

WORKERS VOICE

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**COMMUNIST
WORKERS
ORGANISATION**

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MINERS SHOW THE WAY TOWARDS CLASS WAR

As month has followed month in the struggle of the British miners against pit closures, so the stakes have risen and the significance of the dispute has increased. This dispute has now become the longest, most bitter and most important class battle in Britain since the First World War, surpassing even the General Strike of 1926. And just as the battles of the British working class from 1918 to 1926, through their defeat, opened the way to the pauperisation of the workers and a new imperialist war, so today the miners' strike poses the question of the crucial and stark historical options opened by the crisis: war or revolution.

A victory for the miners will not only clear the way for a renewed offensive by the rest of the British workers who, up till now, have been cowed by unemployment and the catalogue of defeats over the past 5 years. It will also be crucial for the balance of class forces in Europe as a whole: the significance of the British miners strike overshadows all events in the class struggle in Europe since the Polish defeats of 1980-81. The embryonic revival in class struggle, as seen in the Belgian public sector general strike last year, and the struggles of the German metal workers this year, will be tipped towards upsurge or retreat by the outcome of the present battles in the British coal industry. The ruling class is well aware of the importance of the current struggle, which they provoked in the hope and expectation of a quick victory that would be the final blow to the British workers. That is why they have already spent more on fighting "the enemy within" - the working class, than was spent in defeating Galtieri in the Falklands campaign, in terms of importing coal and oil and in policing the strike.

THE MINERS RESPOND

At the beginning of the strike its meaning was more obvious to the ruling class, to MacGregor and Thatcher, than to the miners. Though they showed great militancy, this was channelled by the NUM into harmless ritual

picketing. But the response of the state in starving their families, in fining and jailing thousands of miners, and in killing two of them, has gradually brought about a change in attitude and a new determination. Over the past weeks we have seen the miners abandoning the tired and useless framework of trade union "legality", and engaging in guerrilla actions which are embryonic civil war. Miners have taken over radio wavelengths and broadcast appeals to working miners to join the strike. Commando groups have been organised to bomb lorry depots carrying coal blacked by railmen, and NCB property has been systematically destroyed. Scabs have been finding out that they are playing a dangerous game and have experienced organised workers' wrath. In many pit villages attacks on police stations have been organised, of which the near insurrections at Fitzwilliam and Maltby were only the most spectacular. Rather than simply offering themselves as targets for police brutality, pickets are now making barricades of burning vehicles spiking roads against mounted police and giving the bastards in blue something to think about. The bosses have denounced the miners tactics as "mob rule"; and a "horrified" Kinnock says such actions have "no part in British trades unionism" - how right he is! The NUM has categorically dissociated itself from these actions and explained them as "desperation" and in this has even been joined by some "communists" to whom class violence is anathema. What petty bourgeois pacifist nonsense!

The miners in their increasing use of organised class violence are pointing the way towards civil war, and their actions are to be welcomed. Communists must call for their intensification and generalisation.

"Far from opposing so-called excesses - instances of popular revenge against hated individuals, public buildings - such instances must not only be tolerated, the leadership of them taken in hand." (Marx and Engels, Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League)



Orgreave - June

Against the violence of the bosses workers must respond with class violence.

This break with legality is the biggest single advance made by the miners, or any section of the British working class for decades. In the class war, and more so in the future civil war, the property and persons of the bosses, their police and their scabs are legitimate targets.

GENERALISATION STILL THE KEY

But though the increasing violence of the class is something to be welcomed, and necessary, on its own it will not achieve victory since the organised forces of the capitalist state repression are stronger than any section of the working class taken singly - even the miners.

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CWO AGM REPORT

The Annual General Meeting of the Communist Workers Organisation took place in London in early July. It began with a report from the Executive Committee on the year's work, and was followed by a broad discussion of this amongst the membership. Since many of the points raised at the AGM are of wider interest, we are indicating some of the areas of discussion and resolution in this issue of Workers Voice.

The meeting noted that, within the context of a continued deterioration of the economic position of the majority of capitalist states, the USA was experiencing a so-called boom, which some bourgeois analysts claimed would drag the world out of economic recession. But far from the US boom doing any such thing, it is in fact based on the transfer of surplus value from its political allies to the USA through high dollar interest rates. Continuation of the policies which inspired the US boom would mean the bankruptcy of its main debtors and probably the collapse of the world financial system. It was argued that our previous contention that no more inflationary booms were possible was based largely on the analysis of France and overlooked the specific and crucial role of the USA within Western finance capital and the wider options open to it. The concrete, rather than historical/theoretical aspects of imperialism, was an area to which the group needed to devote more work.

Also noted was the failure of all attempts at arms reduction talks, and the confirmation of our analysis - shown by the deployment of Cruise, Pershing and SS 20 missiles - of the drive of crisis-ridden capitalism towards rearmament and war, and of the centrality of work against war in the communist perspective. The past year had shown that the drive to war, and the drive to revolution, both products of the crisis, were not mutually exclusive. After a long stalemate on the class front, the continued attacks of the bosses on the living standards of the working class had seen the revival of class conflict on a wide scale, with the mass strikes in Belgium, the biggest strike wave in West German history, and the bitter struggle of the British miners which has significantly altered the balance of class forces in the UK. This new wave of class struggle, however, still shows sectional and regional weaknesses, and while responding to the challenge and opportunities it poses, it would be foolish to euphorically assert that we are on the verge of a pre-revolutionary wave of struggles.

THE WORK OF THE CWO

Our main response to the events of the last 12 months has been to develop our press, which we are striving to make "not only a collective propagandist, and a collective agitator, but a also a collective organiser" (Lenin). Our continued ability to publish a regular, printed theoretical journal is a move away from amateurishness in this respect. Over the past year we have clarified our thinking on the Marxist position on class consciousness, and on the strategy for revolutionary defeatism in the light of the Iran/Iraq war. We were able to demonstrate that class identity emerges through the class struggle, while communist consciousness is produced by the party on the basis of the class's whole historic experience. Revolutionary defeatism does not simply mean calls for insurrection but is an immediate and practical strategy of orientation against war with insurrection as the aim and end point.

The production of our newspaper Workers Voice had maintained, but not been able to surpass, its bi-monthly periodicity. Until we are able to produce at least a monthly paper its function as a tool of agitation will be limited and it will continue to be aimed at the communist milieu, politicised workers and those questioning leftism. In this context we must strive to produce a paper that avoids journalistic trips round the world and contains serious texts of an historical/theoretical nature as well as topical coverage. The need to unify and homogenise the theoretical work of Revolutionary Perspectives and the practical agitational texts of Workers Voice was recognised as particularly important.

The last 12 months had seen the CWO issuing more publications than ever before, since it also produced the 4th International Conference Report and the first issue of Communist Review, as well as issuing 4 pamphlets in French and one in Farsi on the Democratic Revolution. The year also saw the CWO issuing more leaflets aimed at the class than ever before, as well as organising a record number of reasonably successful public meetings. This increased activity has partly been the product of, and has partly caused, a modest increase in our forces and the organisation is now able to maintain viable regional sections in Scotland, the North of England and London. We had also been able to initiate a series of educational sessions which enriched the internal life of the group.

Our ability to respond to the miners' strike with a campaign of interventions was beyond any other organisation on the communist left. But the strike also revealed our weaknesses - e.g. we failed to produce a national statement to the rest of the class and failed to organise a series of national meetings, as well as being initially slow to respond. Against this should be set our generalised intervention with Workers Voice in the class, and over a dozen leaflets aimed at miners and non-miners, as well as physical intervention at demos, miners clubs etc. The miners strike highlights the priority of strengthening our forces and integrating sympathisers in our work.

