

# WORKERS VOICE

COMMUNIST  
WORKERS  
ORGANISATION

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Number

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20p

## SOUTH AFRICA

# ENDING APARTHEID TO SAVE CAPITALISM

### The Crisis

A spectre is haunting capitalism in South Africa. It is the spectre of communism. Every political force, inside and outside the country is united in trying to exorcise this spectre. Priest and bishop, Anglo-Saxon bankers and Boer industrialists, US Senators and black trades unionists are all united in a holy alliance to save capitalism. To do this they recognise they have to end that odious form of repression and exploitation - apartheid - that they have suffered or supported for decades.

The present crisis of apartheid, unlike those of the late 1950's and early 1970's, has lasted for 5 years and has become even more intense over the last year as hundreds of black protestors have been killed. The reason for this deepening intensity lies in the crisis of the world capitalist economy which at last has visited itself upon South Africa. Until very recently the white Afrikaner's National Party thought itself impregnable on the basis of South Africa's virtual monopoly of Western gold production and of the strategic needs of Western imperialism. When the crisis was in its worst inflationary spiral South African gold prices rose and that future seemed rosier, but with monetarist policies being adopted throughout the West gold prices have slumped and with it the South African economy. This has led to plant closures. General Motors, Ford and Volkswagen, the main employers in the Eastern Cape, are all working a three day week and thousands of workers have been sacked. This is typical of the situation all over South Africa and the huge black townships like Soweto, outside Johannesburg and Crossroads, outside Uitenhage, are teeming with the unemployed. This is the reason for the wave of militant strikes, the mass protests particularly at funerals of the victims of state brutality and the attacks on black councillors and other collaborators with the apartheid regime. As long as the South African economy appeared immune to the effects of the crisis foreign capital, which understands material rather than moral laws, flowed into the country, almost all of it from Britain and the US. Despite cries for "disinvestment" which anti-apartheid organisations in both countries have made for years, capitalists continued to find South Africa with its slow-paid black workforce a safe investment. Safe, that is, until 1984 when the same economic crisis that showed that apartheid could no longer survive merely on shootings and sjambok whips also hit the profits of the multinationals. Barclays Bank, for example, saw its profits in South Africa nose-dive by 75%, from £38million to £10million in one year. Barclays' response was to abandon majority control of their local subsidiary as a first step in moves to extricate themselves from South Africa IF no political solution can be found to safeguard the country as a safe place for capital export. In selling out its controlling interest it is following other

iated British Foods, British Electric Traction and the US Standard Chartered Bank.

However, this still leaves 1,200 UK companies with investments in South Africa. UK companies employ 350,000 workers in South Africa (7% of the total labour force) and in addition "UK indirect investments like shares in South African companies are estimated to be worth £6billions" [Financial Times 5.9.85]. The scale of this investment is equalled only by US capital. It is not surprising therefore that the biggest noises for a total boycott of South Africa come from the likes of Mitterand's France where the "Socialist" government badly needs something over which to strike a radical posture in view of its attacks on the working class. It would have no economic effect on France. Equally unsurprising is the fact that it is in Britain and the US that governments have opposed these moves.

At a diplomatic level the British and US policy of what Reagan called "constructive engagement"



South African capitalists now realise that they can no longer stand by and rely on apartheid's naked oppression.

is in tatters since the US and South Africa don't even have normal diplomatic links at present. However, inside South Africa British and US multinationals like Ford and the Anglo-American Mining Company have taken the lead in breaking down apartheid by creating black foremen and allowing unions. As we wrote 5 years ago:

"They wish to see a stable Black working class whose grievances are expressed by 'responsible' unions. This is part of a wider aim, namely the ending of the apartheid system and the establishment of a Black capitalist class united to the White capitalists by their joint exploitation of the working class." [Workers Voice 1 page 9]

In this task they have found willing allies in the black community, not only amongst

Boesak, leader of the United Democratic Front [UDF] but also among the black trades union leaders and Nelson Mandela himself. In a recent interview Mandela announced that he wanted a democratic, capitalist South Africa which would welcome foreign investment. As far as the West is concerned South Africa's attempts to portray him as a communist bogeyman have failed. They recognise him for what he is - an authentic representative of the black bourgeoisie that runs both the UDF and the African National Congress [ANC]. Despite Russian aid to foment the armed struggle the ANC, like Mugabe in Zimbabwe will turn to the West once in power for it alone can provide the capital that the black bourgeoisie will want to run South African capitalism.

### Bankruptcy of Nationalism

Western imperialists have also discovered elsewhere in Southern Africa that they have nothing to fear from national liberation movements. In Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique self-proclaimed "Marxist" regimes have invited back foreign firms like the US Gulf Oil whilst workers in these countries have found that little has changed. Whilst the Luanda dock workers found their strike brutally crushed by MPLA troops of their newly "liberated" country in 1976, in Harare workers have found that Mugabe uses Smith's Emergency Powers to prevent them struggling against low wages. "National liberation" today means liberation for the bourgeoisie only and doesn't create new conditions for the struggle of the proletariat. Instead it chains them to a nationalist ideology which is used to condemn strikes or other workers' struggles as being "against the good of the nation". Exploitation, if anything gets worse for workers.

Western imperialism's other allies in attempting to establish a post-apartheid South Africa are the trades unions. The imperialists know that without unions it will be impossible to contain the class anger of South African workers, particularly in the mines where pay is only £30 a month. The recent failed miners' strike is a perfect illustration of how the unions act as a mediator between capital and labour but constantly on behalf of capital. In July wildcat strikes broke out in the South African gold mines where 600,000 black workers, two-thirds of them immigrants from neighbouring black states, work. The National Union of Mineworkers [NUM] stepped up calls for a 20% wage demand and announced that if it was not met then a strike would take place ... in a month's time! Just as in Britain this gave the bosses time to prepare. "Troublemakers" were weeded out individually, private armies were strengthened with government troops and some mines (where the workers had been most militant and where there were few immigrants) were offered an 18% wage rise. The result was a fiasco. The union called out 200,000 miners but only 15,000 went on strike whilst many other mines such as:



# TEN YEARS of the CWO

The Communist Workers Organisation, which publishes *Workers Voice*, was founded 10 years ago in September, 1975. Now is therefore an appropriate time to reflect on the organisation's achievements to date, and the direction in which it is headed.

The organisation was founded from various elements, heavily influenced by the ideas of the German Left of the 1918-24 revolutionary period; such ideas had undergone a dramatic revival in Britain and elsewhere in the years after 1968, which witnessed massive class confrontations. The CWO shared many of the weaknesses of the groups spawned by this period of struggle, in its initial years. Firstly, there was the underemphasis of the role of the party, which, in the tradition of the German left, was downgraded to an instrument or an accelerator of the class struggle, rather than being seen as the leading theoretical and practical force in the class's fight for emancipation. Related to this, was an inability to develop a strategy for relating to the class struggle in an organised fashion, limiting our intervention to that of cheering on the fight from the sidelines.

Like many of the newly formed groups in the early 1970's, though not in so extreme a form as most, the CWO overemphasised the proximity of decisive class confrontations, tending to see the struggles which erupted after 1968 in a spontaneist way, as the end of the domination of the class by the forces of the counter-revolution, when in fact we were seeing rather an important intensification of struggles, which however, still lay in the domain of capital, of "ignorant armies clashing by night".

The CWO had many factors to its credit in its early days, particularly in the theoretical field, and here especially in the realm of economics. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the CWO virtually restored Marxist economics as a science of the actual crisis, within the U.K. However, even our

back, in that it contributed to a feeling that we were "building all anew", and manifested itself in a sectarian attitude towards other political tendencies, and a dismissive attitude towards the historical traditions of Marxism, whose expressions we saw ourselves as having "transcended".

All these factors were shared by those myriad groups which emerged a decade ago, and they soon plunged them into crisis. The political archeologist of today will be aware that of all the counciloid groups of that period, almost none survive today. The CWO too, was plunged into a series of intense crises in the first years of its existence, which seriously put its survival in doubt. Yet we have survived, and been able to strengthen our forces. It is not simply of academic interest therefore, to ask why we were able to do so, in the face of such a waste of potential revolutionary forces as the last decade has seen.

The answer does not lie in any evaluation of the human material that made up the CWO membership, but in the ability of the organisation, over a period of years and political debates, to break with its political origins in the German left, and to unite with the traditions of revolutionary Marxism, which we today recognise as being those of the Italian left. This whole process is documented in our texts over the years, and has reached fruition in recent numbers of our theoretical journal *Revolutionary Perspectives*, which are available to interested readers. This itself was not simply a theoretical development, since it took place through the agency of the comrades of the Internationalist Communist Party (PCInt.), who confronted our political errors through their press and personal exchanges. Even more important was the calling into existence of a series of international communist conferences by the PCInt., from 1978 onwards, where the errors of the German left and its councilist derivatives could be confronted in open debate. Here the inadequacy of the ideas of the German left, even when held in the sophisticated form of some tendencies who liked to talk a little about the party, became clear.

