheap loans - to be largely funded by South Africa. These plans were frustrated: the guerrilla war intensified and South Africa's neighbours formed an alternative economic organisation, the SADCC (Southern African Development Coordination Conference). With the collapse of these plans South Africa applied both military and economic pressure on its neigh-

bours. The present treaties and truces are the direct result of this. Following the methods adopted by the US in Central America, local resistance movements were trained, armed and ferried into neighbouring countries. The Angolan UNITA movement, the Mozambique MRM, the Lesotho Liberation Army and the dissident movement in Zimbabwe are examples of the organisations used by South Africa. In addition the South African armed forces have continued to invade and occupy Angola and raid other neighbouring states, notably Lesotho and Mozambique.



This pressure has brought South Africa's neighbours to their knees. The economies of Angola and Mozambique have all but collapsed and states such as Lesotho have already capitulated and expelled ANC members as demanded by the South African regime. The cost for South Africa has, however, been high. Both the South African prime minister, described the Namibian war as an "economic millstone round our necks" and appealed for the Western bloc countries to assist in financing it. The cost is estimated at approximately £600m annually. This, of course, doesn't include the costs of subversion in Mozambique and elsewhere. A further burden on the economy is caused by the fact that South African troops are conscripts who have to be released from productive employment for three month periods of service every 18 months. Also the casualties are becoming much higher. More men were lost in the recent invasion of Angola than ever before; in addition South Africa also lost aircraft for the first time.

Politically South Africa feels more able to make concessions over Namibia than before. Its ability to control so-called marxist states on its borders has made it less fearful of a SWAPO victory in Namibia. In addition, the forces of the extreme right within South Africa have been proved much weaker than previously thought. This was shown in the "Whites only" referendum in November 83 over a new constitution which envisages sharing power with Asian and Coloured (mixed race) people. These reform proposals received the backing of over $\frac{2}{3}$ of white voters. All these factors have led the South African government to think that the present is a good time for settling the Namibian question.

Russian imperialism has been faced with the choice of drastically stepping up intervention to counter South African subversion or reaching a compromise. The drift of its former clients, Mozambique and Angola, back to US imperialism and the enormous cost of supporting these regimes has persuaded it to compromise. Conditions in Mozambique and Angola are appalling. The activity of the South African sponsored guerrillas combined with a severe drought has caused complete breakdown of the economy in large areas and the threat of national bankruptcy. It is estimated that 100,000 Mozambicans have died of starvation and another 100,000 have fled as refugees to Zimbabwe. Relief supplies cannot get through as railways and roads are cut. Conditions in Angola are just as bad, despite the country's vast resources. In addition to their other burdens the Angolans have to find hard currency to pay the 20,000 Cuban troops with. It is hardly surprising that during the last few years both countries have been making overtures to the West in the hope of attracting Western capital.

The present treaty and ceasefire means that these states will have to ditch the liberation movements they have been supporting. There is little doubt that this is precisely what they intend to do. Mozambique's foreign minister recently declared that the ANC must accept the "principle of peaceful negotiation with South Africa".

THE MYTH OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

Recent events in southern Africa illustrate that countries which have gained formal independence from the colonial powers are quite unable to become independent of imperialism. Their economic and military dependence on one or other imperialist bloc shows they are not independent at all. Despite the enormous bloodshed and destruction of the national wars in Mozambique and Angola conditions for the working class and indeed the majority of the population remain worse than in colonial times. This in turn illustrates the general political point that today, as far as the working class is concerned, a successful national struggle succeeds only in changing the imperialist power to which the nation is subject. Whereas in the last century national struggles were able to develop indigenous capital, capitalise agriculture, unify the nation and make proletarians out of the peasantry, and were therefore progressive, today this is not possible. Such struggles today are essentially inter-imperialist ones in which the working class is inevitably massacred fighting for one or other capitalist faction. The side which wins is forced by economic circumstances to impose increased oppression and exploitation - as the Luanda dock workers found at the hands of the MPLA in 1976. Like everywhere else today, the only progressive force capable of developing in the area is that of proletarian internationalism. Once the working masses in southern Africa learn that their interests lie with their class brothers and sisters in the rest of the world - whatever their nationality or skin colour - then the reactionary forces of black nationalism and white racism, not to mention world imperialism will have a real fight on their hands.

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crisis has produced levels of class struggle not seen in so many countries at the same time. "Socialist austerity" has been attacked by widespread strikes in Spain and at Talbot-Poissy in France, whilst Belgium has seen nearly a million public service workers on strike at the same time (see WV15). These strikes have had smaller but significant echoes in Holland, Germany, Italy and even the United States itself. At present trade

union tactics and divisions have prevented these struggles from turning openly against the state and from taking an international dimension. But the very mass nature of such strikes will make this increasingly more difficult to do in future. And this is why we can say there are two alternatives to the crisis which continues to unfold before us. It is the same alternative as is posed in the Communist Manifesto. Either we will have the "revolutionary

reconstitution of society" - in other words, proletarian revolution, or the capitalists, in realising all other solutions have failed and that the working class threatens to engulf them, will attempt to extinguish their rivals and working class opposition in one go so that we have the "common ruin of the contending classes" in imperialist war. Communism or capitalist barbarism. There is no third road in our epoch.