On an international level our relations with the P.C.Int (Battaglia) had become much closer with the foundation of the International Bureau, and the publication of Communist Review and we hope that this will act as a pole of attraction that can lead to the convening of a 5th International Conference. The formation of the Bureau affects the situation of our comrades in France. Instead of seeking to establish a CWO section in France, the French comrades would act as a kernel affiliated to the International Bureau, a view that was echoed by those comrades themselves.

Overall the preceding period had been a positive one for the organisation with a physical and theoretical strengthening of our forces. But the tasks we face in the coming period demand a further strengthening of the available forces. It is up to us to convince our contacts, sympathisers and rivals that the CWO is the only serious focus for communist work in Britain, by demonstrating in a theoretical and practical manner our political maturity.

subscribe

If you sympathise with the CWO's politics, take out a supporter's subscription of £10. 6 issues/year - £2.50 (post paid) in Britain. Subscribers outside Britain send £3.00 (or equivalent). To receive our theoretical journal and the international journal of the IBRP (Revolutionary Perspectives and Communist Review) as well, send a combined subscription of £5.00 (£6.00 outside Britain) to the group address.

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MINERS continued from pg1

The panic experienced by the ruling class when the dockers temporarily joined forces with the miners in July shows that this is the way forward. The imports of coal and oil cannot be stopped by picketing, as was shown in 1980 during the steel strike. Only active solidarity from all transport workers can achieve this. But the British working class, still operating within the bounds of trades unionism, while sympathising with the miners waits on its unions to organise "support". The unions on the other hand watch while the strike bleeds to death, making phoney gestures of solidarity - one day "token" strikes - and proposed financial levies 3 months after the strike began. The forthcoming TUC conference, whatever gestures or motions it adopts, will try to make sure that the miners remain effectively isolated. The miners, and the available revolutionary forces must direct their efforts towards generalising the strike. And the seeds of generalisation are there in the simmering situation in the docks as the bosses try to use scab labour to unload iron ore, and in the dwindling power station coal stocks, which mean that eventually troops will have to move pit-head coal stocks to power stations. Future strikes by other workers, e.g. the dockers, need to be clearly linked to the miners' strike and the watchword should be "No return to work before dockers and miners' demands have BOTH been met in full."

Although the miners have gone way beyond bourgeois legality in carrying out their struggle, they have not yet questioned the role

of the unions. The NUM retains the loyalty of the most militant miners, and criticism of the union has only come from the reactionary position of those who have scabbed, accusing it of "lack of democracy". The NUM has been extremely skilled in carrying out its role of a safety valve for the miners' anger: leading figures in the union have repeatedly had themselves arrested, and made the most militant sounding speeches. The result has been that even the most blatant of NUM actions which have undermined the strike have gone unchallenged. Such is the refusal of the miners' union to pay strike pay, the slashing of picketing allowance etc. Even McGahey's refusal to condemn or try to prevent the import of Polish coal flooding into Scotland has not led to criticism of the NUM in the Scottish pits. Criticism of the NUM is seen by striking miners as opposition to the strike. This means that communists must concentrate more on outflanking the union by concrete proposals and demands, which it will be unable to endorse, thus revealing the NUM in the eyes of the miners as an agent of class conciliation, however radical its rhetoric. At the moment, the most militant miners still see the question of solidarity as being the task of the NUM to organise via its bureaucratic links with other unions, and at a general level as the task of the TUC. While it is easy to denounce Sirs, Chapple and others as scabs, it is a more difficult task to explain to the miners that, objectively, the tactics of Scargill and Co also serve the same interests as their class enemies. The NUM, like other trades unions, functions within the class struggle as a brake on its generalisation and a shock absorber for the bosses,

while supporting the faction of the bourgeoisie (i.e. the Labour Party) which is allied to state capitalism. However, in this strike the NUM by militant acts and rhetoric has appeared to be expressing support for class warfare. It is up to communists to show how the NUM is acting against the interests of the working class, by turning the strike into a battle for "Britain's national interests", the economic patriotism of this echoed by the farcical incident of Scargill's wife leading miners' wives to petition the queen. The logic with which the trades unions operate, whatever the intention of individuals, means that the NUM will eventually call for a return to work on NCB terms.

If the British bourgeoisie, after its ideological victory in the Falklands, and its crushing of the steelworkers and Leyland workers, can add to its body count the miners, then it will have gained an upper hand so firm that it will be almost impossible to shake off. If the miners can hold out until the winter months, and can convert sympathy amongst the rest of the class into solidarity, the whole British working class will be assured of an historic victory that will widen the perspectives for revolutionary work. Communists face daunting tasks and opportunities in the historic days ahead.

FULL SUPPORT FOR THE MINERS !
AGAINST STATE VIOLENCE RESPOND
WITH CLASS VIOLENCE !
FOR THE GENERALISATION OF THE
STRUGGLE, POWER, STEEL AND
TRANSPORT WORKERS - FOLLOW THE
PATH BLAZED BY THE MINERS.

BREAKING WITH TERRORISM

The impact of the capitalist crisis, and the revival of class confrontation has led to many crises and fissures in bourgeois leftism. In Italy the dominant form of leftist ideology posing as a pseudo-alternative to the grip of the P.C.I. (Communist Party) on the working class was the emergence of terrorist manifestations in the 1970s. These groups, of which the most famous were the so-called "Red Brigades", never questioned the basic political assumptions of Stalinism but instead criticised its manoeuvres with the Italian state (the doctrine of the "historic compromise", support for NATO etc) and proposed a strategy of exemplary actions (such as the assassination of Moro) to galvanise the Italian working class into action. The political and tactical bankruptcy of such a perspective opened the way to a crisis in this movement, despite its sustenance by an influx of recruits from the crisis-ridden Italian petty bourgeoisie.

Repression and demoralisation have taken their toll, but some elements from these former terrorist groupings will search for a way out. In this context we are pleased to publish the following brief appeal which gives clear expression to the desire of the comrades to move from terrorist to communist positions. This has not been without its dangers: the events of May 1st referred to were a physical attack on the comrades by the "residual combatants". In their political movement, these comrades have our physical and political solidarity, as they deserve from all internationalists.

We are a small group of Italian communists in exile in France whose erroneous past still un-

fortunately weighs heavily on the present.

It is five years since we parted from a group of petty bourgeois terrorists of the anarchist mould when we moved towards the historic positions defended by the communist left of Italy. Terrorism is a desperate expression of the outraged middle classes under the pressure of the crisis in an epoch when the proletariat is not yet ready to formally constitute its political party and therefore not able to give those elements a prospect of communist struggle. Our rupture could not develop as in the case of an exit from a legal group. It has been complicated by two factors: above all else, that of the state where we have the weight of judicial courts pending; and secondly, with the "residual combatants" who adjudged the separation as betrayal and collaboration.

On the basis of notorious lies, we have for years been the object of denigration, threats and physical aggression, culminating in an attack on the First of May demonstration in Paris, which narrowly avoided becoming a tragedy. We are making an appeal to revolutionary organisations, because they should be on their guard against such Stalinist police practices, and because our testimony should be of value in raising an awareness against armed nationalist reformism, masquerading as communism. History has already shown, that during the rise of the class struggle, these forces will explicitly line themselves up on the side of the counter revolution, as the enemies of the independent party of the working class.

A.E., F.I., P.M. Paris June 1984.