Over the following years, the readers of our press will have noted an undoubted movement in our positions towards those of the Italian comrades, over such issues as factory groups

against an increasingly desperate and therefore an increasingly militant black proletariat.

With Western imperialism demanding action; with the failure of the Governor of the South African Reserve Bank's mission to London and New York to try to get financial help; with the moratorium on debt repayments continuing and with the rand still sinking on international currency markets, the Afrikaner ruling class' room for manoeuvre is restricted. Their best hope lies in accepting the plan of Gavin Relly, Chairman of the largest company in South Africa, the Anglo-American Corporation. He has been calling continually for a deal between Botha and the "moderate" leaders of the ANC. As we go to press he has managed to get talks in Zambia "between the businessmen and the ANC which President Botha has approved tacitly" [*The Times* 6.9.85]. The spectre of "communism" in Southern Africa could yet be exorcised if the ANC and the multinationals can find a way to dismantle apartheid and thus save South African capitalism.

## THE PROLETARIAN SOLUTION

Needless to say the white supremacists' vision of "communism" is not ours. The "communism" they talk about is Russian imperialism and for years they have played on Western imperialism's fears of a victory for its rival in Southern Africa. But with Russia's failure to make solid allies of "Marxist" regimes in Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique this threat has become increasingly hollow. This is another factor in the West's distancing itself from the Pretoria regime.

Paradoxically, as the threat of the spectre of "communism" in the form of Russian imperialism recedes the present situation of revolt amongst the black working class has created the condition for the appearance of the real thing. The struggles of the past five years have done more for the political education of black workers than any number of acts of propaganda but their heroism is still saturated with nationalist and capitalist ideology which sees the end of apartheid as the final goal of the struggle. The struggle against the indignity of apartheid has to

question of lineage, and the issue of the nature of class consciousness. Such an approximation of views between the CWO and the PCInt., allowed the formation of an International Bureau between our organisations, whose eventual aim is the construction of an international communist party. Though the Bureau aims at eventual regroupment, and can be described as a regroupment-in-process, it is not itself a regroupment. It is a forum where within strictly defined limits (limits established by the international communist conferences) debate between organisations which still maintain a distinct identity can take place, and where these organisations can test each other out in practice. The impact of the Bureau in the brief time since its foundation, with the formation of an Iranian section, and the promise of one in India, is gratifying. Though the CWO has some reason to feel pride in the theoretical work it has carried out over the last decade, restoring the Marxist position not only on economic theory, but also on class consciousness, it was never our intention to remain a group of theoreticians. Our development of a strategy for intervention in the class tested out in such battles as the recent miners' strike, our publication of a newspaper and issuing a mass of leaflets to the class all bear testimony to our intention to transform the CWO into a viable vehicle of agitation and influence in the class.

It is quite clear that we have not achieved this objective, the word has yet to become the deed. However, we start our second decade on a much firmer theoretical and practical basis, from which to direct ourselves towards our objective. In a sense the past decade has been our pre-history, and we today have little in common with the original CWO than the name. In the coming decade we have to transform the organisation from a theoretical sect, marginal to the class, into a tendency that has a real existence within the larger life of the proletariat, and concerns itself less with the scholastic concerns of the so-called "communist milieu", which is now a spent political force. In our forthcoming AGM, and in the press of the organisation in the future months, the debate on our future orientation will take place, and we hope this can be widened to our readers.

## South Africa (cont. from p1)

"GfSA's Deelkraal and Gencor's Beatrix, were not even on the list of targeted mines and the strikes there appeared to take management and even the union by surprise." [*Financial Times* 5.9.85]

The effect of all this is to give the capitalists an air of invincibility but this has not dismayed the NUM which is preparing for its future integration into the state by getting the courts to prevent dismissals of strikers. Once capitalism can provide the right legal framework for them to operate trades unions everywhere repay this trust by being of enormous service to capitalism in containing the class struggle.

But if Western imperialism wants to get rid of apartheid to save capitalism why hasn't Botha made more significant steps towards it? The answer is that he is scared. Before the failure of his elections for Indian and coloured assemblies Botha was beginning to recognise that apartheid no longer coincides with the interests of South African capitalism. He had begun dismantling so-called "petty apartheid" (by withdrawing the Morality Act etc.), had dropped the threat to exclude blacks from citizenship and had ignored the de facto collapse of some apartheid laws in industry. This was, of course, only to buy more time for white domination but had the economic crisis not worsened it was feasible for this to have become an evolution of apartheid into the more normal "democratic" form of exploitation which provides the most stable conditions for capitalist accumulation. Now the Afrikaners are paralysed. They cannot go forward to give "one man one vote" since this would be to invite their own loss of control. As one of their spokesmen said:

"If an unqualified one man one vote election was held today ... a non-white leader with a communistic programme would probably attain an overall majority on a pledge to confiscate and redistribute the property of the privileged classes."

And, short of an economic miracle, they cannot go backwards to return to total suppression

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be widened to a struggle against class society, otherwise it will do no more than create the conditions for stable exploitation which Western imperialism and the black bourgeoisie are working so hard together to create. To destroy their cosy plans the South African proletariat, black and white, will have to create the nucleus of its own political vanguard. We do not expect this process to be rapid but through the work which we are conducting in the International Bureau towards the formation of an international communist nucleus we hope to be in a position to shorten the birthpangs when a new communist organisation emerges in South Africa. We look forward to the day when we will be able to announce that the spectre of communism has been replaced by a manifesto of the proletarian party itself.

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# AFTER THE MINERS STRIKE : A BALANCE SHEET OF DEFEAT

## EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

We are publishing here the text of the CWO speaker's introduction at our Leeds readers meeting in July on the present situation of the working class and the task of revolutionaries in Britain. Since it was delivered the overall perspective of a continuing successful bosses' offensive has been confirmed by events like BR's sackings of railwaymen in the guards' dispute. Threats to close the entire rail network have been successful in cowing the railwaymen whilst at BSC in Scotland the steel workers have been rewarded for crossing miners' picket lines by further lay-offs of hundreds of workers. The presentation ended by attempting to give a focus of orientation for our work in preparation for the discussion of this issue at our AGM this Autumn. Comments and criticisms from readers would be welcome additions to this vital debate.

## The Miners Defeat

670 miners currently remain sacked. About 10 per cent of that number are in prison (two of them for life) and the planned cuts of 4 million tons of capacity and 20,000 jobs which the miners went on strike to fight have now become 30 million tons and 50,000 jobs. Despite the intense class anger still smouldering in the pits it is clear that this most significant section of the British working class has suffered a massive defeat. And revolutionaries have to face up to this fact. We cannot simply pretend that it was "just another strike". It was an important barometer of the direction that class struggle in Britain will take in the immediate future.

The miners lost the strike because they were isolated and other workers' struggles were successfully sectionalised by the unions (e.g. dockers, rail unions). Many workers adopted a wait-and-see attitude hoping that the determination of the miners would destroy the austerity plans to restructure capitalism of the present government. They then hoped to push forward their own fights. Now the miners have lost we have seen only the most feeble struggles by the working class in Britain, typified by the failure of the London Underground strike which collapsed due to lack of support.

It is too easy to point to the manoeuvres of the unions and say that they have held back the struggle. This is no explanation and only raises the real question of how they have been able to prevent workers realising that a fight for their immediate defence requires class solidarity. The fact is that the working class itself has not yet acquired the consciousness of its interests as a class. On the other side of the coin, the present small size of communist organisations in Britain, opposed to the anti-working class manoeuvres of the unions, is a product of the same lack of consciousness and we must first of all recognise that this will continue for a long while yet.

Therefore, despite the continual demonstrations of workers' combativity elsewhere (at present the torch of open class struggle is being heroically carried by workers in Brazil, Israel, Spain and Iran), we have to focus on where the defeat of the miners has left revolutionaries in Britain and what our tasks are in this immediate period of difficulty.

In this context we must clarify what we meant by 'victory' in the miners' strike. Clearly a simple NUM victory and the withdrawal of pit closures would not have been a victory for communists since it would a) have left the NUM as the unchallenged representative of the workers' interests and obscured its class role and b) have still allowed the NCB to close the pits using a stealthier approach. Victory for us would have come only in terms of how far workers recognised the failure of unions and the Labour Party to defend them and in how far they moved away from class collaborationist methods to fight for their existence by extending the struggle beyond

a craft dispute. The class violence in November last year was pointing in this direction but its lack of co-ordination and wider class perspective led it to peter out into mock confrontation staged by the unions. Today we have the worst of all worlds in that defeat has not only demoralised the class for an incalculable period but has still managed to camouflage the anti-working class nature of the NUM leadership in particular and the union form of organisation in general. Even today, when the NUM is paying lip-service to the idea of solidarity with sacked and imprisoned miners (whilst it actively discourages and disorganises real attempts to solidarise with them in any form), the leadership are still portrayed as working class martyrs by the left of capital in their irrelevant squabble with the leaders of the Nottinghamshire scabs. What it does show is that for union bureaucrats the loss of 15,000 subscriptions is a greater problem than the mere sacking and imprisonment of 700 or so militants of the class war!

