

WORKERS VOICE

COMMUNIST
WORKERS
ORGANISATION

CONTENTS

COMMUNISTS AT FIAT....3
SOUTH AFRICA.....4

1916 EASTER RISING....6
PRINTWORKERS FIGHT....8

April 15th - May 31st

Number

28

30p

Angola Libya Nicaragua Afghanistan

U.S. IMPERIALISM'S NEW WAR DRIVE

A TASTE OF IMPERIALIST WAR

The events in the Gulf of Sidra have shattered the cosy complacency of those who have faith in a peaceful future with capitalism or who thought that the Geneva Summit had ushered in a new move towards disarmament. Whilst the usual banal commentators of every shade of opinion have put the clash off the Libyan coast down to the madness of either Ghadafy or Reagan it was more serious than that. It was nothing less than a preview of the kind of crisis which capitalism will one day turn into all out war. The Libyan affair was a gym workout, a training session, for the real contest between the two heavyweight powers which dominate the globe. This event is one amongst many incidents in which the interests of the imperialist powers leads them into closer and closer conflict. Only one pundit (Michael White in the Guardian) saw the significance of the event and compared it to the Agadir Crisis of 1911 in which the operations of the German gunboat "Panther" off the coast of N.Africa led to an international crisis and almost world war. As the world capitalist crisis deepens and the rivalry between the imperialist superpowers intensifies, a crisis provoked by any of the explosive elements at present operating in the Middle East could ignite into a full-scale conflagration.

THE GADFLY'S GAMES

One of the more combustible elements in the present international situation is the current Libyan leadership. Ghadafy, contrary to the picture painted of him in the yellow press, is no more insane than any other capitalist leader. His Spitting Image type performances on the television news aren't aimed at the metropolises of the West. By his support for PLO commandos who kill US citizens or spray airport lounges like those at Rome and Vienna, Ghadafy wants to be seen as the staunchest of Arab nationalists. This is useful for his international standing amongst the Arab world and gives him an importance far beyond the leader of a tiny country like Libya (population 3½ millions) would merit. Not only is he the most hard-line Arab nationalist who drags along behind him in uncomfortable silence other Arab leaders but he is the most consistent defender of the USSR in the region. But he doesn't pursue this policy for mere megalomaniac self-gratification. Ideologically it is the strongest defence for his so-called "Arab socialist" regime. By posing as the defender of the victims of US imperialism he can play the nationalist card in his minor struggles against the US. Unable to seriously damage the US his gadfly attacks on individual US citizens were what provoked the US attack in March. Whatever the outcome of this attack (and it seems at least 30 Libyan sailors were killed) Ghadafy's defiance turned him into a national hero once again. Indeed as one US journalist put it the "line of death" strategy across the Gulf of Sidra was a no loss situation for Ghadafy. If the US Sixth Fleet ignored it he would have scored a propaganda triumph whilst the attack whipped up precisely nationalist hysteria Ghadafy was looking for. However one fact which must have become clearer to the Colonel is that the one factor which his tactics depend on, the protection of the other superpower was notably missing last month.