COMMUNISTS IN INDIA continued from pg 6

have only proved the truth of the Marxist dictum that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made state machine and wield it for its own purposes". The bourgeois state machine needs to be smashed and destroyed. The various Maoist factions styling themselves as Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) have, by blindly following the concept of "people's war", "four-class-bloc" and "new democratic revolution" and by their anarchist methods of so-called "annihilation of class enemies", have proved themselves to be the Indian version of populism in general and Narodism in particular. This movement, at the cost of tremendous sacrifice of the cadres has led to the strengthening of the bourgeois state machine in India. The Stalinist-Maoist parties in India, true to their anti-proletarian class character have attempted to destroy the class unity of the industrial working class by formation of rival trade unions. The multiplicity of trade unions has led to the fall in the striking power of the working class and, as a result, the strike movement of the Indian workers, inspite of their remarkable long-drawn-out character, have failed to achieve even their limited economic objectives. The railway workers strike, the Bangalore government workers strike, the Bombay textile workers strike which continued for more than two years, are a few examples in point. The Indian proletariat is getting disillusioned with these petty bourgeois parties along with their so called class and mass organisations. Under such circumstances the urgent need for the formation of a revolutionary proletarian party in India cannot be over-emphasised.

Marx maintained that the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The world proletariat, and along with it its Indian counter-part has learned from its own experience that whenever it is under the leadership of any other class or strata, including the radical petty bourgeoisie, its movements and struggles are doomed to devastating failure. The proletariat, in its process of becoming a class power, builds up its own class party. The task of the revolutionary Marxists is to aid the proletariat

(by arming it with the revolutionary principles and practices of Marxism-Leninism) to build up its independent revolutionary class party distinct from all other parties of radical petty bourgeoisie including those who call themselves Communists and Marxists. It is in educating the vanguard of this class in the essentials of revolutionary Marxist-Leninist theory, in exposing before this class the reactionary content of revisionism in the form of Stalinism, Maoism and Trotskyism, in emphasising the importance of revolutionary unity of proletariat with the oppressed masses, particularly with the rural proletariat and poor peasants, in acquainting the proletariat with the struggles of the proletariat in various countries, in drawing revolutionary conclusions from the struggles of the world proletariat against world capitalism and imperialism that revolutionary marxists can fulfil their historic role.

The aims of Revolutionary Proletariat are precisely the same. Being the flag-bearers of proletarian internationalism, we hold that though primarily the proletariat of each country has to deal with its own bourgeoisie, it makes all efforts to learn from the experiences of the proletariat of other countries and must aid the proletariat of other countries in their struggles against national and international capitalism by all means at its disposal. In order to achieve the above objectives the world proletariat must strive to form a world organisation i.e. an International which, since the dissolution of the Third International has remained practically non-existent.

With these objectives in view the Revolutionary Proletariat would publish the views, resolutions and programmes of all revolutionary Marxist-Leninist currents all over the world, currents fighting resolutely against all forms of Stalinist-Maoist-Trotskyist revisionism, making sincere all out efforts to give moribund world capitalism its final death-blow and establish on its ruins an exploitation-free, classless, stateless communist world.

THE EVENTS AT BANEH

Due to the black-out by the bourgeois media, a tactic now more frequently deployed because of the rising tumult of the world class struggle, news has just reached us (via the press of the C.P. of Iran) of the valiant fight of the people of Baneh. On 5th June, Iraqi jets attacked Baneh, concentrating their fire on the poorer parts of the city and killing and wounding over 1000 people.

Following these acts of barbaric terror, the workers of Baneh went on the streets shouting anti-war slogans, condemning the Islamic Republic's crimes and demanding an immediate end to the war. To prevent the spread of such a movement the black hundred mercenaries of the reactionary Pasdaran were sent in to quell the demonstration, killing, wounding and arresting hundreds.

According to the latest news, the people of Baneh have not succumbed to this bloody suppression and their struggle continues. From other sources we have heard that more anti-war demonstrations have taken place, though till now in a very disorganised form. Desertions have taken place and there has been disquiet in the long food queues.

We consider the events of Baneh extremely significant as one of the first expressions of a proletarian rupture with the nationalist hysteria of the followers of Khomeini; a chauvinism which has suffocated the Iranian masses since the beginning of this horrific war. This uprising indicates the initial awareness that neither regime should be supported - neither the mullahs nor Hussein, that both are engaged in a war which is directed against the interests of the working masses of both Iran and Iraq.

The need for a strengthening of communist forces and intervention is now more urgent than ever for the transformation of this micro-imperialist war into a civil war against a blood of countless Iraqi and Iranian toilers. A historical parallel can be drawn with the anti-war demonstrations which took place in Russia during the First World War where it was demonstrated that peace could only be achieved by revolutionary defeatism and, through the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship.

Every further day in this carnage emphasises that absolute clarity in the understanding and application of the policy of revolutionary defeatism is vitally necessary. Any equivocation on this central issue, around which the fate of the working class depends, can only be interpreted as both a subjective and objective capitulation to the bourgeoisie. (For a deeper analysis of this question see the statement on the Iran Iraq war in this issue.)

We call on all class conscious workers to solidarise with the embattled people of Baneh and all those forces pitting themselves against the vile perpetrators of this war.

- For an immediate end to the war
- Neither the Islamic Republic nor Baathism
- For the international solidarity of the working class against all wars.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

LONDON: Debate with the Socialist Party of Great Britain.
See local advertising for details.

GLASGOW: The Iran/Iraq War.
Early October,
Contact Glasgow address for details.

SHEFFIELD, LEEDS:
See local advertising for details.

STATEMENT ON THE

In February 1979 a widespread insurrection in Iran overthrew the regime of the Shah and opened up a totally new situation for the country and the entire region. In the factories and industrial quarters of the cities the working masses organised for the first time. In the villages the poverty-stricken masses and the small peasants - impoverished by the regime's "white revolution" which had allowed large scale capital to undermine the small peasants and traditional producers - were experimenting with new forms of direct democracy involving full freedom of opinion and expression.

Despite the context of backward social and economic conditions it was the beginning of a process which contained within it the source of the historical threat to capitalism and its oppression over humanity. Capital's penetration of all sectors of society, the final upsetting of the precarious balance which had held between the domination of imperialist capital, and the existing economic and social formations which were essentially pre-capitalist, was not only the result of particular policies of the Shah. It was also and above all dictated by a crisis-ridden world capitalist system, by its tensions and contradictions. In order to cope with that crisis in its advanced citadels capital has everywhere to extend its undisputed domination and its depraved methods of exploitation. The Shah's compulsory industrialisation responded to imperialist capital's need to create the conditions for super-exploitation and the extortion of super profits in the backward areas. Forced industrialisation involved economic and political violence - the use of severe oppression and repression against Iran's working masses. Their reaction to this oppression was no less than the historic reaction to the historical conditions of capitalism's existence and rule. These in turn contain the objective conditions and causes for proletarian revolution.

Such objective conditions for revolution have not yet been accompanied by the subjective ones of revolutionary will and capacity matured in the struggle of a revolutionary communist party. In Europe, the birthplace of capitalism and also of its historical opponent - the proletariat with its accompanying doctrine of revolution - the working class is still the object of history but the forces which historically represent it are still very weak. Iran, however, could not wait for the eruption of a political force capable of leading the proletarian masses to an assault on capitalism for communism. And a still more serious factor, given the context of the worldwide dispersion of communist forces,

an isolated attempt at revolution would not have had any chance of survival. The objective and immediate conditions for an assault on power were there, but the forces of political leadership and the international political conditions of support were absent. In short, the international proletarian party was missing. In the absence of a revolutionary force it could only be a bourgeois force which triumphed. And the successful force would be that which above all others was capable of interpreting and distorting the elemental outbursts of the masses in order to redirect them into a new administrative form but with the same class interests as before - those of capital. Other political forces and social strata came to serve the interests of capital and identified with those interests in a new form of subservience to the network of world imperialism. As a result of the balance of class forces inside Iran the political and social forces which soon turned out to be the victors were those linked to religious traditions. Although from the standpoint of a backward and reactionary conservatism, these had become the traditional opponents of the regime. A mass struggle against the Shah's oppression and the devastating policies of imperialism of which the Shah and the other leading families were such faithful followers, was converted by one of history's seeming paradoxes into a polarisation of forces around an even more reactionary centre linked to a feudal and pre-capitalist culture.