## The Present Crisis

Some may argue that this is an excessively gloomy picture, that it ignores positive features like the willingness of miners in many pits to take further strike action, for example. However, it would be myopia (of a particular kind peculiar to revolutionaries who seem only to see half the picture) to ignore the fact that none of these small strikes have been successful and often they are actually provoked by management in order to win another battle in the struggle to re-establish work discipline. Revolutionaries have to squarely look reality in the face at every conjunctural turn in the class struggle and draw up clear tasks for the immediate period until a new upsurge rouses "the vast masses to active life ... to fundamental historic creativeness" [Lenin]. The miners' strike was an attempt to halt a successful bourgeois offensive which has been going on in Britain for 6 years (since the "Winter of Discontent"). It failed. However, we have to put this failure in its historical context. Despite the cries of those who insist that "the crisis is here" in its fullest sense we are, as we have argued since our formation a decade ago, still at the beginning of a period of long drawn-out crisis. In many ways it is similar to the Great Depression of 1873-96 in which, instead of a colossal slump as in an earlier epoch of capitalism, there was a continuous cycle of mini-revivals within a generalised recession. Then capitalism was just entering its monopolist and imperialist stage with the establishment of cartels and joint-stock companies. Today, under decadent capitalism, we have an infinitely greater concentration of capital, either in multinational monopolies or in state capitalist monopolies which keep in operation by shifting investment from areas with a low rate of profit to those with a high rate and which, by paper credits and an elastic international banking system, have been able to avoid a major catastrophe. In this context the perspective we announced in 1977 (and recently reprinted in our pamphlet The Economic Foundations of Capitalist Decadence) remains valid.

"The perspective for coming years is one of long periods of economic stagnation, punctuated with short periods of inflationary mini-booms, in which there is little fall in levels of unemployment, and where living standards will continue to fall. As long as the major capitals keep their nerve (and as long as no local war erupts into a major imperialist war) capitalism can stagger on in its inflationary depression for the time being. Such a perspective, with its gradual erosion of living standards, and high but not chronic levels of unemployment, coupled with intense local (albeit manageable) crises which will raise social tensions to fever pitch, possibly offers the best of all perspectives for the maturation of class consciousness. In the long run the tendencies towards equalisation of the crisis cannot overcome capital's fundamental accumulation problem - that of the decline in the rate of profit - but they do mean that the effects of the crisis will not be restricted to the peripheries of capital

and will strike its heartlands with equal intensity. This kind of "equalisation" can only benefit the future proletarian revolution." (page 74)

The majority of workers in Europe still have cars, colour tv's and full bellies. It is hardly surprising therefore that their collective consciousness still remains at a relatively low level.

We also have to abandon one formulation that we have repeated as a truth since our foundation that the period of 1968-74 was "the end of the counter-revolution" which hung over workers since the collapse of the Russian experience in the 1920's. This is inaccurate in two ways. First, what does it mean to talk of a "victory of the counter-revolution" over the workers? The defeats of the Twenties weren't primarily physical defeats (although this was an element) but POLITICAL defeats. Within a decade the workers had twice seen their mass parties pass over to imperialism in the forms of Social Democracy and then Stalinism. Such a double ideological defeat still hangs over the working class since the most militant workers still remain within the entrails of these running dogs of capitalism. It is also untrue to say that the period 1968-74 was a reawakening of the class militancy. There was massive militancy in Spain, France and the USA in the 1930's (despite being controlled by the social democracy of the CPs and Socialist Parties). More recently in Britain (and the same holds good everywhere) the period 1970-74 (which saw two successful miners' strikes) was not a new era of militancy. Many militant strikes took place in Britain in every year from 1945 onwards (there were no less than fourteen occasions when troops were used by Labour Governments alone before 1951) and it was to combat wildcat strikes which began in the 1950's (when there were also many factory occupations) and developed in the 60's that Labour first tried to bring in laws against striking in 1969. This hardly reflects the behaviour of a dormant class. Thus 1968-74 changed nothing. - Workers were no more nor less militant and social democratic dominance of the workers' movement was not weakened or strengthened by the events of those years. In sum, the counter-revolution - i.e. social democratic ideology in all its guises - still weighs heavily on the workers' movement. What distinguished 1968-74 was not the appearance of a more militant and independent class but the beginning of the crisis when rampaging inflation began to obviously attack the living standards of workers as capitalists tried to print their way out of the crisis. The successful money-militancy of the period of reconstruction in the 50's was gradually checked and from 1976 onwards

Cont. on

## REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

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THE ORIGINS  
OF  
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75p

— PLUS —

• The Rome Theses  
(Theses of the  
P.C.d'I 1922)

• Analysis of the  
Miners Strike  
•  
ICC and the Italian Left

Theoretical Journal of the Communist Workers Organisation



is almost two years since the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party was formed on the basis of the groundwork established by the series of International Conferences of the Communist Left. Our aim was to establish a political and organisational reference point to which emerging communist forces can relate and through which the revolutionary programme and the international revolutionary party will eventually be able to develop. An ambitious project and an immense task. At subsequent events have shown that the time was ripe for such an endeavour if communists in Europe were not to shirk their responsibility of ensuring that the Marxist legacy becomes truly internationalised. In the relatively short time since its formation the contacts and work of the Bureau have expanded beyond the confines of the capitalist heartlands. And, as this report shows, comrades from India and Iran share our perspective of developing an international party with a single programme for the whole working class which at the same time is organised amongst its own local working class in each respective area. The task remains enormous but our forces are growing and on an increasingly firm base. The prospect of a future international conference of the Bureau and sympathising organisations is now a real one. Such a conference will mark a further advance in the consolidation of communist forces and bring us a step nearer our ultimate goal: the creation of the international party of the proletariat.

### REVOLUTIONARIES FROM IRAN

In the last issue of *Workers Voice* we published the Statement by ex-members of the OSCPIA [Organisation of Supporters of the Communist Party of Iran Abroad] in Italy. After attempting to raise criticisms of the CPIran's politics and Programme and finding themselves summarily expelled from the organisation, the comrades announced their intention to work with the IBRP. Although initially discussions between the Bureau members and what were then the UCM's supporters in Europe were fruitful and involved a genuine exchange of political views (even to the point where the SUCM could accept the criteria for attending the IVth International Conference of the Communist Left\*), as the discussions focussed more on programmatic issues affecting communist strategy in Iran itself (the questions of the democratic revolution and the Iran/Iraq War) and after the formation of the CPIran (by the unification of the UCM [Unity of Communist Militants] based in Iran proper and KOMALA [Toilers Revolutionary Organisation of Kurdistan] based in Iranian Kurdistan) it appeared that our criticisms had fallen on deaf ears. But now, more than 3 years after our first contact with the UCM, the voice of revolutionary Marxism has found an echo, not just from the ranks of the ex-supporters of the CPIran, but from the wider milieu of Iranian political exiles. While the official publication of the CPIran in Europe now dismisses "the Communist Left" trend in Europe as "inherently pacifist and non-revolutionary" while holding out the illusive prospect of future criticism of our views which it has so far been remarkably unable to provide (in *Bolshevik Message* 1 [2nd series] p.23), our comrades from the PCInt in Italy are holding regular discussions with Iranian internationalists with the perspective of establishing the political homogeneity and clarity for their working together in an organised way with the IBRP. As part of this work the comrades aim to produce a Farsi publication which will circulate appropriate IBRP material inside the Iranian milieu. The first issue is planned for the Autumn and will contain some documents already available separately in Farsi (the CWO on the Democratic Revolution; PCInt letter to the SUCM; IBRP Statement on the Iran/Iraq War) as well as the IBRP Communique on the CPIran (See the last *WV*).

### INDIA

Meanwhile, almost a year after initiating correspondence with another ex-Maoist group in India - the RPP [Revolutionary Proletarian Platform], we have received a letter from a minority tendency in this organisation organised mainly in Bengal round the journal *Lal Pataka* [Red Flag]. The comrades' letter explains why we have had no developed political reply from RPP as a whole (despite their clear intention to do so announced in various letters) on the obvious main areas of difference: trade

unions and parliament. When we first came into contact with RPP it was clear that this recently formed organisation was a group in transition which represented a remarkable break with Maoism. In particular they shared our criticisms of the CPIran's holding to the outmoded perspective of a democratic revolution and clearly argued that revolutionary defeatism was the only revolutionary strategy for communists faced in practice with capitalist war. At the same time they criticised the CPIran's concessions to united frontism in Kurdistan with the clear recognition that proletarian independence, politically and organisationally, is an essential basis for the development of the proletarian revolution. On the question of organisation and class consciousness the RPP solidarised with our attempt to strengthen the Marxist view by publishing a CWO article "Class Consciousness and Councilist Confusions" (originally published in *WV* 17) in issue no. 3 of their own journal, *Proletarian Emancipation*. Moreover, the fact that RPP announced in its Policy statement that the document was a draft which:

"...may be suitably changed and improved through discussions and analysis of the objective material condition prevailing in India and world at large ..." [page 2]

opened up the possibility of seriously influencing their political development.