Trades Unions and Workers' Struggles

CWO INTRODUCTION

We are publishing here part of a longer set of theses on "The Revolutionary Party's Tactics of Intervention Today" accepted by the Internationalist Communist Party at its Vth Congress held in Milan in November 1982. We will in due course be translating and publishing all the documents of that Congress (which appeared in Italian in *Prometeo* no. 7 (4th series) in 1983). This present publication will help to nail the falsifications of those like the ICC who, following the splits in their own ranks in 1981, have sunk to a campaign of systematic misrepresentation of their opponents' positions. We welcome debate, but on the real positions which we or the PCInt. defend. This text gives the lie to the ICC's assertions of the PCInt's (and the CWO's) views on the unions. The PCInt's position is to participate in the life of the union as rank and file members only in so far as it serves any revolutionary purpose (see Thesis 23 for example) and to reject all positions of power in trades unions which are clearly portrayed as actively counter-revolutionary bodies.

However, what is the change in the ICC position? In *World Revolution* 68 they tell us that they have themselves intervened in union meetings to "put forward a class perspective." Yet apparently the latest Congress of the ICC resolved to make it obligatory for ICC members to leave unions except where "professionally necessary". If this is true it is only symptomatic of a general retreat from the real world by the ICC in the last few years. Leaving aside the question of whether a revolutionary principle worthy of the name can be over-ridden by questions of "professional necessity", there is a serious point of difference here.

As early as *Revolutionary Perspectives* 10 we argued that though we shared the same

concept of the decadence of capital the ICC devalued the term. That article mainly addressed itself to the ICC's wooden and undialectical proofs of decadence and their sterile attempts to prove that world economic growth has been stagnant since 1914. However, today we see the fruits of that woodenness in the use they make of the concept. The ICC use the argument that we now live under decadent capitalism and this means that revolutionaries can have nothing to do with unions today. However, this misses the point. The unions, from their outset, did not have anything to do with revolution. Marx quickly realised this in Britain when he criticised unions for not "acting against the system of wage slavery itself". Unions, in other words, were not regarded as instruments of revolutionary politics, even in the period of capitalist ascendancy. On the other hand, work in the unions was useful to revolutionaries not, as the ICC says, because there existed the possibility of gaining reforms (since revolutionaries have never been interested in reforms per se) but because it was through the unions that the workers united to fight the economic struggle which is the indispensable basis for any subsequent political struggle. At this point revolutionaries and reformists could exist together in unions and social democratic parties because the contradictions of capitalism had not yet sharpened to the point where the split between proletarian politics and bourgeois politics inside the working class was inevitable. This came when capitalism entered into its epoch of imperialist wars (decadence), unambiguously highlighted in 1914; an epoch which also opened up the necessity and possibility of proletarian revolution - as seen in the October Revolution of 1917. But it was capitalism that changed, not the unions. Now the framework for union activity has changed because the survival of capitalism depends on greater control of the labour force and thus on a more directly anti-working class role for the unions (strike-

breaking, containing struggles, mobilization for imperialism under the banner of the "national interest"). Unions therefore cannot serve even the immediate interests of workers in the imperialist era. Whereas previously they simply didn't challenge the capitalist assumption of the existence of wage labour today they are its active proponents with a vested interest in its defence.

Perhaps the ICC will agree with this but they leave out the next point. Unions today still regroup millions of workers on the basis of a feigned struggle for workers' interests. Revolutionaries cannot simply turn their backs on these workers (even now when many radicalised workers are beginning to abandon the unions - see Theses 20 and 21). Often those who remain in the unions are amongst the most militant workers - i.e. those most likely to be part of the fight to destroy the union strangle-hold on the extension of workers' struggles. Being ordinary members of unions can allow revolutionaries to fight the union manoeuvres more effectively, to be present exactly when and where meetings of striking workers take place. And when individual struggles die down revolutionaries in the workplaces can provide the perspective to maintain the anti-union ideas which arose in struggle via factory groups which will continue the anti-union fight on a daily basis. But then, all this is part of a set of concrete tactics the very idea of which is anathema to those whose politics remain in the realm of abstract principles. Behind the ICC jibe of "watered-down politics", and the CWO and the PCInt's supposed incapacity to "defend clear class lines" there lies a complete failure to recognise the need for a revolutionary organisation worthy of the name to develop a strategy and tactics for intervention. It is only in this framework that the following theses can be understood. It is a more fruitful working document than sterile formulae which condemn revolutionaries simply to impotent acts of denunciation and propaganda.

Theses of the 5th Congress of the P. C. Int.

UNIONS AND THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE

1. The objective, irreversibly counter-revolutionary and anti-working class nature of the unions in the imperialist period does not alter their working class composition, or the fact that they are organisations in which the proletariat collectively presses for its immediate self-defence.