Even though some forms of insurrectional "gains" remained after February it was from amongst the more or less fully Islamic forces that a selection process began to establish which of these, or which alliance amongst them, would go on to administer the terrain of capitalism and re-establish the corresponding links with international imperialism. All those self-styled revolutionaries who flirted with the "anti-imperialist" expression of anti-imperialism, part of a hypothetical international revolutionary process - here we refer to the "new left" organisations in the dominant countries and to certain 3rd worldist currents in the dominated countries - revealed themselves as the fundamentally petit-bourgeois reactionaries they are. Whilst applauding any mass movement they are prepared to align themselves with the most fanatical priests and the blackest reactionaries that a subject society like Iran always carries within itself.

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

In February 1979 a regime fell which for years had been the uncontested policeman for Western imperialism in the region. The situation thus created also opened up the possibility of the destruction of the imperialist balance of power in the area. The USSR had been trying for a long time to re-establish its position in the Middle East which had been widely eroded by the more powerful USA. Nearby Iraq, notably more backward than Iran economically, was waiting to settle accounts with Iran. For decades there had been tension and struggle between the two countries for hegemony of the Persian Gulf, particularly over its most important ports and oil terminals. Throughout the '70s there were border skirmishes, usually begun by Iran which was trying to win control of the particularly rich zone of the Shatt al Arab and thus strengthen its hegemony in the area as a sub-imperialist functionary of the West. By "virtue" of its backwardness Iraq, which is governed by the Baathist Party and divided into factions according to the various clan alliances, has been able to maintain partial independence from the network of Eastern Bloc imperialist interests. It has been able to divide its debts and foreign trade (completely based on the export of oil) between the USA and its allies and the USSR. According to the 1970's "Kissinger doctrine" this situation had to be overcome with the defeat of the Baathist regime and the imposition of a regime more friendly to the US's ally Iran.

The social disturbance and disorganisation of

the army which accompanied the fall of the Shah thus opened up the prospect of a settling of overdue accounts between the two brigands and favoured Iraq, at least in appearance. Moreover the ferment of insurrection, the demand for elementary freedoms won in the beginning by the Iranian masses and taken over by militant Shi'ism, brought with it the danger of contagion which was in the interests of the Iraqi regime to block. The Iraqi attack on Iran in September 1980 thus occurred in the context of the international capitalist crisis. It was an attempt by the Baathist regime to profit from the disorganisation of the Shah's powerful army and from the social ferment inside Iran in order to conquer a position of strength in the Persian Gulf. An eventual victory would have, in Iraqi eyes, allowed it to take over Iran's role as the mini-power in the region. From this position it would be able to negotiate with the opposing imperialist fronts and sell itself to the highest bidder. It is a significant fact that while Iraq is linked to Russia by a treaty of friendship and co-operation and while its army is equipped by Russia, Iraq has also presented itself as the defender of Western interests and enjoys the encouragement of the USA and France. The international capitalist crisis, the stagnation of production and therefore the fall in international trade and in the demand for raw materials - particularly oil - means a huge drop in the value of Iraq's income. Thus its ability to import all those goods for which it completely depends on the international market has been undermined. Until now Iraq has survived by importing goods from both the American and Russian blocs. But today its loss of purchasing power forces Iraq to choose which camp it is going to depend on for the financial aid to import these essential goods.

A quick Iraqi victory after the attack four years ago would have allowed Saddam Hussein's regime to enter the international network of agreements and alliances in a position of strength. It would have enabled it to negotiate with one or other of the opposing imperialist fronts and to decide whether or not to confirm the treaty of friendship with the USSR - backed up by major financial and technological commitments on the part of the "soviet" power (which up till now have been somewhat scarce) - or whether to open its doors definitely to the other imperialist camp, the USA, and to put its trust in its financial and technological power in order to establish itself as the regional power.

THE PROSECUTION OF THE WAR

Saddam Hussein's hopes soon evaporated. After the initial shock of the attack on Iran's Khuzestan the Shi'ite coalition succeeded in mobilising the masses and quickly reorganising the Army under the banner of a "holy war" against the "satanic aggressor in the pay of imperialism" and thus stopped the Iraqi advance. Religious and nationalist fervour combined to form a powerful weapon for the Iranian regime which conveniently diverted the attention of the masses from the increasingly chaotic situation inside Iran and united all classes against an outside enemy. Thus arose the conditions for a lasting war which developed in the framework of imperialism, though on its fringes, without the direct intervention of the superpowers and with neither of them able to decide in favour of either of the combatants. The fluid situation in the Gulf was thus caught up in the bigger even more fluid situation in the Middle East and Central Asia. Here a chain of conflicts which extend from Lebanon's Mediterranean coast to the Afghan mountains in which Janus faced alliances are made and broken repeatedly show the dangerous tensions which have arisen since the period of post-war accumulation came to an end. In the Iran-Iraq War the cards in the supposedly fixed alignments in the region have recently been reshuffled. Iraq, already a part of the "rejectionist front" over the Palestinian question and therefore politically opposed to the "moderate" Arab countries which are closer to the USA, now receives arms and aid from Saudi Arabia and its Gulf satellites since they hope to use Iraq to drive the Khomeini menace away from their quiet

COMMUNIST REVIEW

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Organ of the International Bureau
for the Revolutionary Party

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THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR

theocratic dynastic regimes. On the other hand, Iran fights with arms bought from the Israeli infidel, formally the sworn enemy of Islamic sovereignty in the region and the hated occupier of the holy city of Jerusalem. Israel is interested in using Shi'ite fanaticism to split the formal unity of the Arab countries that surround it. But arms for Iran also come from Syria and Libya which get them from the USSR which is still waiting on the sidelines to see which card to put its money on.

This is a situation which the imperialist centres find difficult to control directly. Many of the reasons for this can be found in the internal condition of Iran itself. Undoubtedly the Khomeini regime is a bourgeois regime. It is a reactionary and repressive regime based on a new ruling strata which, by means of the state, owns the same sources of wealth in the capitalist economy once held by the Pahlavi dynasty and the few families gathered round it. But what is the international orientation of this new regime? The internal struggle in the first government of the Islamic coalition ended with the overthrow of Bani Sadr (who favoured co-operation with the European pole of western capitalism) in June '81 and in the subsequent elimination of the uncomfortable alliance with the Tudeh, the USSR's right hand in Iran. The Khomeini regime, in the midst of the fuss over its own anti-Americanism, also condemned Bani Sadr for breaking contracts with US firms worth 50 billion dollars. From the masses who gave the regime legitimacy in its early days there is growing and widening opposition to Khomeini's barbarous repression. The regime cannot last for ever and could collapse at any moment. Who will replace it? The Mujaheddin? The Council of National Resistance? The CNR is the hope of the European bourgeoisie to whose social democratic representatives it largely appeals. But this is not a certainty. In Iran other tensions, other autonomous interests have begun to express themselves, particularly those of the working class who helped the old bourgeois forces in the earlier period of the re-adjustment of the balance of class forces in Iran. If Khomeini fell through an eventual insurrection a new situation would be opened up, the outcome of which is neither predictable nor manageable by either Russian or American imperialism. They would prefer Khomeini to direct dependent Iranian capitalism towards one boss or another rather than risking unpleasant surprises in a mass insurrectionary process.