In fact this is what has happened. While it was relatively easy for RPP to acknowledge points of disagreement with the IBRP it is more difficult to resolve those differences without further questioning the general framework of their politics. Moreover the differences on trade unions became more apparent during the British miners' strike when the IBRP and RPP put forward widely differing tactics. (The RPP, for example, echoed British leftists' calls for a national NUM ballot and in general saw the union as the legitimate organ through which workers must conduct their struggle.) As it turned out, the RPP's silence in the face of our criticisms was again, not because those criticisms had fallen completely on deaf ears, but because, as *Lal Pataka* explain in their letter to the IBRP, we:

"... have correctly located the root of the differences between IBRP and RPP in their approaches to bourgeois democratic institutions like parliamentarism and trades unionism at the point of understanding and interpretations of capitalist decadence and now RPP is sharply divided on the assimilation of the implications of decadence and on the understanding of the essential laws of motion of this epoch. Our comrades associated with *Lal Pataka* are of the opinion that we must move ahead with the Marxist method and analyse the present and draw revolutionary lessons and accordingly step forward. And thus we share your position that "In capitalism's epoch of imperialism and decline trades unions - whose existence depends on the survival of the wage labour - capital relationship - find themselves defending the interests of capital against the interests of the working class because a real defence of workers living standards and jobs poses an implicit and increasingly real threat to the capitalist system itself." [IBRP's letter dated 10.4.85]. The clarity and precision of your analysis with which you have structured your texts on the issues being debated internationally have inspired us to review the whole problem and now we are on the same platform on these questions." [LP to IBRP, 18.7.85]

While this letter shows that the minority have clearly accepted our arguments it seems that the majority are retrenching under pressure from the attack. ("So far as the upholders of the RPP's official position are concerned the trades unions to them are "always" "inevitable", "natural", "spontaneous", "permanent", "essential", "indispensable" and "only" working class organisations which are extremely important instruments "in the daily economic and political struggle of the class". [ibid p.3])\*\*

### THE PROCESS OF CLARIFICATION

Although our intention was not to create a split in RPP it is obvious that any serious attempt to overcome political differences will involve fierce debate and confrontation resulting in more or less political and organisational

upheaval. This in itself is not a bad thing - so long as greater political clarity and the basis for consistent revolutionary policies emerge. As far as *Lal Pataka* are concerned, their *Open Letter to RPP Members* shows that they are conducting a fight, not just on empirical grounds involving a criticism of the RPP on trades unionism and parliamentarism, but from the more fundamental standpoint of the necessity for a communist organisation to work from the basis of Marxist method, not a set of inherited scriptures. For this reason they argue,

"The 'faction' is preoccupied with the tendency to take everything Marx, Engels and Lenin said as sermons. They are more interested in what our teachers said rather than how, why and when they said so... But revolutionaries today can't just take everything the teachers said and apply that like religious dogma to changed historical circumstances. As Lenin put it in 1915 "One cannot be a revolutionary Social Democrat without participating according to one's powers in developing this theory (Marxism) and adapting it to changed conditions." ...

So it will be futile to try to bail the ailing platform out of its destined degeneration. Its methodology, ideas and ideals, its explicit and implicit positions on the questions of decadent capitalism, trades unionism, nationalisation, etc., its inherent inclinations in proclaiming itself to be the "real left" (of course, not the 'Communist Left') and all that it holds and preaches are non-dialectical and unscientific..." [page 2]

and go on to propose:

"... to restructure our platform in India in collaboration with the IBRP. (The Bureau which co-ordinates the international work of organisations - the CWO, London, PCInt - Battaglia Comunista and comrades in France) on the basis of the following political criteria, which exclude from its framework both the capitalist left and the neo-spontaneist and councilist spectrum:

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

On the basis of an agreed framework as such, let us initiate contacts boldly and widely within India as well as at international level, let us establish circles for intensive and extensive studies, discussions and debates for the maturation, the growth and selection of revolutionary forces." [ibid p.3]

We can only welcome this proposal wholeheartedly and would also encourage comrades of *Lal Pataka* not to abandon their attempts to persuade the RPP majority to adopt the same perspective - not because it would lead to the greater strengthening of the IBRP as such, but because we seriously believe that this would be a further consolidation of the forces of Marxism internationally.

## COMMUNIST REVIEW 2

Organ of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

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Bordigism and the collapse of the ICP  
Theses of the Communist Collective  
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Perspectives of the IBRP  
The British Miners' Strike

80p



# INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

In this context we also welcome Lal Pataka's aim, following Lenin, of engaging in debate and discussion with various political groups and circles which exist in India and to publish IBRP material in their press. While we remain ignorant about most of these groups we have recently become aware of the existence of another group in India, Communist Internationalist, which has apparently been discussing with the ICC [International Communist Current] for over 2 years and which directly identifies with Left Communist politics. In their reply to our initial letter they tell us:

"Broadly speaking, we are fully convinced about the correctness of left communist positions, but our link with it is recent and knowledge of different LC currents, of the implications of their positions is limited. Similarly, though we are fully convinced about the correctness of certain ICC positions we are still studying certain of their other positions. We intend to study different LC currents and your help in this regard is/shall be greatly valued..." [Letter from CI to IBRP, 20.5.85]

The letter goes on to explain that the IT comrades are studying the national and trades union questions and offers to translate and publish any relevant IBRP articles. At the same time as acknowledging that "a communist minority in peripheral countries cannot emerge fully formed" IT criticises the Bureau for "its stand" regarding the RPP which it sees as simply a degenerate split from an (unspecified) rabid nationalist parent body. In reply our letter explained that since RPP:

"explicitly disassociates itself from Maoist 3 world notions, it explicitly states that world capitalism is in its moribund stage, divided into 2 imperialist camps and that the tasks of the proletariat and its political organisations everywhere are to work for the defeat of their own bourgeoisie and for the proletarian, not the bourgeois revolution. Moreover, RPP itself recognises that its Statement is a Draft which may be altered after clarification through discussion. For us this is a sufficient basis for initiating correspondence and political discussion between us." [IBRP to IT 19.6.85]

In fact the issue is not simply one of examining a group's positions in order to pin labels of proletarian (good) or counter-revolutionary (evil) onto this or that group. The problem is rather to assess the potential for development of any group which we come into contact with and to contribute to the clarification of revolutionary marxism wherever and whenever we have the opportunity. But the opportunities also have to be worked for. It is a sign of political weakness, not of strength, for revolutionaries to cut themselves off from dialogue with organisations who have rejected both imperialisms and are in the process of confronting Left Communist ideas. For this reason we asked IT to let us know of any developed criticisms they themselves have made of RPP. In a broader sense too, we know that revolutionary Marxism can only be strengthened in India and thus internationally by the various groups and tendencies engaging in a serious and open attempt to persuade and to develop their critique of each other's views. This means neither resorting to organisational manoeuvres to silence undesired criticisms nor peremptory dismissals without any prior attempt at discussion. In this respect we once more solidarise with Lal Pataka when they state in their letter to the IBRP:

"Our task ahead is to 'organise'. But how? Lenin showed the process. ... 'Thousands of circles are now springing up everywhere without our aid, without any definite programme or aim, simply under the impact of events. The Social Democrats must make it their task to establish and strengthen direct contacts with the greatest possible number of these circles, to assist them, to give them the benefit of their own knowledge and experience, to stimulate them with their own revolutionary initiative.'"

In India we shall engage our endeavours to this end because only an organised and independent political presence of the communists within the class can guarantee their leadership in the class-wide organisations of insurrection. We also hope that those days are not very far off when we stand on the same international platform in our joint struggle to establish a party of the world proletariat." [page 7]

## MEXICO

As the experience of the International Bureau is showing, the process of establishing and strengthening contacts internationally is one which takes time to develop and mature. This is inevitable. Serious militants cannot change their politics overnight. While in India we are seeing the emergence of a political arena for revolutionaries to positively relate to, itself testimony to the deepening crisis and at the same time the break-up of Maoism, in Latin America correspondence with the Alptraum Communist Collective in Mexico continues. It is another example that the forces of communism are growing world wide in response to the international capitalist crisis and the class struggle which accompanies it. In Communist Review 2 we published their Theses and now they have written to us saying that they in turn will publish our criticisms plus their reply in the next issue of their journal. We are publishing here our translation of the CCA's leaflet produced at the time of the recent parliamentary elections in Mexico.