The contradiction between the working class composition and the bourgeois function of the unions is both a reflection and an expression of the contradiction between the objective historical antagonism of the proletariat towards capital and its present ideological and political subjugation to the bourgeoisie.

2. The rise of the proletariat as the subject of history during the revolutionary upheaval will also signal the end of the unions - as the class passes from negotiating organisations to those suitable for conducting direct struggle and for the subsequent administration of power.

3. Because the passage from one form of mass organisation to another takes place in the revolutionary period, as part of a dialectical leap (of which such an organisational change is one of the principal signs), this cannot be achieved gradually through the gradual evolution of the unions. In other words, it is impossible to conceive of the movement from trade unions to soviets being brought about by the transformation of one into the other.

The organisations which the workers create for the revolutionary struggle completely replace the old organisations in which the workers are confined through wage

negotiations and an internal set of rules which help to preserve their existence.

4. Besides negating all the historical experience of the communist movement, the idea that a "class" form of trade union is possible in the imperialist epoch - with tactics for intervention subsumed under a policy of building such a union - and also the notion that the existing unions can be reorganised to act effectively as intransigent defenders of workers' interests have to be rejected as opportunist and objectively counter-revolutionary. Such theories explain the anti-working class activity of the unions as the result of bad political leadership or rather by their being subordinated to anti-working class forces whose replacement would change the direction of the trade union movement towards a genuine defence of workers' interests.

5. In fact the counter-revolutionary political direction of the unions is only the consequence of their objective function in the imperialist epoch. Moreover, it is undoubtedly the case that the unions have never not even in the ascendant period of capital, had the real possibility of adopting a revolutionary political course. This is much more the case in capitalism's decadent epoch when negotiations, i.e. the real terrain of the unions, are conditioned by and subordinated to capital's need to survive and are thus dependent on the suppression of the proletariat.

6. The proletariat's break with the practice of mediation and negotiations which progressively worsens conditions for the class will be

through the rejection of the existing unions and will immediately pose the problem of power, the problem of the assault on capital and its state.

7. During the period of heightened struggle between the classes - expressed in the radicalisation of the workers' struggle outside of and against the unions - the problem posed historically is not that of the creation of a new union, but the creation of real organs of revolutionary struggle and consequently the expressions of class power - the workers' councils. Every attempt at mediation - the function of all unions - is useless. Such a union would act no differently from those just abandoned and swept aside by the masses.

8. The fact that the very organisational forms of unions and soviets are radically different confirms that this is not a nominal question. Radically different also are the nature of the problems faced by both organisations.

9. The essence of the problem is found in the originality of the communist party's tactics as opposed to other organisations and tendencies' methods of intervening.

10. Given their perspective that the working class will abandon negotiations and develop forms of organisation which have broken with the unions, the problem posed for revolutionaries is how these future organisms can take a communist course.

The current tactic of the revolutionary party must therefore aim to create conditions so that the real class conflict of tomorrow will lead to the political struggle for power and the installation of the proletarian dictatorship, in accordance with the communist programme.

11. The pre-condition for the future radical struggle of the proletariat taking a revolutionary direction is a workers' vanguard strongly organised on the basis of the communist programme inside the class.

12. The party defines these organisations of advanced communist workers as the network of internationalist factory groups.

13. The creation of factory groups, their political and organisational reinforcement, their centralisation on a national and international scale - these are the immediate objectives of the work of the party and its militants in relation to factories, workplaces and in general to working class environs.

14. The role of the groups is to translate into practice, in an organised political form, the influence which the party has succeeded and is succeeding in exercising in the industrial centres. These are not simply a duplicate of the party since they also regroup sympathisers and unorganised elements who agree with our definition of the "union problem". They are not duplicates because they have the fundamental task of creating that zone of influence which, removed as it is from the influence of counter-revolutionary forces, forms the sphere of activity which links the party's work to the new situation of resurgence of the political struggle and to the rise of new mass organisations.

POLITICAL PLATFORM of the INTERNATIONALIST COMMUNIST PARTY

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15. Already today, in the conditions created by the crisis, the struggle for the real defence of the proletariat's interests - as in the great Polish events, or in the more limited battles which take place periodically in the factories and other areas badly hit by the crisis - is taking place outside of and against the instructions of the unions, and therefore outside of and against their structure.

16. Also, in places where real struggles are continuing the unions face enormous losses, with almost no new members but instead an increase in torn up membership cards.

17. This clearly shows today's objective tendency to go beyond the unions by means of new organisations which are appropriate for conducting the class struggle and for this generalisation of the real class struggle to destroy the unions.

18. It is this tendency - obviously hindered by political counter-tendencies (both ideological and directly psychological) which it is the task of revolutionaries to encourage by means of their own intervention in the working class.

19. Encouraging this historical tendency cannot simply mean the general (and therefore easily recuperable by the right-wing of the bourgeoisie) invitation to abandon the unions. The objective tendency carries with it the possibility of revolutionary growth only if abandoning the unions involves the recomposition of class forces on an anti-capitalist front.