On the other hand, the same goes for Iraq where the proletariat and exploited masses are increasingly oppressed by the internal repercussions of the international crisis. To support the bloody fall of the Ba'athist regime also means to support the opening up of a revolutionary process in Iraq with equally uncertain results. This is why the great powers stand watching the butchery which has now reached a million men. The drawn out war of attrition, of attack and counter-attack on a blood drenched front, of bombing missions and reprisal bombardments of industrial plant and oil terminals as well as cities continues. The USA, backed up by Britain, has deployed an important fleet at the mouth of the Straits of Hormuz in order to dissuade Iran by the threat of a blockade of its most important oil outlet. The USSR has replied by threatening to retaliate in the event of an American attack on Iran. Iraq is bombarding the Kharg Island oil terminal and the oil tankers which go there, and Iran is responding in kind. The danger of an extension of the conflict grows and with it the efforts of the super-powers to avoid it. The inhuman logic of capitalism demands that Iranians and Iraqis continue to massacre each other so long as the situation as a whole prevents the imperialist centres from intervening decisively to resolve it.

THE PROLETARIAT AND THE WAR

It is obvious that the workers of Iran and Iraq have no interest in defending this war. When workers fight in the name of religion or a supposed national interest they kill each other for the material interests of their own ruling class in a tragic game of internecine struggle created by the most anarchic and brutal mode

of production which has ever appeared on earth. The bourgeoisie assigns to them the role of fighting and suffering in war with all its burden of dead and wounded, of starvation, misery and desperation. The acceptance of this can only be explained by the ideological enslavement to which the working class has submitted. But even the most deeply rooted illusions and myths based on ignorance and religion are shaken when war and sacrifices continue for a long time without ceasing. Eighteen months after the war began we had news of anti-war demonstrations in Iraq. The masses' instinctive hatred of both regimes was summed up in the slogan of striking workers in Sulamaniyah (Iraqi Kurdistan): "Neither Saddam nor Khomeini". Today we learn that similar opposition to the war is building up inside Iran. For example, after the bombardment of Baneh in Iranian Kurdistan on 5th June by Iraqi planes the proletariat of that city took to the streets for several days to demonstrate their hatred of the war. The Islamic Republic didn't shirk from the ruthless repression of this demonstration, confirming once again that the proletariat in Iran, Iraq and Kurdistan has no interest in supporting either regime. The working class in these tormented countries must extend their opposition to the war. They must start to organise themselves independently of those forces which are trying to mobilise them behind this or that bourgeois faction and move on to a direct boycott of the war policies of their respective governments.

The armed proletariat in the opposing armies must begin to recognise their officers who order them to the slaughter as the real enemy and turn round on them the arms which they have been given to wipe each other out. The young called to the front in place of the hundreds of thousands already dead must refuse to go. The workers who produce and maintain the tools of death must go on strike. Production and transport of arms have to be blocked by mass proletarian action organised by the communist vanguards.

The main aim of the working class in both countries at the moment is the imposition of peace and the only means to do this is by class war against their own governments and against this capitalist war. In the struggle to impose peace on the two governments the class forges its instruments of struggle for the final assault on capitalism:

- its independent organisation
- its solidarity beyond capitalist frontiers
- its consciousness of its real antagonism towards capitalism
- its unity around the programme of its own emancipation.

For this reason the battle to impose peace on the two governments is a struggle of the working class against capitalism. And for this reason this must be the principal area of intervention and of communist work in the region at the present time. The main barriers to communist politics taking hold within the working masses in the region are the nationalism and the myth of the revolutionary nature of the Islamic Republic propagated by organisations who claim to have the interests of the masses at heart. Thus, inside Iran itself bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces have taken sides with the barbarous Khomeini regime which they depict as the guardian of Iran's "anti-imperialist" role since 1979. To such forces communists reply that there is nothing for the proletariat to defend in a war fought for the competitive aim of the plunderers (however much they themselves are subordinate to greater interests) and carried out by states - independently of their specific strength and solidity - in which the proletariat is an oppressed and dominated class. Whoever has spoken of "defence of the conquests of the February Revolution against the Iraqi attacks" in order to call the proletariat to the war front has led the workers who supported them to the slaughter house under the banner of reactionary Islam and the bloody priest Khomeini. Whoever, in Iraq, has called for war against the reactionary theocracy of Khomeini has tried to draw the Iraqi workers to the side of the

national bourgeoisie in a war to confirm Iraq as the sub-imperialist power in the region against the interests of the international proletariat.

Whoever, in Iraq, has called for support of the Islamic Republic against the Ba'athist regime has spread lies about working class interests amongst Iraqi workers and has only helped to undermine the struggle of the Iraqi proletariat. Whoever, on each side of the border in Kurdistan, has aligned with the Ba'athists or the Islamic Republic for the sake of Kurdish nationalism has sacrificed the international interests of the Kurdish working masses.

Communists in the region have to wage an implacable struggle against all such forces in order to maintain the independent interests of the working class. Their basic weapon in this fight is the recognition that the proletariat is an international class whose interests do not change according to national frontiers. The prolonged slaughter of proletarians and the enormous sacrifices demanded from them by the regimes of Baghdad and Tehran have provided the material basis for mass opposition to both governments. The task of communists in both Iraq and Iran (including the Kurdish zones) is to harness this growing opposition to genuine communist policies. That is, to policies which clearly express the proletariat's opposition not only to the Ba'athist and Islamic Republic regimes but to all those state capitalist or democratic opposition forces who are seeking a national alternative and would have the working class line up with yet another faction of capital.

THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU for the
REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
ITALY, UK, FRANCE. AUGUST 1984

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COMMUNISTS IN INDIA

Introduction

We are publishing below an extract from Revolutionary Proletariat, organ of a recently formed communist group in India. In a region where the political milieu is almost entirely dominated by various brands of leftism - Maoism, Trotskyism etc - all the more welcome is a programmatic statement the existence of which must be seen as an important initial step towards the unification of our class on the Indian sub-continent.

Since the outbreak of the crisis in the late '60s a whole series of social convulsions has shaken the partially developed periphery of capitalism in Asia, Africa and Latin America and has centred on historically young proletariats carrying in their wake the semi-proletarian masses. The resurgence of workers' struggles outside the metropolises indicates not only the global nature of capital's crisis, but raises to a new level the problem of the formation of a vanguard where a brutally suppressed proletariat finds itself an isolated minority of the population and has been deprived of any organic contact with the tradition of the Communist Left.

Out of the human maelstrom which toppled the Shah of Iran in 1979 emerged the Unity of Communist Militants who, despite confusions inherited from their populist past, were moving from leftism towards communism. We have been, along with the P.C.Int. of Italy, pursuing a principled political dialogue with what is now the C.P. of Iran, part of the process in the creation of conditions for an international party.

This theoretical confrontation has not only deepened our theoretical understanding, especially around the issues of revolutionary defeatism and the "democratic" revolution, but has also contributed towards an increasing sophistication in the framing and execution of our tactics.

It is on this basis that we welcome the publication of Revolutionary Proletariat, which shows a clarity on a range of positions: decadence and the nature of imperialism, the necessity for the party, the political forms in which state capitalism clothes itself and the need to absorb and enrich the historic experience of the class as a global totality. All this expresses the autonomous re-emergence of the Indian proletariat, a proletariat historically experienced and concentrated in a few key zones. Recently, for instance, mass strikes have broken out in India and factory committees have emerged on the basis of mass meetings with revocable delegates in opposition to the "official unions".