Although we would have liked to have seen the comrades develop their message to the working class beyond the need to "generalise" the struggle and we feel the "myth" of parliamentarism is treated in rather an abstract way, we share its essential aim of freeing the proletariat from the shackles which bourgeois democracy tries to impose on the class struggle. In this sense it carries on the best tradition of the Communist Left.

- \* The report of this Conference is still available in bookshops or from the CWO address (£1.50 inc. p&p).
- \*\* The full correspondence with RPP and Lal Pataka will be published in Communist Review 3.
- \*\*\* These were in fact the 7 criteria for the IVth International Conference of the Communist Left.

### Addresses for Contact

The Iranian comrades in Italy can all be contacted through the PCInt. Write to: C.P. 1753 - 20101, Milano MI, ITALY. Ex-OSCPA comrades can also be contacted at the following address: G.K. C.P. 11-221, 00041 Roma Montesacro, ITALY. Lal Pataka: Lal Pataka, Dalmadal Road, Po. Bishmupur, Dist. Bankura, Pin. 722122, WEST BENGAL, INDIA. RPP: RPP, c/o N.K. Karunakaran, 21 Hari Building, Dr. Ambedkar Road, Parel, BOMBAY, 400 012 INDIA. Communist Internationalist: Post Box No. 25 NIT, FARIDABAD 121001, Haryana State, INDIA. Colectivo Comunista Alptraum [CCA], Write without mentioning the name to: Apartado Postale 21-964, Mexico, D.F. C.P. 04000.

## ELECTIONS WON'T SOLVE THE CRISIS !

### FIGHT AGAINST CAPITAL!!

Whilst government and union officials keep telling us that the "process of economic adjustment" has to be harsher and that it will be necessary to "maintain discipline" in the years to come, the government, the church, the political parties and the media keep on repeating that we must vote in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

It is at moments like these that it becomes clear to workers that politics and economics go hand in hand. The latter demands sacrifices, each time greater and greater, whilst the former demands submission to bourgeois institutions.

Will accepting greater austerity solve the crisis? Are there "national solutions" to the world crisis of capitalism?

Is the defence of democracy a working class objective? We think not, but the bourgeoisie and its spokesmen want us to think it is, in order to have us tied hand and foot.

Every country in the world finds itself in a crisis of overproduction. To overcome the difficulties which threaten its profits, the world bourgeoisie has instituted harsh measures in the field of political economy, attacking the living conditions of the working class - e.g. massive lay-offs, wage cuts, price rises and cuts in social benefits. In the field of politics it has utilised and strengthened parliamentarism, the unions and the opposition parties (both left and right) in order to control the nascent working class struggles and movements which in the last two decades have broken out, for example in Britain, France, Holland, Belgium, Bolivia and Brazil, etc.

The working class in Mexico has not been an exception to this capitalist development. Whilst the crisis has sharpened and increased discontent, the bourgeoisie and its state have carried out grandiose campaigns of mystification, such as the present elections, in order to conceal the inhuman exploitation which faces every worker today.

Like their 'pals' in other countries, the national bourgeoisie has raised the spectre of parliamentarism. In the electoral campaign the opposition parties which make up the left of capital (the PSUM, PMT, PST, PRT, CS, PSR, etc.) have played a central role in this process of mystification, by telling workers that the solution to their social and economic problems lies in political change and the "revolutionary use of parliament". The bourgeoisie and its state attack the working class from the right and from the left. The former use national chauvinism in elections whilst the latter advocate voting in order to "hold back the reactionary advance".

The real role of the left-wing opposition (PMT, PSUM, PRT, etc.) is to strengthen the bourgeois state and its institutions. The struggle of the working class is not to defend the state of the class which exploits it, but to fight for the abolition of wage labour, which involves the destruction of the bourgeois State.

We workers must not fall into the trap. The programmes which the left put forward defend the bourgeois State, for example their "victory to democracy", "defend the nation", "national reconstruction".

On the other hand, parliamentary mystification goes hand in hand with the illusions which are beginning to be spread by the UNIR, a left-wing group made up of different Maoist factions (who stand to the left of the reformists), who put forward syndicalism and petit-bourgeois words of violence.

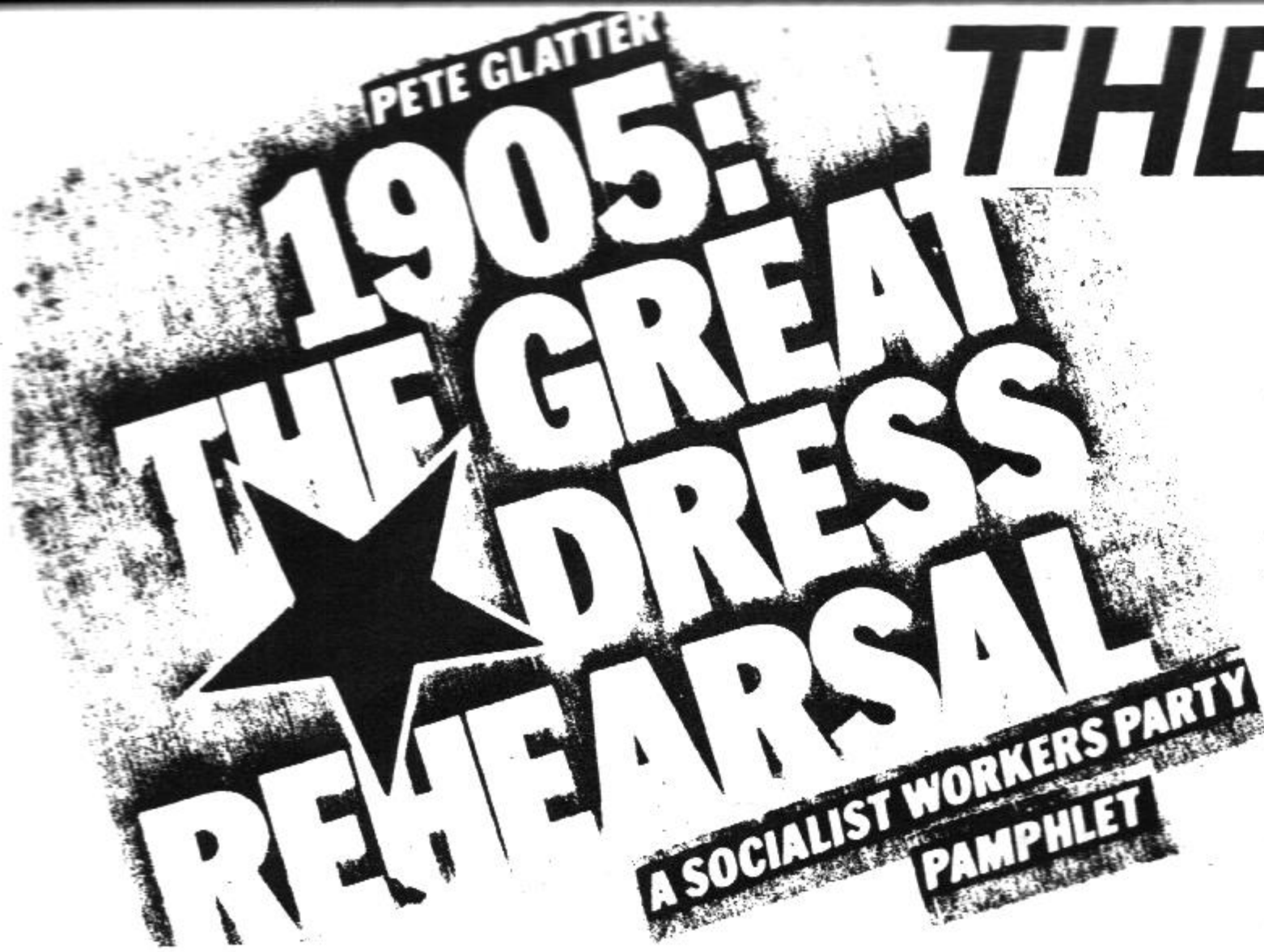
The example of the recent struggles which our brothers have fought in other parts of the world (i.e. the British miners, the public services in Denmark) have made it clear to us that the only way to confront the crisis is to struggle against capital and its different national States, generalising our struggles and not limiting them to any specific corporation or sector.

Parliamentarism and elections have nothing to do with the historical struggle of the proletariat against capital. They are bourgeois myths which only tie the working class to the politics of its exploiters.

Mexico, June 1985

For the Abolition of Wage Labour!  
Colectivo Comunista Alptraum





# THE MENSHEVISM OF THE SWP

The SWP's pamphlet 1905: The Great Dress Rehearsal correctly claims that the events of 1905 should be studied "not just out of historical interest, but for what they could mean for us today". In their analysis of 1905, however, the SWP fail to discuss, let alone draw the political lessons of the revolution.