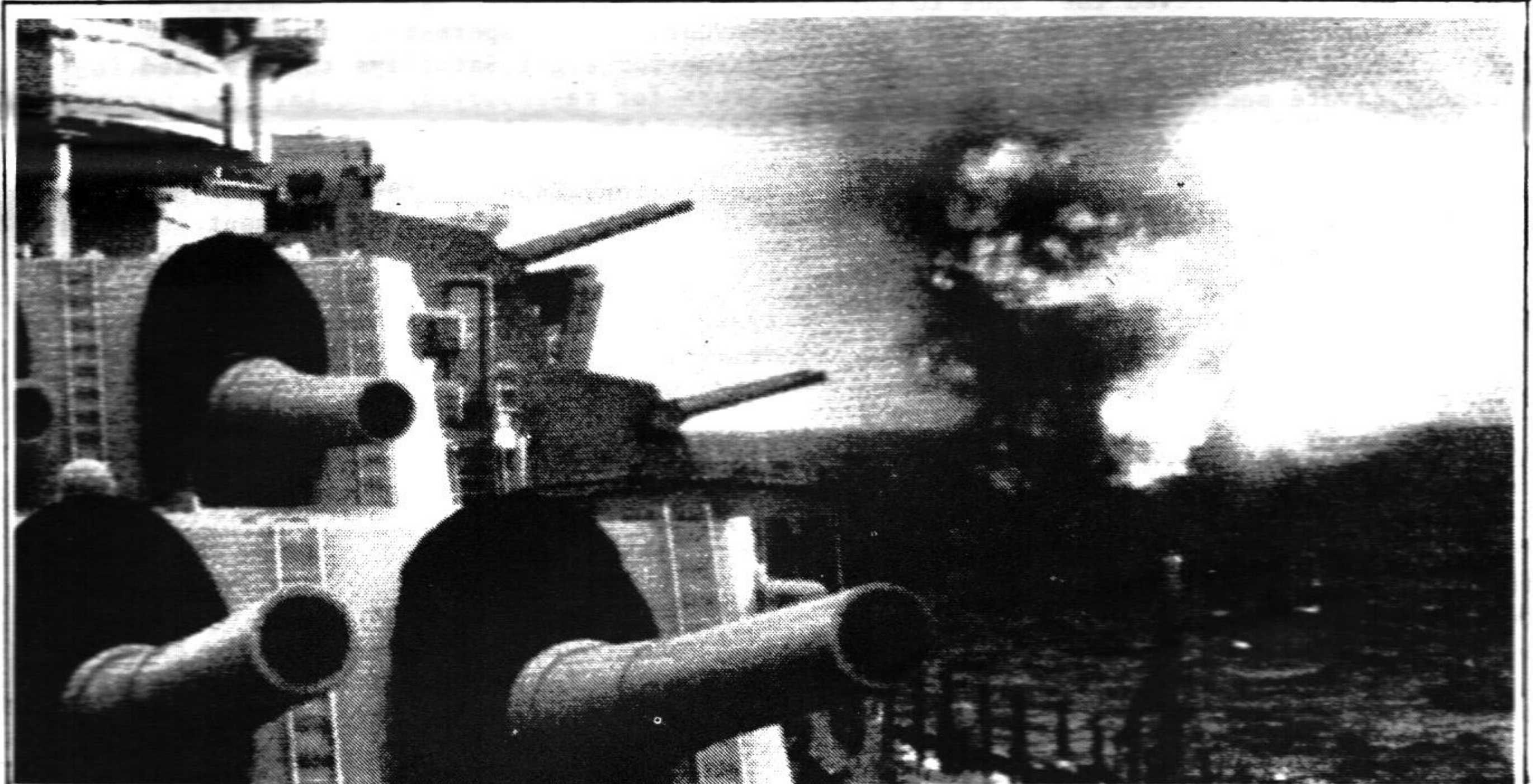
PROBLEMS OF RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM

Like the USA the USSR emerged as a victor from the Imperialist war in 1945. Yet, despite US

fears of "communist expansion" most notably expressed in the so-called Truman Doctrine the USSR was the weaker imperialism. Unlike the USA it's economy had been devastated by the war and so it found the agreements which Stalin had entered into with Western imperialism to divide the spoils of war very acceptable. In 1956 Khrushchev re-affirmed his support for the 1945 status quo by announcing that the Soviet Union could "peacefully co-exist" with the USA, each in his respective area of domination. Despite talk of a "Cold War" there was little real danger of a new war at this time between the masters of the planet. [See Workers Voice 25 and 26 for a more detailed analysis of this period] Even the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 could not seriously disturb this situation and ended up with new attempts at safeguards against nucl-

had a profound effect on Russian imperialism's foreign policy. The USA got the largest slice of the world cake in 1945 so when the crisis turned imperialist manoeuvres into a more keenly contested struggle for the planet the USSR could only hope to break out of its limited empire by competing in the one arena where it could match the West - supplying arms.

Whilst the USSR cannot hope to match US capital in an open fight for world markets and subjugate its satellites by economic means it could disturb the USA's enjoyment of the fruits of the planet by pursuing a policy of supporting guerrilla movements everywhere and thus destabilising many areas under Western control (the Horn of Africa, SE Asia etc). The victory of its satellite in Vietnam seemed to vindicate



US TERRORISTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

ear war (installation of the so-called hotline between Washington and Moscow, the Nuclear Test Ban treaty of 1963). But "peaceful co-existence" began to evaporate with the onset of the world capitalist crisis in the late 60s and early 70s.