20. That can only be encouraged, stimulated and guided by preparing the political conditions in which such a regroupment can come about. For revolutionaries then, this means working via their own instruments (the factory groups) to unmask the real nature of the unions and to expose the connection between this and their function as collaborators with and supporters of capital. By so doing the possibility of an effective economic defence is clearly related to the question of political opposition to capitalism.

21. The best conditions for the proletariat to abandon the unions occur when the proletariat's passive organisation inside them is replaced by active and autonomous struggle in the context of the general fight against capital.

22. In spite of the tendency outlined here, masses of workers are union members. The unions are therefore of interest to the revolutionary party because of the working masses who are locked inside them. In the confrontation with the unions it is necessary to keep up constant critical activity and leadership in order to direct the workers onto the terrain of autonomy and class struggle. In this sense therefore the activity will be carried out from inside and outside the union organisations, depending on the material conditions in which militants have to work.

23. When the above-mentioned tendency becomes strikingly obvious by masses of workers abandoning the unions the internationalist militants will work outside of the union structure, since this will now have lost the only interest it had for revolutionaries. When, on the other hand, the majority of workers are still contained inside the unions and when they still use the union framework as their reference point the internationalist militants do not disdain working in them as ordinary members.

24. However, since they work arm in arm with the local organs of the party, the militants and factory groups will avoid falling into tailending the spontaneous workers' movement. Having the necessary political understanding, they will judge when it is necessary to take the initiative in order to influence the masses into a timely break.

25. The eruption of the class struggle can only be revealed as the masses break from the union gaol. And it is the masses who replace the unions with their own organs of struggle in a process which is certainly not linear. Thus the theses of those who expect to see voluntarist activism and isolated subjectivism produce immediate class expressions are to be rejected as anti-marxist and opportunist: i.e. workers' groups, co-ordination committees, and so on.

26. Despite their formal working class content, such formations express the variety of different political tactics in existence apart from those of the party. They reflect the work and existence inside the class of reformist and opportunist tendencies which it is our task to fight.

27. There must be no confusion between strike committees - which emanate from the real struggle of the workers - and minority groups - which are the products of political organisations operating inside the class.

28. The internationalists, along with their factory groups, take up a vanguard role inside the strike committees. Because the formation of such organs underpins all their work their experience will allow them to act as a stimulus and political guide to action. Workers' circles, co-ordination committees, on the other hand, will be judged according to how they demonstrate their political worth.

29. The possibility cannot be excluded of workers' circles being formed through an undirected political initiative of the proletariat as it breaks from the trade unions and their

parties and searches for a new orientation. In such a case the internationalist militants will consider this a necessary time to intervene to clarify the situation and provide political orientation in order to transform these bodies into revolutionary political instruments, or rather to incorporate them into the political network and organisation of the factory groups.

30. In the case of political expressions which more or less disguise other groups and tendencies the revolutionary tactic is to expose them for what they are, and in particular to denounce them for their opportunism towards the class. In fact it is really through organisations like this, which stem from an irremediably opportunist group (or really from joint groups) that the tendency towards new unions or to the reorganisation of the old ones is manifested, if only indirectly. In other cases it is the explicit political positions which these organisations take up that are the target in the party's permanent political fight. Therefore the internationalist militants are excluded from any collaboration with them and from any participation in their activity.

MEETINGS

The CWO holds regular meetings for readers in Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield and London. In addition we periodically hold public meetings in the same cities. The next public meeting is in Manchester on "War or Revolution". See local advertising for more details or write to the group address. The next readers meeting in London is on Weds. 25th April, 8p.m. on "The National Question" at the Prince Albert Pub, Kings Cross, N1. Fortnightly readers meetings are planned in Glasgow - write to Glasgow address for details

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⁶Debate with the I. C. C. CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES

In early February the CWO held a debate in London with the International Communist Current (ICC). Like previous debates this one was held on the initiative of the CWO. The ICC claims to be mystified by our readiness to debate since according to their version of history the CWO and Battaglia Comunista (PCInter) were responsible for the "sabotage of the conferences of the international communist left". What the ICC omits to mention is that it was they who did their best to sabotage any meaningful debate at the 3rd Conference by refusing to accept a straightforward resolution on the fundamental role of the revolutionary party put forward by Battaglia. ("The international party is the indispensable organ which politically guides the revolutionary class movement and the proletarian power itself.") Although the ICC claims that the revolutionary party has an "indispensable role" to play, it could not agree to even this very general framework for action because to do so meant that the next step forward for the conferences would be to discuss the concrete tasks of the party. When it comes down to reality the ICC is always the first to sabotage discussion in a cloud of verbiage. Sadly the debate in London not only showed that the ICC is still not seriously confronting the problem of revolutionary organisation but demonstrated their abandonment of more and more of the fundamentals of marxism.