## PARTY AND SOVIET

The basic flaw in the pamphlet is its inability to analyse the role of the party as being distinct from the role of the soviets. It tends to blur the two forces into one with the result that the Party disappears from the scene altogether. On the one hand the soviet is held up as "the highest form of organisation" whilst over the page it becomes "inexperienced and apt to be misled". This contradiction is never explained since the pamphlet fails to discuss the complicated and dialectical relationship between the soviets, as mass organs of the working class, and the Party, as the organisation of the class-conscious minority of that class.

Although the pamphlet is correct in saying that at first the Bolsheviks had to be won over to the idea of soviets as revolutionary weapons of the working class, it doesn't tell us that this was largely due to their origins in a Menshevik strike committee. Nor does it explain that it was the Bolsheviks who fought all the misleading confusions in the soviets and were thus alone capable of putting the soviets onto the revolutionary road proper. Having failed to distinguish between the class wide organ of the whole class and its conscious minority the pamphlet

goes on to attack the Bolsheviks' attempts to give a political lead to the revolution in terms of their trying to "foist their own programme" on the soviets being "muddle-headed"[page 23]. But this is precisely the role of the revolutionary party. As later events showed, it was only after the soviets accepted the Bolshevik programme in 1917 that they became an instrument of proletarian revolution. Soviets elsewhere (for example Germany in 1918) were actually dominated by reactionary unions and social democrats and used to hold back the revolution. The SWP even omit to mention that it was the Bolsheviks who provided all the organisation for the most heroic episode of 1905, the December uprising in Moscow (there will be an analysis of this in WV25) and organised the fighting detachments through their majority in the Moscow Soviet. As 1917 shows, soviets can only be described as the highest form of organisation with which to embark upon the dictatorship of the proletariat when they have purged themselves of reactionary elements. Until then they are another arena of class struggle in which the Party has to fight for a communist consciousness.

## REVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLES OF BOLSHEVISM

The SWP is also incapable of providing an adequate analysis of the Bolshevik Party after 1905. In order to give spurious historical support for their own economism and opportunism today the pamphlet glosses over the Bolsheviks' decline between 1907 and 1914. It is not true that the "Bolsheviks were everywhere, arguing and fighting on every issue"[page 26] in this period. According to Lenin it was a "period of disorganisation and disintegration." For Zinoviev "the party as a whole ceased to exist". The reaction which hit the working class after the revolution also hit the Bolsheviks hard. Yet the biggest reduction in their numbers came because of their refusal to compromise their programme in order to make immediate gains in numbers. The Party's growth during the strike movement of 1912-14 was thus reversed afterwards when the Bolsheviks swam against the tide of popular patriotism and denounced the 1st World War, calling for the defeat of their "own" country

and proletarian revolution. Such principled adherence to a clear programme, despite its short-term costs, is anathema to the SWP who see the essence of Bolshevism as lying in the supposed "tactical flexibility" of Lenin. But in fact this is more akin to the practice of Menshevism of 1905.

## THE SWP'S MODERN MENSHEVISM

As the pamphlet correctly points out, 1905 sealed the divergences between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Whilst the former concluded that the revolution had failed because the workers had been betrayed by the Kadets, party of the liberal middle class, the Mensheviks drew the opposite lesson. For them 1905, and especially the December uprising which the SWP ignores, was a senseless adventure. Whilst Menshevik leaders like Axelrod and Potresov now called for the dissolution of the revolutionary party (on the grounds that its influence had waned) Plekhanov was urging for "tact" in dealing with the Kadets. It is amazing that the SWP can retell these facts without a blush since they parallel their own tactics since the defeat of the miners' strike.

Leaving aside the basic economism of their paper which relates tales about the economic struggle without attempting to inject a political message into them and thus reduces "the class struggle to narrow trades unionism and to a "realistic struggle" for petty, gradual reforms" [What Is To Be Done?], they have now concluded that in the aftermath of the miners' strike they too, like the Mensheviks, should make siren calls to the party of the liberal middle class. In our epoch this is the Labour Party. Having concluded that they failed to win influence in the miners because they were too political (!) and should have given less critical support to the NUM leadership, they now seek a rapprochement with the Labour Party, or at least that part of it which claims to be "revolutionary", the Militant tendency. In their "open letter" to Militant they try to put forward what they

Cont. on p7

## MINERS

(cont. from p3)

the decline in working class living standards has continued as unemployment has climbed.

However, if the crisis is operating slowly, thus ensuring that class consciousness has yet to find its real awakening, the same is also true of its effect on capitalist "solutions" to the crisis, i.e. imperialist war. The fact that for the first time in history the dominant imperialisms (USA and USSR) BOTH finished on the winning side of a global war meant that the 1945 "Settlement" gave enough carrion for the two imperialist vultures to gorge themselves on for decades. [In the next issue of WV there will be an analysis of this "Settlement".] Only since the collapse of so-called detente has the rhythm of the crisis entered the balance in the struggle for the world's resources conducted by the imperialist super-powers. This relationship between crisis and war and class struggle cannot be viewed mechanically but in general the present level of crisis, the present level of managed anarchy which characterises imperialist relations, continues to hold and global war is an unlikely option until the crisis (and the social convulsion this brings) develops further and the options narrow for the international bourgeoisie.

## Our Tasks

The crisis is, then, developing in a slow, staccato manner, with sporadic bursts of often profound class activity first in one area of the globe then in another. It is likely that this situation will continue for some time. What then is to be done by revolutionaries in such a period of slow development of the class struggle?

Many of those who believe that they are taking the side of the working class but in actual fact adhere to the anti-revolutionary dogmas of social democracy (Stalinists, Trotskyists, etc) take solace in immediatist campaigns. Thus they throw themselves into campaigns to defend imprisoned miners to the exclusion of all else, or into defending the NUM "against scab unionism", or, like the Socialist Workers Party with their letter to Militant, they campaign for "unity on the left". But such a "unity" is of the left-wing of capitalism and its only real goal is to bring in a Labour government committed to state capitalist measures which these reformists see as a step towards socialism. Their lack of a programmatic understanding of what communist society is all about is the source of the illusions they foster about the proletarian nature of the unions and the Labour Party. This doesn't equip them in any way to attack the fundamental evils of capitalism.

Communists, though, have to turn away from minute analyses of the internecine quarrels of tiny minorities to confront the real issues which capitalism daily provokes for the working class. This means avoiding the pure economism of those who exhort workers to "unite their strikes" or to "struggle autonomously" without injecting a clear message as to what that struggle is about. It does not mean that there is a single strategy for the growth of communist consciousness which fetishes one element of workers' struggles in the present period (for example, demonstrations) on the grounds that "we can't leave the terrain to the unions". As we have been saying for some time, we cannot leave any terrain to capitalist and opportunist forces but must fight wherever the proletariat struggles collectively, whether in demonstrations, in the workplaces or in union mass meetings. The point is that we need to work patiently in every area as far as our strength permits and not to put

forward the utopian panacea that this or that area of intervention is the key. When it proves not to be then demoralisation is the final result."

For communists in Britain the answer to the challenge of the coming period lies in a recognition of the difficulties which such a period presents and that our main effort must be in building up the numerical and qualitative strength of communist forces. This can only be done by building up our theoretical arsenal and ability to apply it to current reality by making detailed analyses of the movement of British capital and its attacks on the working class; by unmasking the specific role of unions in different industries and struggles; and by developing the case against bourgeois currents inside the working class. This last task can only be carried out by meeting the anti-communist and opportunist arguments of the leftists in Britain in the same way as we have dealt with international groups like the CPIran rather than by mere denunciations which win over no-one and are only designed to make the writer feel virtuous. Our aim here is not to win over the organisations but to appeal to individuals who are already disenchanted with leftism's continuous shifts in strategy and who have a genuine commitment to building a firm nucleus for a future communist party in the inevitable class conflicts which lie ahead. All this demands a more frequent periodicity of Workers Voice, enabling us to make more topical and relevant comment on the issues of the day. This in turn will make it possible to sell the paper and intervene more frequently and more widely. It demands that every member of the CWO takes his or her task of political education seriously. In this respect, without developing the contribution of individual members we have no prospect of forming a viable nucleus within the working class in readiness for the next outburst of mass working class struggle.



# EIRE : A STATE OF DEPENDENCE

In Eire politics continue to be dominated by the question of 'civil strife' in Ulster. The legacy of partition casts its shadow over politics in the Republic as every bourgeois faction attempts to convince the workers that the national question is crucial to the question of economic development.

The loudest voices come from Provisional Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Socialist party, both of which have military wings engaged in the 'armed struggle' in the North. Recently, both factions have increasingly used the language of pseudo-marxist national liberation, making allusions to state capitalist economic programmes which they claim "will smash the grip of imperialism" in a unified Ireland. Needless to say their politics have the backing of the various Trotskyist and other leftist groups throughout the British Isles.