The world capitalist crisis not only hit the profits of the Western monopoly capitalists but also revealed the equally capitalistic mode of production of the state monopolies of the Eastern bloc. How this hit the USSR can be seen in the growth figures of the Five Year Plans. Between 1950-5 the USSR's annual growth rate was 13.1% but by 1972 this rate had been halved. In 1976 the target for the Five Year Plan was officially supposed to be 6.5%. At that time this was the lowest target ever set but even this was not achieved. By 1979 growth rates had fallen to 3.4%. In the first half of the 80s growth rates are officially supposed to be 3% but even this is a fiction. At the 27th Party Congress of the CPSU last month Gorbachov set the lowest growth targets in Soviet history but it will take more than a change of personnel to make this a reality. Neither state planning in the Eastern bloc nor privatisation in the West are solutions to the capitalist crisis. Increasingly the capitalists of both East and West are feeling threatened and as they do so there will be an increasing danger of a third imperialist war.

Already the crisis of economic stagnation has

such a policy for tying down the "policeman of the West". But as the US disentangled itself from Vietnam it also became obvious that the USSR had fallen dramatically far behind the West in terms of modern technology. Thus Brezhnev began to supplement de-stabilisation in the Southern Hemisphere with "detente" in the North. The aim of this was to get hold of Western technology at the minor cost of allowing Western monopoly capitalists an opportunity to get behind the rouble curtain and find new markets and cheap labour sources in the non-convertible currency area of the Russian empire. But the crisis which had provoked detente does not stand still and it not only provoked the massive wave of class struggle in Poland in 1980 but forced the Red Army to directly support its satellite regime in Afghanistan in 1979. These events showed a further advantage US imperialism has over its Russian rival - it can foist the effects of the crisis onto its satellites without precipitating the collapse of their governments in social crisis and class struggle. The present weakness of Russian imperialism is the main reason why the Reagan camp has gone on the offensive on a global scale.

"PAX" AMERICANA

The liberal press in Britain portray Reagan as an isolated maniac who gets his way by systematically lying to the rest of the US. In actual fact Reagan represents the real

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Communist Work at FIAT

We are publishing here the report of a speech made by a comrade from our sister organisation in Italy (Internationalist Communist Party - PCInt) who works for the Fiat motor company. The occasion for the speech will be familiar to the British reader: in the name of the workers the unions were about to sign an agreement with the bosses which would mean worse working conditions in the name of 'flexibility'. This was just after a general agreement between the unions and private capital throughout Italy to a major reduction in the wage indexation system known as the *scala mobile*. The specific details may vary but the overall picture is the same: in Italy, as everywhere, the working class is being told to pay for capitalism's crisis and faces a concerted attack by government, bosses and unions.

Like Britain the class struggle in Italy is presently at a low ebb. Last year the number of days lost through strikes were fewer than at any time in the past 20 years. Like the steelworkers and then the miners in Britain, the outcome of battles between Fiat workers and 'their' bosses is seen by the ruling class and working class alike as an index of the balance of class forces. Although Fiat, unlike BSC and the NCB, is a profitable company (after massive redundancies and introduction of high technology plant now reckoned to be the most profitable large-scale car firm in Europe) the Fiat bosses are still obliged to attack their workforce with changes in working practices in an attempt to extract even more surplus value to keep up the company's 'competitiveness'. Thus, when Fiat workers were defeated in 1980 (the struggle referred to by our comrade) a recent *Financial Times* Survey explains:

Fiat "not only achieved the right to cut the labour force and restructure but so transformed the industrial climate that other private sector companies could follow suit" (7.4.86)

Hand in hand with these attacks at the workplace has been the gradual erosion in the hedge against inflation through agreements between the government and the unions. In the van of these attacks have been the supposedly 'socialist' Prime Minister, Craxi and the social democratic and Christian trades unions. Until 1985 the Communist Party adopted a posture of distance from the attacks but last summer's referendum 'yes' vote for a cut in index-linking was the signal for the 'Communists' to join whole-heartedly in the attack. "Socialists", "Communists" and trades unions alike have combined to undermine what the same *Financial Times* report describes from capital's standpoint as a system which:

"For years (the *scala mobile*) was considered to be one of the worst evils of Italian economic system. Since 1975, when it began to operate in its most elaborate form, it gave the average

worker protection against about 80 per cent of inflation."