India was one of those Asian countries with a relatively developed proletariat, with political and organisational links with the workers of Europe, which were able to respond to the revolutionary wave of 1917-23. As deputies of British imperialism, the role of the local bourgeoisie in crushing the massive Indian strikes of 1919-23, led M.N.Roy to oppose Lenin's position on the national question at the Second Congress of the 3rd International, hence demonstrating the vital role of the working class in these regions in demystifying the bourgeois lies about "national liberation". Roy argued that the task of the Indian workers was the communist revolution and not the forming of an alliance with the local bourgeoisie.

A major weakness in the Platform of Revolutionary Proletariat is in the conception of the nature and function of trade unions which are seen as basically proletarian organisations. In the March strike of 300,000 Indian dock workers it was the four dock unions which, by putting themselves at the head of the struggle, repressed any incipient tendency of generalisation of the struggle.

The 1982 Bombay textile workers strike, which lasted for over a year, caused tens of thousands of workers to leave the established unions only to fall into the trap of the Datta samant new union drive. This movement served to channel the workers' massive combativity into the dead-end of "rank and file" unionism. Former members of Congress (the ruling party in India) and former Stalinists have played a role in the formation of these new structures. The more radical unions should be seen as a potent disguise for the manoeuvrings of the bourgeoisie, in their success in preventing ex-

tension and generalisation of the struggles.

In making their positions known on a global scale, Revolutionary Proletariat have shown internationalist commitment: we hope that the future will show a willingness to develop further in contact and discussion with communists worldwide.

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FROM THE REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAT ISSUE NO.1, May 1984.

THE AIMS OF THIS PAPER

Humanity today is living under a system of moribund world capitalism currently undergoing an unprecedented crisis. It is characterised by a spread of poverty, starvation, death and unemployment on a mass-scale. An all round human misery has been increasingly affecting not only the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America but also the industrially advanced countries of Europe, America and even the so-called socialist republics of Russia, China and the countries of East Europe. The capitalist relations of production have not only proved to be fetters for any further development of productive forces but a substantial part of existing productive forces are kept unutilised and a huge amount of existing productive forces are being destroyed systematically through long-drawn out localised wars fanned and fuelled by Imperialist super powers by the supply of sophisticated arms to the contending parties. Simultaneously, the discontent and the anger of the exploited oppressed masses against capitalism and imperialism are being expressed in the form of strikes, demonstrations, armed uprising and protest marches throughout the world. The spectre of communist revolution is haunting world capitalism once again, after a lull of a few decades since the Second World War.

The post Second World War era has witnessed the rise of two imperialist blocs, one headed by USA and the other by USSR, fiercely competing with each other to establish their hegemonies in different parts of the world for a re-division of the world market. This imperialist super power rivalry is very likely to cause total annihilation of mankind in the event of a nuclear world war.

The USSR, the first proletarian state in world history has degenerated into a state monopoly capitalist country primarily due to the defeat of the Russian proletariat during the post-revolutionary period of class struggle which it had to wage in near isolation due to its own backwardness and the failure of proletarian revolutions elsewhere in Europe. The proletarian state in the USSR was replaced by a neo-bourgeois state born out of the remnants of the Tzarist bureaucracy combined with the new recruits from the petty bourgeois intelligentsia under the leadership of the Russian Communist Party which was by then captured and controlled by petty bourgeois elements.

The world proletarian movement became impotent for decades due to the political impact of this neo bourgeoisie of the USSR which ruled under the leadership of Stalin in the name of Marxism Leninism but followed a path of class collaboration of the proletariat with the national bourgeoisie in different countries. As a result, insurrectionary proletarian movements against capitalism in various countries - e.g. Germany, Italy, Spain and China were brutally crushed.

The rise of the People's Republic of China under the leadership of Mao-Tse-Tung, with his reactionary theory of a "four class bloc against imperialism" - comprising of national bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and working class - and his concept of New Democratic Revolution (which essentially meant a bourgeois

democratic revolution keeping the bourgeois state intact), actually consolidated the rule of capital in China, simultaneously perfecting the Chinese bourgeois state machine and reducing the Chinese proletariat to the position of mere wage labourers with even less rights on certain counts than the proletariat of a bourgeois parliamentary democracy. The rhetoric of Marxism-Leninism and the pseudo revolutionary jargon of Mao-Tse-Tung thought had, however, a short lived impact (compared to the impact of revisionist Stalinism which continues even today) over the world proletariat and is presently on the wane.

The inability of the Trotskyist movement in the post-Trotskyan period to present any revolutionary alternative to Stalinism and Maoism lies in its inherent petty bourgeois world outlook which equated state capitalism with "socialism in transition" and conceives a workers' state without a working class in state power. Its failure to comprehend the necessity of smashing the bourgeois state machine in a socialist revolution has led it to characterise the Chinese, Cuban, Vietnamese and even the Campuchean "Revolutions" as socialist and designate these state capitalist countries as workers' states. From a revolutionary Marxist Leninist stand point Stalinism-Maoism-Trotskyism are the revisionist and semi-Menshevik outlooks of the petty bourgeoisie and are deeply anti-proletarian by nature.

The world proletariat, the only revolutionary class under the system of moribund world capitalism, after decades of tail-ending various bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties, is once again attempting to assert itself on the world political arena as an independent class force. The revolutionary struggles of the proletariat of East European countries against state capitalism, particularly the struggle of the Polish workers against the repressive militarist government backed by the USSR are indications of this regeneration of the proletariat on a world scale.

In India the various so-called communist and socialist parties have revealed their petty bourgeois class character by undertaking the administrative responsibility of running the bourgeois state machine by forming "Left Front" governments in the provinces of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura within the capitalist framework of the Indian state. These "Left Front" governments, by their imposition of additional tax burdens on the poor and by unleashing the repressive state machine on the unarmed oppressed working masses during different occasions of their movements and struggles,

continued on pg 3

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.

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G.L.C. : FIGHT FOR JOBS —

NO SUPPORT FOR THE STATE

The capitalist crisis is steadily reducing the profits which can be produced from invested capital and this means the bosses are having to cut the amount of money spent on their state. The first sections to be cut as workers well know, are the social services with hospitals, schools, education and housing topping the list; but as the crisis gets deeper the bosses are being forced to cut back and rationalise sections of the government machinery itself. Their aim in doing this is not simply to make the state machinery more efficient but also to adapt it to administering austerity and repression to the working class. In general this entails a further centralisation of power in the hands of central government.

Before the last election the Tories announced their intention of abolishing the Greater London Council and the six other metropolitan councils which form the upper tier of local gvt. The type of rationalisation intended was illustrated in early July when the Dept. of Transport took over the London Transport System from the GLC and proposed axing 10000 jobs, out of 60000. The councils which are controlled by Labour majorities pledged themselves to fighting these abolition proposals. The fundamental argument between the two sides is over the cheapest way of running the state. The Tories estimate that by abolishing the councils and transferring their functions to central Gvt & local authorities £120m can be saved while the councils maintain that this will cost £60m more! This basic argument has been obscured in a mass of propaganda put out by the councils saying that the existing state structures work "in the interests of the working class" and workers should defend them. The GLC has posed as the friend of the working class (and vanguard of the Labour party) by spending part of its enormous budget on a number of reformist programmes. They have held down transport costs - this has been done by increasing

rates. They have propped up enterprises bankrupted by the capitalist crisis and turned them into cooperatives thereby appearing to be fighting unemployment. Cooperatives simply mean that workers take over capitalism's problems, when the bosses have given up, and try to solve them by extra work investing their savings etc. In the longer term cooperatives cannot prevent unemployment as the famous cases of the Triumph motorcycle cooperative or the Scottish Daily News illustrate, however, in the short term they provide cheap political capital. The GLC has further financed community groups minority movements, supported the CND and various other issues so dear to capitalism's left wing.