Communists on the other hand have long exposed the myth of national liberation, using the concept of decadence to show the impossibility of independent capitalist development today, and empirical evidence of the experience of the 'liberated' territories. The following analysis of the historical development and present situation of the Irish economy will demonstrate that no small nation can escape imperialist domination, whatever the subjective intentions of its political leaders, or would-be leaders.

## A Multi-national Colony

The first decade of Irish independence continued the economy's previous pattern of agricultural exports and industrial imports. The chief beneficiaries of this were the capitalist farmers of the east and south, and the Dublin based mercantile bourgeoisie. However, following the coming to power of De Valera, a policy of industrialisation was attempted and a trade war entered into with Britain. This policy aimed at semi-autarchy through tariff barriers, restrictions on foreign investment and subsidies for native industrial concerns. But the rhetoric of the period represented only the illusions of the national bourgeoisie.

In fact, most industrial capacity was foreign (mostly British) and these enterprises had little incentive to re-invest surplus value

in the small and declining (due to emigration) Irish market. Profits were instead re-patriated and invested elsewhere, as were the substantial savings of the Irish petit-bourgeoisie. By the end of 1945 a staggering 72% of all Irish bank funds were earning interest outside the country.

Only artificial monopoly managed to preserve the inefficient and small-scale industry of the Republic. While Western Europe boomed in the post-war period, Irish manufacturing stagnated; in 1958 there were only 168,000 industrial workers as compared with 154,000 in 1936. In another example of its status of formal domination, Eire continued to supply labour to the expanding U.K. economy. Whole communities left for the West Midlands and South East of England. In the last five years of the 1950s 500,000 emigrants left Ireland, causing the national population to plummet to 2.8 million.

This crisis was nothing but the chronic failure of the national bourgeoisie. Independent development was objectively impossible even in prosperous Western Europe. The inevitable turn around came in 1959 with the dramatic new "open door" policy offering advantageous terms to foreign investors and re-opening the Irish domestic market. This was a death sentence for most of the ailing native manufacturers.

A flood of foreign investment followed. The bulk of this (42%) has come from US based multi-nationals, although Japanese capital has been increasingly prominent since Ireland's entry into the E.E.C. in 1973, thus avoiding the EEC tariffs. Foreign capital was attracted by large capital grants and "tax holidays" from the Irish government and EEC regional grants, as well as the huge reserve of cheap Irish labour.

The most striking feature since 1960 was the creation of an Irish industrial working class in a significant scale. Figures for 1973 showed that there were 320,000 industrial workers with industrial employment exceeding agricultural for the first time. By this time over 50% of the fixed assets of all Irish industrial companies were externally owned. With the decline of small scale Irish run production there was an increasing concentration of workers in larger plants in this European

"Taiwan".

As in the Third World the apparent economic boom disguised the fact that there was little development in the local economy. Most development is of industrial enclaves importing the bulk of their inputs and exporting the bulk of their outputs. Such units can be easily transferred to locations where greater incentives are on offer. Thus the Irish economy is not only highly vulnerable to fluctuations on the world market but also to the machinations of the multi-national corporations.

## Chronic Crisis

The onset of the capitalist crisis has led to re-structuring and rationalisation by the multi-nationals. Companies have also reduced re-investment levels, and increased their re-patriation of profits since the "tax holiday" for many has ended. The powerlessness of the Irish bourgeoisie in the face of the multi-nationals was conceded by Trade and Industry Minister John Brunton,

"I am not concerned with the re-patriation of profits. We always knew it would happen. We want foreign companies to invest more here, but if we restrict their freedom they won't come." (Financial Times 2.7.85)

As a consequence of its policy of incentives and subsidies the state in Eire has created a national debt which in percentage terms is one of the world's largest (at 8 billion dollars, bigger by head of population than Poland's). Currently half of total borrowing by the Irish exchequer goes to financing the budget deficit. In Eire, as elsewhere, the working class is expected to pay for the mess. The official unemployment level is 17% while certain areas experience 40% adult and 50% youth unemployment.

The obvious impasse of Eire's economy illustrates clearly that political independence makes no difference to the working class. Exploitation does not disappear and the attacks of capitalism continue as they do everywhere. The next part of this article will chart the evolution of class struggle in Eire and the tasks of communists.

■ ■ ■

# SWP

(cont. from p6)

think are Leninist dialectics but which in fact is Menshevist confusionism:

"Our attitude is clear. We are for a Labour government. Not because we believe it will be a government in the interests of workers, but precisely to test in practice again the reformist road.

We believe a future Labour government will not act in the interests of the working class. On the contrary, it will act like every previous Labour government - in the interests of the bosses' class.

And, since the crisis of British capitalism is deeper now than in the Seventies, a new Labour government will be more vicious, and more reactionary than the Wilson-Callaghan governments - the first since 1945 to succeed in cutting wages, while increasing unemployment and savaging the welfare state." [Socialist Worker 11.5.85]

If anything this is worse than the Mensheviks of pre-1914, who at least argued that the best course for the proletariat was to follow the coat-tails of the "progressive" bourgeoisie. Today the SWP openly advocates support for a party which it knows has nothing to offer the working class but "more vicious" attacks. Even in this period of world capitalism's third pre-war slump the SWP can only see a role for itself as the tail-end of a spurious labour movement which in fact exists only to draw workers into the capitalist democratic farce rather than to fight it. Any Leninist perspective for revolution is totally lost in this immediatist analysis. For the SWP

"That struggle is desirable which is possible and that struggle which is possible is that which is going on at the given moment. This is precisely

the trend of unbounded opportunism, which passively adapts itself to spontaneity." [What Is To Be Done?]

In its downplaying of the role of the political party and in its failure to analyse the revolutionary peak of December 1905 The Great Dress Rehearsal is at least consistent with the tradition that is upheld in the pages of Socialist Worker - that of Menshevism.

## APPEAL FUND

The deepening of the crisis and the corresponding aim of communists to deepen our intervention in the working class lead to an increasing burden on the practical and financial resources of the CWO.

To continue and improve our work, we urgently need more modern printing equipment. We are therefore launching an appeal fund for:

## £2000

We depend entirely upon the contributions of members, supporters and sympathisers, and appeal to our readers to give generously. All donations will be acknowledged.

### DONATIONS

BM Belfast £10	ER Sheffield £90
GH Belfast £10	PT Leeds £6
AD Sheffield £150	EDL York £10

### WORKERS VOICE 25

Amongst other articles, Workers Voice 25 will contain articles on:

- \* 1945 - New Imperialist World Order
- \* The Class Struggle in Ireland
- \* The December Uprising - Russia 1905
- \* Cuts in Social Services
- \* Report of the CWO AGM

## positions of the C.W.O.

- \* Every country in the world today is capitalist - including the so-called Communist states (for example Russia and China).
- \* Trade unions and shop stewards cannot defend the interests of the working class.
- \* The struggle for communism cannot be waged through Parliament, but must be carried out through workers' councils with recallable delegates.
- \* The working class can only come to power through the creation of its own political party the international communist party.
- \* The capitalist system is in crisis and irretrievable decline. It can only offer inflation and unemployment and it cannot be reformed. The only choice for the future is war or revolution: BARBARISM or COMMUNISM



# CLASS WAR V. IMPERIALIST WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

## INTRODUCTION

Day in and day out the media bombard us with the latest developments in the carnage and barbarism of the events in the Middle East. In the Lebanon rival factions of the ruling class and the aspiring ruling class engage in constant battles with each other and also against the encroachments of Syria and Israel who, in turn, support this or that faction of gangsters in order to further their own economic and strategic aims in the area. A few hundred miles east we come across the Iran-Iraq War where tens of thousands of workers and toilers are thrown at each other in the most singularly bloody event since World War Two. And all the while, in the background, occasionally moving into the foreground, lie the giant imperialist powers of the US and Russia, sometimes vying for control and other times directly controlling one faction, client state or another in a protracted struggle for ultimate control of this vital economic and strategic region, once known as "the Gateway to Asia".

Yet there is one factor in the equation which the bourgeoisie carefully attempt to obscure: that of proletarian class struggle, the only force with the potential to leap the abyss of capitalist massacres and the nationalist and religious mystifications which serve to legitimate them.

Recent events in Israel and Iran have shown that increasingly the working class is prepared to resist the austerity imposed upon them by the ruling class. Despite the obvious differences of their cultural and geographical situation, they share certain salient characteristics. Both states may be defined as clear examples of the permanent war economy. In both cases the effects of the world crisis which are particularly acute in the under-developed countries are exacerbated by the cost of maintaining a colossal military apparatus (which takes 30% of Israel's GNP!). Thus the proletarians of these countries are not only required to sacrifice their lives but are savagely attacked by the economic effects of wars which demand war taxes in Iran and have put 25% of Israeli workers below the official poverty line. In such situations the fight against capitalist austerity is inseparable from the fight against imperialist war.