The ICC's statement of its own views was largely hidden in the meeting by an attack on a caricature of the CWO's view, but in so far as it was stated it was a rehash of their pamphlet Communist Organisation and Class Consciousness. For the ICC the working class will become conscious of the need for communism because it is obliged to and it must. There is no difference between the daily struggle of the working class for survival and the overall struggle for communism. The working class is, they argued, gaining consciousness through its struggles anyway and the role of revolutionaries is simply to accelerate this process. The possibility of revolutionaries playing any organisational role at any time was categorically rejected.

We replied that all this amounts to a refusal to look reality in the face. It is a banality to assert that the aim is communism but to assert that because communism is a necessity therefore it must happen doesn't guarantee that it will! Marx and Engels pointed out that each stage in the historical class struggle can lead either to revolution or to "the common ruin of the contending classes" which nowadays means war. The second alternative is already excluded in ICC theory so it's not surprising that they think that this revolution business is a lot easier than the CWO thinks. But all the ICC can offer is sweet nothings. Take, for example, this passage from their pamphlet:

"The proletariat must thus understand reality without prejudice ... The seizure of power by the proletariat demands that the class is fully conscious of its historical mission" (ppl3-15, our emphasis)

To say that the proletariat must understand its goal doesn't explain how it will achieve it and the second sentence reveals the ICC's lack of a dialectical understanding of the growth of consciousness. Earlier in the same pamphlet they underline this by arguing that the new social relations established by communism themselves determine the way in which the class consciousness and the mode of organisation of the proletariat develop." (p. 5, ICC emphasis).

What the ICC is saying here is that "the social relations of a mode of production which doesn't yet exist can actually dictate the pol-

itical consciousness and forms of organisation within bourgeois society. Their mistake is to confuse ends and means. It's true that communism cannot be achieved unless the proletariat as a whole is conscious of what it is, but the communist revolution, i.e. the process of getting to communism, isn't the same. Gradually, as the class struggle develops ever greater layers of the proletariat will become involved in the struggle and every development in that struggle will lead to a greater awareness of the tasks that have to be performed. However, and this is the big question the ICC avoids, Where does communist consciousness lie today at the beginning of the revolutionary process? It resides in the class party. It resides with those who debate, define and promote the goals based on the last 150 years of proletarian struggle. The very existence of the party as a distinct part of the class (which those of us who have a more than metaphysical concept of revolution dare to call the proletarian vanguard) is a product of the unevenness in the development of the class struggle and class consciousness. The party isn't separate from the class as the ICC makes it by reducing it to the role of an 'accelerator' which nudges on an already existing revolutionary process. It is inside the class' daily struggle, playing a leading role at every point in order to return to the proletarian mass of today the political lessons of its struggles of yesterday.

When the ICC does abandon metaphysics and attempts to explain how precisely the communist future is to be realised it resorts to mechanical materialism. Consciousness, they say, comes mechanically from practice. Thus they conclude the position of the working class in capitalist society spontaneously leads to communist consciousness because of its material struggle with the bourgeoisie. They imagine the working class will spontaneously become conscious, spontaneously secrete the party, form councils, etc... Such views, so often repeated by the ICC, are anti-Marxist. They are a repetition of the errors of bourgeois materialism against which Marx fought in his Theses on Feuerbach. They lead the ICC to reject taking up a leading role in the economic and political struggles of the working class. Failure to understand the material basis of consciousness causes the ICC to fail to see a role for themselves as revolutionaries beyond one of general propaganda and encouraging workers from behind.

In their account of the meeting in World Revolution 69 the ICC has taken one step forward in acknowledging that Lenin was essentially right in What is to Be Done? but claims that tearing Lenin from his "historical context" is "a regressive flight into mummified ideology", i.e. there is no longer any necessity for revolutionaries to be present inside the daily struggle of the class. Not so. Indeed the ICC, which spends so much time arguing that the bourgeoisie is a conscious class which, in true machiavellian fashion, is able to nudge the workers away from proletarian internationalism, should pause to reflect that an organised expression of communist consciousness is more than ever

necessary today. Great bursts of proletarian energy in spontaneous class movements have ended up, not in communist revolution, but in some other form of capitalist sidetrack. (Polish Catholic nationalism or Iranian Islamic fundamentalism, for example). The spontaneous class movement can and will reduce a particular form of bourgeois rule to rubble, but unless it has a conscious programme, a communist programme, to lead it forward it can always be directed into various state capitalist and nationalist projects. This is why we affirm the need for a party which is active at all times to the limits of its strength within the working class and which unites internationally to coordinate the class movement across national frontiers. The coming into existence of such a party on an international scale is dependent on both the increase in class consciousness amongst workers as a whole and on the increasing activity within the day-to-day struggle of the communist minorities themselves.