The Gvt's plans to abolish the councils set a date for abolition of April 1986 and so entail suspending next year's elections to the councils and running them with Gvt. appointees during the interim period. This has enabled the councils to pose as the friends of democracy and champions of the people's right to choose! The GLC leader, Livingston and 3 of his henchmen are resigning their seats and standing for reelection during the Tory conference this year. The first minor setback to the Gvt's plans came over this issue when in mid June, the Lords rejected a bill to suspend next year's elections. Meanwhile the councils' campaign against abolition has continued with protest marches, open days, fetes, concerts etc. The GLC has encouraged its employees to strike and its schools to close so that these protests can mobilise larger numbers.

A QUARREL BETWEEN THE BOSSES

The fact that it is the house of Lords which has upset the Gvt's plans shows the real nature of this quarrel. It is a quarrel between two sections of the bosses over the best state machinery for administering capitalism. Workers have no interest in taking sides in this dispute. The state, as Marxists

have long recognised, is simply the tool with which the bosses protect their property and exploit and oppress the working class. This is the ultimate role of the metropolitan councils. Fire and Police services protect bourgeois property, education provides the bosses with workers who can be trained for exploitation in modern industry, cheap housing and transport mean wages can be kept down, sewage and rubbish disposal mean less time off work because of sickness etc. etc. The task of the working class is to DESTROY the bourgeois state not to assist the bosses in organising it! The ultimate beneficiary of this farce is, of course, the Labour party which is able to conceal the fact that it actually pursues the SAME objectives as the Tories; namely profitable British capitalism and this means more efficient and intensive exploitation of the working class and always will do. It was the 74 - 79 Labour Gvt. which really started slashing the so called social wage of workers. Hospitals, schools, benefits and jobs were butchered and at the same time wages were kept down by statute and troops used to break strikes. Despite all the posturing and fine words of the metropolitan councils any future Labour Gvt would be forced to adopt the same programme and they would once more be its accomplices. Today's rhetoric, which is cheap when you are in opposition, is simply to fool workers into supporting them.

THE REAL FIGHT - FOR JOBS

Workers should refuse to take part in any campaigns to protect the metropolitan councils and the existing structure of the bourgeois state. However, all job losses should be opposed. Workers must fight for their own interests without concern for those of the bosses or the needs of capitalism. Today all sections of the bosses are equally reactionary and alliances with them can only lead to defeat. The slogan of workers in the councils should be: "NO TO ALL JOB LOSSES AND TO HELL WITH THE BOSSES STATE!"

PRIVATISATION

- Continued from pg 8

property owning democrats utopia. For communists, and for the working class, the specific form of capitalist ownership - state or private - is not the issue. In the words of Bukharin, one of the Bolshevik leaders:

"There is no difference in principle whether the state power is a direct expression of (capitalist) monopoly or whether the monopoly is privately organised. In either case there remains a commodity economy.... and what is more important, the class relations between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie." (*Imperialism & the World Economy* p.157)

Just as revolutionaries denounced the mystification about nationalisation in the past, so we do so over privatisation today. The real issue is not ownership, but the resistance to attacks on the class, whether these take place in state owned corporations, or in "privatised" industries. In a crisis leading to the nationalisation of a company, communists would agitate and organise round the demand for no job losses or deterioration in conditions. These should be the demands in the context of

any privatisations. Privatisation and nationalisation are both anti-working class and neither are a solution to the crisis of capitalism.

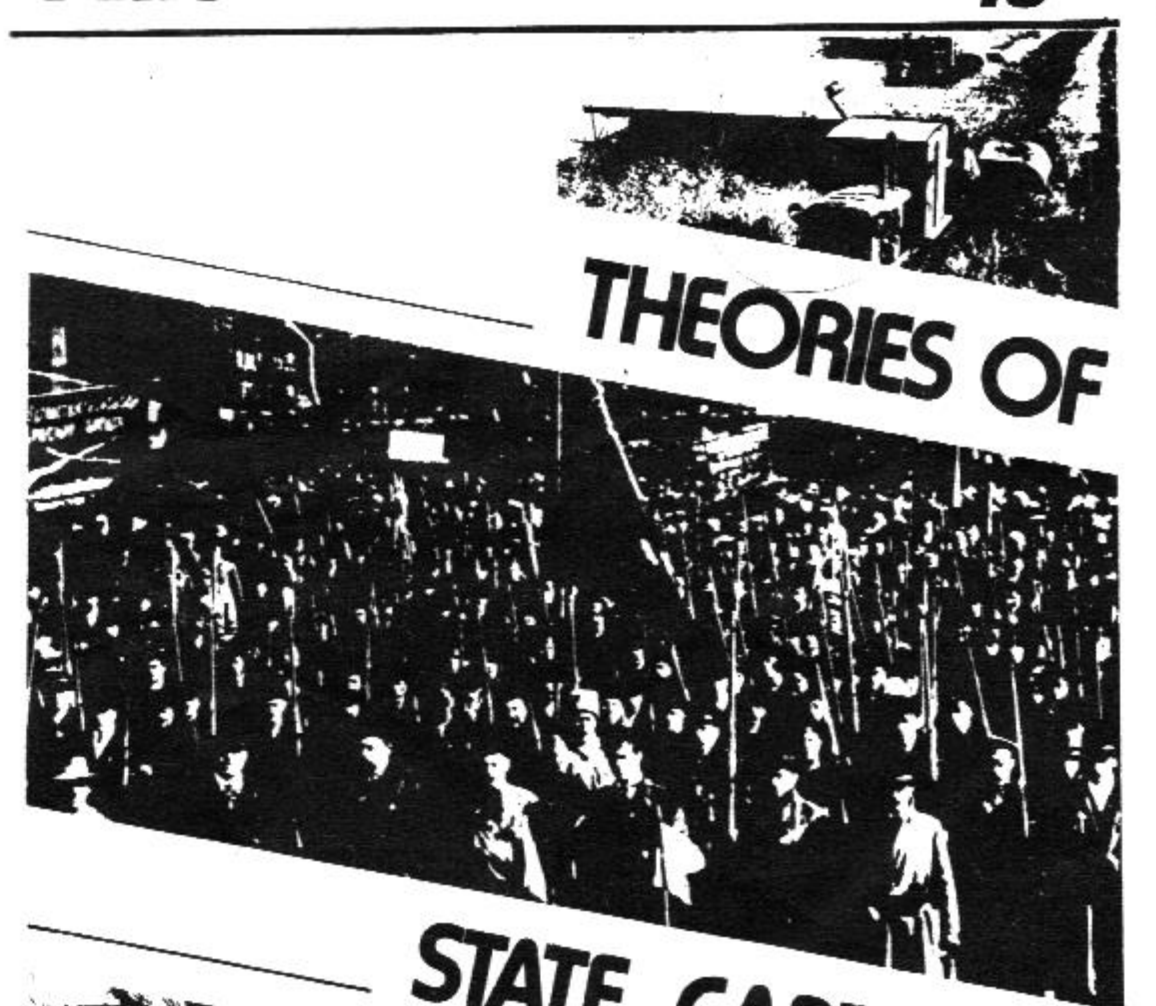
What then should the attitude of communists be to union led strikes against privatisations? Refusal to participate on the grounds that the unions are mystifying the working class would align us in the eyes of other workers with the Tories, and isolate us from opportunities to intervene where the working class is active. The response should be to participate independently, making clear by leaflet and in work-place meetings that communists are striking against any proposed further deterioration in conditions which privatisation would involve, and denouncing the unions and Labour Party for job losses under state ownership. Communists cannot, here or elsewhere, choose the ground on which to fight, but must struggle, under our own banners and slogans, where there is a ferment in the class and a political crisis for the bosses.