## Israel : Counting the Cost

Despite 3 billion dollars given by the US annually, inflation in Israel has reached 400% as successive governments have resorted to the printing press to fund the armed forces. The invasion of the Lebanon was not only a political disaster for the Israeli ruling class (see WV23 for example), it exacerbated an already disastrous economic crisis. US pressure to avoid total collapse not only involved pulling out of Lebanon but carrying out economic austerity measures to prevent a total collapse of the guardian of Western imperialism's interests in the Middle East. The resultant austerity package which was launched at the end of May contained the classic measures the bourgeoisie the world over have used in desperate attempts to stem the tide of economic catastrophe. The cornerstone of the programme was a 3 month wage freeze to be followed by the abolition of the practice of wage indexing. Other well-worn measures included the devaluation of the Shekel (by 18%), increases in indirect taxation and severe cutbacks in public sector spending, involving the sacking of 10,000 state employees. Defence naturally was only to be cut by 3%.

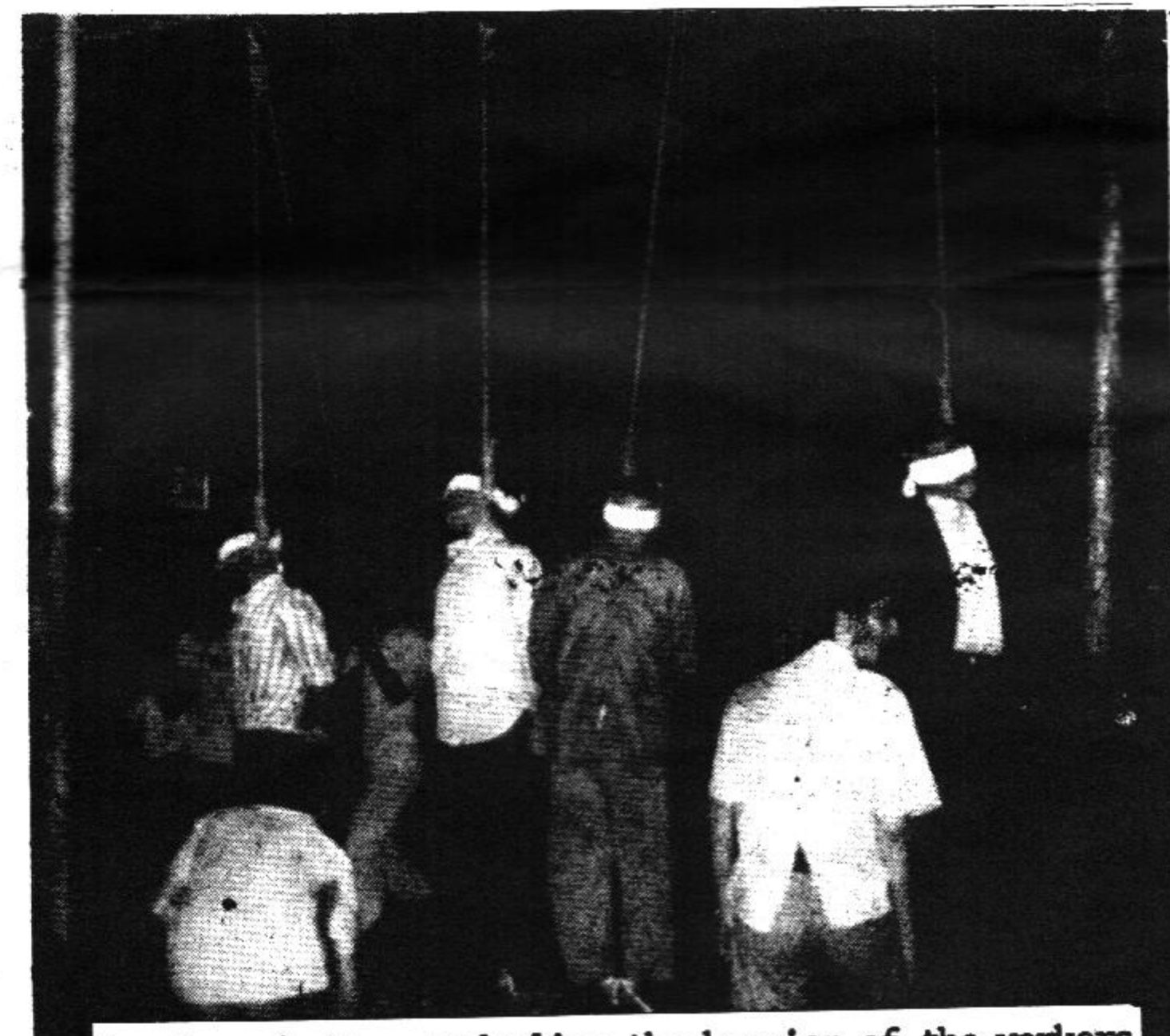
The response of the working class was swift and militant. On June 15th almost 80,000 public sector workers went out on strike and failed to respond to government pleas for essential workers to return to work. The wave of militancy continued throughout June and July, resulting in power cuts, strikes in the civil service, ports and hospitals. A planned television broadcast by Prime Minister Shimon Peres calling for "moderation and calm" was blacked out by a strike of communication workers. Throughout this period the Histadruth, the Israeli TUC, worked overtime to sectionalise the strikes whilst trying to make a compromise deal with the government. After widespread action on June 2nd the Histadruth resisted demands for a general strike, preferring instead "to gradually increase pressure on the government whilst negotiations continue" [Guardian 3.6.85]. Moreover, the Histadruth undermined the strike waves by calling for action on the basis of each individual union: "the unions would take individual actions as they see fit" [Financial Times 3.6.85]. Thus the Histadruth, like trade unions everywhere, revealed itself as part of the capitalist forces of containment of the class struggle. Through compromise rather than confrontation, selected strikes rather than class wide solidarity (the Histadruth only called out state employees, being itself a major employer in the private sector), trade union methods render struggles ineffective. The result is usually demoralisation and confusion instead of organisation and the development of the political consciousness required for the proletariat to make even the smallest advance against the state.

In this case, however, the manoeuvres of the Histadruth were not quite enough and on July 2nd 1,200,000 workers (out of a total population of just under 4 million) took to the streets in massive demonstrations. A day later the Peres Government bought calm by announcing modifications to the austerity programme and new negotiations with the Histadruth. This partial climbdown has been enough to cool the situation for the time being but the government has received a nasty shock. In the past it has been able to calm class anger by pointing to the "enemy" abroad, by appeals to Zionist nationalism. Israel's workers have shown that they are not prepared to buy this for ever and that they are a far more formidable force than the middle class pacifists. Not only did over a million workers take to the street but hundreds of young workers refused to accept the "peaceful" nature of the unions protests and battled against the

police. This is still a long way from revolution but it does demonstrate what communists have always argued: that the fight against capitalist austerity plans today open the road towards fighting against imperialist war tomorrow.

## Iran strikes

In Iran the war against Iraq has dominated not only the economy but also every aspect of social life. In this context the most elementary and economic class struggle is charged with an anti-war content. This is why we have argued since the start of this war that the only revolutionary policy in the region is that of "revolutionary defeatism" which doesn't mean that revolution is immediately on the agenda but links the struggle against austerity to the fight against capitalism's barbarous wars. Events in Iran have constantly shown that this is the direction that the proletariat is already taking. Recent events have confirmed this. Last summer a wave of strikes occurred against wage cuts, increased working hours and redundancies. In Isfahan 20,000 foundry workers struck for nearly 3 months against redundancies and workers took management hostage in response to the imprisonment of militants. In other factories strikes occurred against pay cuts imposed by war taxes. The duration and solidarity of these struggles, often in the face of the most murderous state



Hangings in Iran underline the heroism of the workers who strike against the Islamic state and its war.

repression, is largely explained by two important factors: firstly, the acute misery of the Iranian proletariat and secondly, the absence of a developed trade union structure which would serve to stifle initiative and solidarity and direct struggles up the cul-de-sac of negotiation, compromise and support for the "national interest".

In addition to the strike movement, several political demonstrations against the war have occurred, including a recent demonstration in Tehran where up to 200 workers were lined up against a wall and shot by Khomeini's Revolutionary Guards. Unlike the middle class dominated Israeli peace movement, it seems that these demonstrations in Iran represent a genuine mass disaffection with the imperialist slaughter. In this sense the Iranian class struggle is more acute than the struggle in Israel, although at the moment the Iranian proletariat as a whole is still organisationally and politically a long way from Lenin's turning "the imperialist war into a civil war". However the process has been initiated by the waging of independent proletarian class struggle against the bourgeoisie's plans for austerity. The interventions of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party are also helping to develop a communist nucleus amongst the Iranian exile milieu. Thus the seeds of a class conscious proletarian movement exist and the continuing situation of economic crisis and war provide nourishment for their future germination.

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