In the London debate the ICC attempted to present a caricature of our views by ripping quotations from their context; by attacking any attempt at clarifying our terminology (which they systematically misrepresented) as a "retreat" on our part; and by refusing to face up to the problem of how we get from today's economic struggle to tomorrow's communist society. According to the ICC the CWO's posing of this problem is crude and mechanical but they had no alternative analysis to put forward, simply asserting that the problem was irrelevant since history will provide the answer anyway. However, as we said in reply, the ICC's attempt to score debating points in this way showed they did not take our views seriously. Secure behind their metaphysical slogan that "the class struggle will take care of itself", the problems we raise are of no importance to them. If revolutionaries are really part of the class struggle in its widest sense can we abdicate our tasks so easily. The ICC appear to forget that revolutionaries are a part of history and must also help to forge it.

But in their arrogant refusal to really read or listen to what we say the ICC betrayed a further decline. In our article "Class Consciousness in the Marxist Perspective" in Revolutionary Perspectives 21 we criticised the ICC's views as councilist because they claim that communism for the proletariat means "the consciousness of the necessity to organise itself in councils" (see pages 41 and 42 of their pamphlet) when in practice soviets can be controlled by capitalism and in fact are only the arena where the class struggle is fought out at the beginning of the process leading to communism. (Ultimately, if the communist vision is triumphant, they will become the ruling organs of a new proletarian state which will be on its way to creating communism.) In the debate, however, more than one ICC speaker asserted that communism is spontaneously being built today within capitalism and thus there is no need for any party involvement. As one of their members so graphically put it, "communism is alive and straining to be born". The lack of biological knowledge shown here is dwarfed by the failure in historical understanding on the part of the ICC. Again, if we turn to their pamphlet, we find this error. This is the view that "the proletariat, like other revolutionary classes in the past, is obliged to organise itself consciously if it is to overthrow the old economic and social order" (p. 36). In fact it is because the proletariat is obliged to organise itself consciously in a programmatic party which distinguishes it from all previous revolutionary classes. Communism is a propertyless society and can only develop after the proletariat, conscious of its goal, has seized power. If the ICC is right and "communism" is alive today (other than in the minds of revolutionaries) then what need we for a political advance guard; what do we need with discussions about the period of transition to communism and what do we need with a proletarian state to destroy capitalism? But

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CONFERENCE REPORT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE NO.4 OF GROUPS OF THE COMMUNIST LEFT.

The report of the above conference, held in December 1982 will be published this spring. Advance orders should be sent to the group address. Price £1.20 including post & packing.

MOROCCO AND TUNISIA

The hand of the I. M. F. on the throats of the workers

INTRODUCTION

1984 had hardly begun when the news came that several towns in Tunisia had been swept by a wave of violent riots. A few days later, it was Morocco. Apart from the fact that both were sparked off by massive price increases in basic foodstuffs, a common cause lies at the bottom of these dramatic events: world capitalism's economic crisis which is spreading and gathering pace. In such a context selfishness, which is an intrinsic part of bourgeois relations, is assuming proportions that reduce all talk of "cooperation", "aid" and harmonious "development" to the level of mere propaganda. Witness the oppressive policy of the IMF which, worldwide, is imposing drastic reductions in state spending on all the indebted countries as a condition for continued economic and financial help. For most of the countries on the periphery of capitalism the level of poverty is such that governments are forced to subsidise basic foodstuffs in order to maintain them at an accessible price to the working masses. With the economic crisis strengthening its grip worldwide, the IMF experts have deliberately adopted technical and financial measures aimed at pressurising the "dependent" countries to pay their debts. A little more of the real function of the so-called "aid institutions" of imperialism is thus revealed as one of appropriation of wealth produced elsewhere in order to compensate for its own economic difficulties.

THE FOOD RIOTS IN TUNISIA

In January tens of thousands of people were on the streets, throwing stones at the army and police, looting shops, setting fire to the banks and official buildings. Suddenly the "developed" world caught a glimpse of what life in this "tourist paradise" is like for ordinary Tunisians. Though the regime claims to have introduced democracy and though the statistics show a rise in average per capita income, most of the population live in appalling conditions which are daily getting worse. In the rural areas the poor are getting poorer as agricultural production stagnates or declines. For the "better off" workers in the towns the minimum wage is £2 per day. Half of this goes on rent. Whole families have to be fed on less than £1 per day. The thousands of unemployed (15% of the male working population) receive nothing. Prime Minister M'zali's doubling of the price of staple foods like pasta, semolina and bread (up from 10p to 21p) was the straw which broke the camel's back. From villages in the south, through important towns like Sfax, Gabes, Kasserine and Gafsa, the masses' response spread to the streets of Tunis.

Without arms, men, women and children, employed and unemployed, students and peasants, erected barricades and confronted the armed might of Bourguiba's brutal dictatorship. At first the ruling class tried to hide the social character of the uprising, blaming a plot by Gadaffi to destabilise the regime of the "friend of the Tunisian people". But when the revolt spread to the north of the country, leading the government to impose a curfew, the lie could last no longer. It took a few days for the army and national guard to subdue the revolt, particularly in the proletarian suburbs of Tunis and the industrial centres of the south. Despite its withdrawal of the price rises the government had to impose a "state of emergency" for a

month. More than 300 people were killed, thousands injured or arrested.