Our slogans are:

- Both privatisation and nationalisation are attacks on the working class.
- Neither privatisation nor nationalisation can solve the capitalist crisis
- Organise outside of the unions for a defence of all jobs and conditions in the face of privatisation
- No concessions on jobs or conditions either to secure a nationalisation or privatisation.

REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

19



60p
Journal of the Communist Workers Organisation

A fuller explanation of our views on state capitalism can be found in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 19. Available from the group address.

WORKERS VOICE

PRIVATISATION AND THE WORKING CLASS

The current campaign of the Thatcher government to "privatise" large chunks of state owned capital has provided a field day for speculators and financiers, as state assets are sold off at bargain-basement prices. Following on Britoil, Jaguar and BA, British Telecom and the warship section of British Shipbuilders are destined to pass into private hands during this governments term of office. But privatisation has also been a field day for the left-wing of capital's political apparatus - the Labour Party, trades unions and sundry leftist groupings - providing them with the opportunity to pose as the true defenders of the national interest. They accuse Thatcher of "squandering national assets" and defend the state-owned sectors of the economy as stepping stones towards socialism, as public services rather than capitalist economic units. In certain of these industries, such as British Telecom, the unions have been mobilising the workforce, not against job losses (over 15,000 this year) or falling real wages, but in defence of state ownership. The struggles provoked by the threat of privatisation, or in its wake as these new owners go for increased exploitation, mean that this is an issue where communists must produce an analysis of events, and, equally importantly, a policy for the sectors of the working class affected by privatisation. Privatisation has been a godsend for the unions, allowing them to wage a pseudo-militant struggle while at the same time accepting massive cuts and redundancies prior to privatisation (e.g. at BA where the union collaborated in sacking thousands of the workforce). This government-union shadow boxing has been a bonus to the bosses in the current context. But though privatisation helps to let the unions off the hook, it isn't the cause of the policy.

STATE CAPITALISM

Privatisation, like other issues, can only be understood within the broader historical framework of capitalist development. Since around the turn of the century, the capitalist system has been in a state of semi-permanent crisis. In the 19th century crises were events that "cleared the decks" for a further period of dynamic capitalist growth. But with the establishment of capitalism as a world economy and the rise of imperialist competition, the nature and content of the capitalist crisis underwent a fundamental change. On an international level, capitalism became marked by a hellish cycle of world war - reconstruction - crisis - world war as an expression of imperialist competition; on an international level, the state more and more intervened in the economic organisation of the capitalist system, i.e. the tendency towards state capitalism became manifest.

The root cause of all capitalist crises is the falling rate of profit, diagnosed by Marx over a century ago as "in every respect the most important law of political economy, and the most essential for understanding the most difficult relations". (Grundrisse p.748) Since the exploitation of living labour is the only source of surplus value for the capitalist system, its historical tendency to reduce the amount of living labour in the process of production (or to raise the organic composition of capital) leads to an historical tendency for the rate of profit to fall. By the beginning of this century the organic composition of capital was so high, and the opportunities for offsetting it so diminished by increased international competition, that the capitalist system, especially the mechanism for the equalisation of the rate of profit via the redistribution of surplus value, went "out of gear". This meant

that capital intensive industries - such as the heavy industries of steel, coal etc, as well as newer industries requiring vast initial capital outlays (communications, the public utilities) - could not themselves generate the surplus value necessary for their existence and expansion. Hence, in one form or another the state had to intervene to assure the continued functioning of these sectors, and itself take on the role of the redistribution of surplus value (the form varying according to historical, political and economic circumstances). The state can do this by a combination of taxation of profitable capital and subsidies to unprofitable industries, or by allowing and supporting the formation of monopolies operating behind tariff barriers which are able to appropriate "extra-profit" to themselves at the expense of their rivals. Or the state can simply take over ownership itself of crucial sectors of the economy, wipe out their debts and engage in a programme of direct investment in them - that is, it can nationalise them.

NATIONALISATION & PRIVATISATION

It is clear from all this that nationalisation is a response by the state to the crisis of capitalism, and an attempt to solve certain aspects of this crisis. But by an absurd perversion nationalisation has been portrayed by the bosses of the left and right as socialist or proto-socialist in its essence, and large sectors of the class have been presented with this as a "solution". But nationalisation is never a gain for the class. It is always an attack on it, since it is inevitably a prelude to the reorganisation of a specific industry on more "rational" lines; investment leads to increased exploitation and centralisation leads to the closure of "uneconomic" units. A brief look at the record of nationalisation in Britain confirms this: under nationalisation two thirds of miners since 1945 have lost their jobs, with similar figures in the railways and steel. Workers in BL who, in the mid 1970s, saw nationalisation as a solution to their problems soon found each BL worker doing the work previously done by 6, and half of their mates on the dole. This is not due to the perversion of nationalisation by the "wicked Tories": more miners were made redundant by Labour than by the Tories, and today in France it is a "socialist" government which is sacking thousands in the steel and coal industries which are state owned. As Engels noted so long ago in the Anti-Dühring "the transformation... into state ownership does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces... The workers remain wage labourers, proletarians....(state ownership is) in no sense a socialist measure."

But why then privatisation? The essential element of state capitalism is the redistribution of surplus value: the specific form in which this takes place is secondary. For example, in the USA nationalisation has never been dominant in the way it has been in Western Europe. When certain industries, which required massive investment (which they could not themselves generate) to rationalise themselves, have been rationalised, there is no reason why they cannot be "re-privatised". For example, no British capitalist would have invested in forestry after the Second World War even though timber is the third biggest drain in the UK's balance of payments. The state, however, seeing the overall needs of UK capital, did so and paid for this investment by taxing private capital. Now, with forests mature and hence "profitable", privatisation is a viable option. Similarly, the restructuring of industrial units like Jaguar and BT made them once more viable for private enter-

prise. The money the state raises from these sales (as opposed to the annual profits from these sectors, which also function as government revenue) is available either to cut taxes on the profitable sector of capital, or to re-invest in the essential but non-profitable sectors such as mines, railways and steel. Privatisation, like nationalisation, is simply a specific aspect, a particular moment in the redistribution of surplus value by the state. This is the fundamental issue: others, such as the speculative element whereby the chums of the ruling party profit at the expense of the national capital, or the mystification of a sector of the Tory Party by their own ideology which leads them to seek the privatisation of assets (such as arms factories) that the overall interest of capital require to remain state controlled, are secondary to the general question of the redistribution of surplus-value. The extent to which privatisation can be carried out is also limited by the overall profitability of the economy and its worst-hit sectors. Clearly, mines, steel-works, railways are not targets for privatisation. And the nature of the crisis does not exclude the possibility that even Thatcher, like Heath 10 years ago, might be obliged to carry out nationalisation.

Privatisation not only redistributes surplus value between capitalist sectors, but also in time: by exchanging future profits against revenue produced by a sale, the government has an immediate windfall which reduces its need to either borrow or raise taxes in the shorter term. Thus, privatisation has a short-term anti-inflationary effect, and allows a larger part of the immediate mass of profit to remain in the capitalists' hands. All this is based on the assumption that a recovery is under way. In a few years, when the assets are sold, and the annual profits of the former government corporations no longer bring in any revenue, there will have to be a massive increase in taxation, or borrowing, or both.

THE REVOLUTIONARY POSITION

For communists both nationalisation and privatisation are attacks on the working class and are merely attempts to mitigate the chronic crisis of the capitalist system. We reject the lies of both the left factions, who argue that nationalisation is a step towards the socialist paradise, and of the right factions, who portray privatisation as a step towards the

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C.W.O.

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