... AND THOSE IN MOROCCO

The ostentation of the 4th Islamic Conference in Casablanca in January couldn't hide the catastrophic situation of the Moroccan economy. For months King Hassan II had been discussing with IMF experts the conditions for a re-scheduling of Morocco's debt (\$11bn in 1983). After the reaction of the Tunisian workers the government was fully aware of the danger involved in announcing similar measures to the working masses of Morocco.

In June 1981 violent riots in Casablanca had greeted King Hassan's decision to raise the price of basic food products by 85%. The revolt had quickly spread to other towns throughout Morocco, forcing the monarch to step back. Contrary to official reports, more than 800 people were killed. Since then the economic situation has kept on deteriorating. The cost of the war in the Western Sahara (\$1.5m a day), which Hassan initially saw as "only a 15 minute job" but which has now lasted 9 years; the fall in the price of raw materials which Morocco exports (phosphates) and a persistent drought have added their weight to the more general effects of the capitalist crisis. Unemployment has been rising steadily: 250,000 lost their jobs in 1982, 300,000 more in 1983. People starving in the country have moved to the cities in the hope of finding better living conditions, but all they have found is ever-deeper misery in the shanty towns which have mushroomed almost everywhere. The sacrifices required from the proletarian masses are exhausting - wages are very low and, as in Tunisia, half of them are used to pay rent. Exploitation is really ferocious and any strike or attempt at resistance is met with barbaric repression.

Despite the well known brutality of the regime, all the exploited had no hesitation in once again taking the path of class struggle when the draconian decision to raise the price of butter, tea, sugar flour, bread and oil was announced. Starting in Nador on 19th January, the wave of protest spread to Marrakech, Agadir, Casablanca, Al Hoceima, Oujda, Tetouan, Ksar-el-Kebir and Chaouen. Contrary to the official version of the facts, it was not restricted to students: workers and unemployed actively took part in the street fighting with the same spontaneous heroism as their Tunisian counterparts but also with the same lack of political, organisational and "military" experience and preparation. The total news black-out during the events gave the Moroccan army and police a free hand to do their dirty job and the official figure of 250 rioters killed is certainly well below reality.

THE AFTERMATH

Both Hassan and Bourguiba have withdrawn their price increases for the time being but whatever measures the capitalists try to adopt they cannot halt the course of their system towards wider social cataclysms. As individual regimes blame subversion and "external elements" for spontaneous popular revolts the growing deterioration of the world economy will create the objective basis for a fightback which will not be restricted to this or that national section of the working class as has been the case until now. After the food riots of 1977 in Egypt, those of 1978 in Tunisia, 1981 in Morocco, Brazil last year, not to mention the struggle of the Polish workers in 1980, this renewed action of our

Tunisian and Moroccan class brothers and sisters is a sign of commitment to fight by our class which requires more than sympathy and formal solidarity. If these struggles are to bear fruit in future it is necessary for the most advanced workers to draw their political lessons and confront them with the experiences of the workers in other countries and their political vanguards. Only in such a way can a genuine revolutionary movement emerge in areas with limited working class tradition. A first criterion in the process of selection of such a political force must be the understanding that the spontaneous mobilisation of the exploited masses, though necessary, is not in itself enough. There is a need for real class independence which can only be provided by communists acting on the basis of the programme of emancipation of the workers of all countries. Only the most advanced elements of the class have the capacity (and the duty) to give political orientation and a general perspective to the present struggles against austerity, strengthening them until they turn into a conscious attack on the capitalist system as a whole.

In this sense, real solidarity with the rioters of the Maghreb means the development of the class struggle everywhere against attacks on our jobs, wages, working and living conditions; coupled with a strenuous effort by revolutionaries to fulfil their tasks of political leadership●

INTERNATIONAL LEAFLET

Nationalism and Imperialism Against the Lebanese Workers

Readers will find enclosed with this issue a leaflet on the above theme produced by the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party to which the CWO is affiliated. It has already been published in French and Italian but lack of space prevents us from printing it in this issue of Workers Voice. We appeal to all readers who find themselves in agreement with its content to help make this revolutionary intervention more effective by sending for copies (any amount, please specify) for distribution wherever they can.

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then the ICC doesn't recognise the state of the period of transition as a proletarian state. the councilist logic of downgrading the tasks of the party works itself out in the anarchist corollary of the abandonment of marxism.

This debate was by no means the last word on the issue for us since its aim was to make all revolutionaries aware of the enormous responsibility that the class struggle has thrust upon us - the responsibility to actively strive to create the most vibrant, combative, centralised international party of the proletariat which repeats none of the mistakes of the past. This was why our introduction to the meeting also outlined our programme of work in relation to the daily class struggle and the necessity to build a network of communist factory groups in the workplaces. Through such groups the gulf which exists today between the revolutionary minority and the rest of the class can find a medium of connection. Through them the experience of the entire class can be unified.

Lastly, the meeting itself was encouraging in that it was just about the best attended that we have experienced and the quality and sophistication of interventions from the public matched those of members present. For us it underlined the necessity to achieve greater precision in our terminology (the need to clarify the distinctions between class and communist consciousness, between the economic class struggle and the class struggle writ large), not as false dichotomies (as the ICC would have it), but as successful tools of analysis in order that we arrive at a more precise understanding of our tasks. The greatest dichotomy of all, however, is that between our views and those of the ICC which now appear to be leaving the framework of marxism altogether●

WORKERS VOICE

The Struggle at Scott Lithgow

Scott-Lithgow: Lessons of the Struggle

After months of bitter struggle the workers at the Scott-Lithgow shipyard have finally accepted the take-over of the yard by Trafalgar House. They have managed to win some concessions from the bosses. Lump sums of £600 to £750 will now be paid to workers who otherwise would have lost out by not having claimed voluntary redundancy before privatisation and the consortium has promised to keep the full workforce on at the yard, though only for 12 months, after which it intends to make drastic reductions to only 1200 jobs.

The move was hailed by one of the chief shop stewards as a "victory for justice and common sense". But for the workers at Scott-Lithgow who have had to face the continuous hesitations and backsliding of the unions, this pose of militancy is a shallow one. In the past ten years this same union has been only too ready to accept some 40,000 redundancies. They called off a national shipbuilding strike last year in the face of vague promises from the bosses to "review" the speed of increased productivity. Last year the shop stewards' committee produced a "rival" plan no different from the plan of the bosses which had been rejected by the workers. In fact the Glasgow Herald described the plans as "virtually indistinguishable".

When the Trafalgar House take-over bid was announced the workers correctly realised that rationalisation would follow and that at least 2,000 redundancies would be on the cards. Their reaction was a mass walk-out. This scared the bosses who immediately started to babble about survival plans to reassure the men. But the unions' response is even more significant. Though many workers expected them to lead their militant moves, they were to be swiftly disappointed. A radical working class outside their control would have been an obvious threat to the

unions' existence so they advised a harmless work-in in order to maintain their control over the workforce. Using typical union delaying tactics they promised an occupation at the end of February unless a satisfactory agreement could be reached beforehand. By such tactics the workers were lulled into passivity and prevented from pursuing autonomous action, the only kind of action which could have hit the bosses hard. Naturally, once the workers had returned to work and the February deadline had passed the unions conveniently forgot about the occupation and instead launched a "fight" against compulsory redundancies which amounted to a paltry STUC demo on March 6th which did nothing to damage the bosses and only served to defuse the anger of Scott-Lithgow workers as they experienced the meaningless token actions.

The unions had wasted valuable time and had frittered away the confidence and resources of the workers. The shop stewards deliberately avoided any kind of all-out industrial action and all their radical phrases about organising solidarity came to nothing - in practice they didn't get a single solidarity action from any other section of the working class.

A lot of workers today believe that without the union organisation to back them up in their struggle they are wasting their time. This is one of the biggest myths in existence. Compare the effectiveness of the shipyard workers in Germany who really shook the bosses by blocking the ports with unfinished boats in their fight against redundancies with the unions' dragooning of Scott-Lithgow workers who wanted to fight back to work.

In our two leaflettings of the shipyards earlier this year, the CWO urged the Scott-Lithgow workers to put an end to the secret decision-making of the unions by mass democratic assemblies. We called for the workers to elect a strike committee which would be subject to instant recall by the work-

force at the mass assemblies and to seek real solidarity action by spreading their strike (initially to the workers at Yarrow's) under the slogan of "No Productivity Deals and No Redundancies". Despite the sabotage of the unions, the workers' militancy has forced the bosses to salvage something from Scott-Lithgow but so long as workers accept the tactics of the unions there remains the danger that their energies and militancy will be sapped by a slow erosion in working conditions and jobs.

Already the unions have made concessions to the bosses and agreed to discuss new manning levels and job practices. This shows that the struggle at Scott-Lithgow is far from over. The unions, always ready to be "realistic" i.e. to see things the bosses' way, are leading the way to defeat. For the Scott-Lithgow workers to avoid this they must be prepared to fight without the unions and against the unions. Sooner or later the lessons of previous struggles must be drawn and the "realistic" (i.e. defeatist) tactics of the unions ignored for an all-out fight of workers in the whole area. Workers on Clydeside have a whole history of struggle but this tradition can't be taken up again by towing the union line. Like everywhere else, the way forward for the Scott-Lithgow workers lies in preparing the ground for the wider and deeper struggles to come. Militant workers who want to defend their jobs and living standards are being forced to seek a political solution outside of the range of left capitalist options. It is to these workers that we turn to help us establish internationalist factory groups in the workplaces. We want to ensure that in future workers' militancy and will to fight will not be wasted by the delaying and divisive tactics of the unions. We want to ensure that someone in every workplace can put forward a brighter alternative for the future than acceptance of further belt-tightening, more sacrifices and eventually war●