Today the "average worker" will be lucky if he is protected against 51% of inflation. The role of those political parties and the trades unions who long ago stopped defending workers' interests and went over to the capitalist class is obvious. The reason workers vote for cuts in their own wages in a referendum or acquiesce in the bosses' plans for lay-offs and greater exploitation is not just "gullibility" or even the threat of unemployment (officially running at 10.5% in Italy with 75% under 29 and following a cut of 20% in the workforce over the last decade). At a much deeper level workers in general still believe that the old parties and the trades unions represent their interests; that the interests of national capital can be reconciled with their interests. And unless communists, the internationalists, make their voice heard in the workplace to show otherwise workers as a whole will remain disoriented and paralysed in the face of capital's attacks.

As Battaglia point out, we are under no illusion that with our small forces today we can change the course of the class struggle. But the necessity for communists to intervene in the daily struggle remains. In the class battles which lie ahead it will be those communists who have consistently defended the working class against bosses and unions alike who will be in a position to lead an independent class struggle and win over class conscious workers to the communist organisation. The report which follows is an example of how communists carry out their elementary tasks of building a communist nucleus in the workplace.

"Suddenly", the papers tell us, "FIAT is asking for eight Saturdays to be worked in return for re-employing 400 laid-off workers". Against their will, the unions were forced to call a mass meeting for 8th January. The agenda? The dispute with the company about work flexibility. The re-employment of those who have been made redundant. The doubling of the 14th installment of the *scala mobile* (a system of pay increases linked to the cost of living index); and, naturally, compulsory work on Saturdays.

Let's look at the Mirafiori body pressing shop. We are in one of the company canteens where mass meetings are held: a few frightened shop stewards are wandering about. But why? They are 'orphaned'; their leader, the union official has been held up by the snow, they say. One shop steward briefly explains the reasons for calling the meeting. To cut a long story short, there is more room than usual for interventions.

The interventions are principally about the bosses' plan to introduce Saturday working. They are all on the same wavelength as the union. This is only logical, as those who speak are shop stewards or workers who toe the union line. The FLM's (Engineering Union) position is basically the same as reported in the papers. We quote here *L'Unita* of 24.1.86 (the Italian Communist Party paper) since it can't be accused of bias against the unions:

"In reply to technically motivated requests for flexibility our answer is essentially favourable, so long as the workers concerned agree to it and it leads to a complete clarification of industrial relations."

And of course some of those present loudly accuse the unions of being undemocratic. The meeting drifted sleepily along as usual. It needed one of our comrades to intervene to liven things up:

"Comrades, I shall refer to the lamentations on democracy", he began, "to remind you that what the unions mean by 'democracy' is that their agreements are carried on the backs of the workers. That's what happened in the now-famous dispute of 1980 when, despite the workers rejecting them, the unions agreed to redundancies. It's what happened in January '83 when the unions agreed to cut the *scala mobile* by 15% without even calling mass meetings. This is what this democracy

that everyone is mouthing about is really about: the imposition of the bosses' laws and interests on the proletariat.

The latest example is the agreement of the *scala mobile* (yet again!). No consultation, no mass meetings and yet this agreement completely changes our wages. For the worse, naturally. The operation just finished provides for:

- 1) A cut in the installments;
- 2) The introduction of differentials in their value;
- 3) Increases every six months instead of every three months.

The cut alone is 20% which, translated into money (for the bosses) is like reducing its present value (6,800 lire) to 5,400 lire (over three installments). They justify the introduction of differentials by the fact that the installments tend to equalise wages.

But what's the equalisation of wages got to do with the increase in the cost of living? - The *scala mobile* is supposed to keep up with inflation, with the increase in the cost of living, which it does in a very piecemeal way! What has professionalism to do with the belly? What they're proclaiming here is the "professionalism" of the belly. - This is greeted with great applause.

"The truth", he continues, "is that they want to link our wages to the changed conditions in the labour market and to new technology which requires extreme flexibility. Our wages should be "rigidly flexible" and so subordinated to the fickle conditions of the market. It is in this situation that FIAT asks us to work Saturdays. Comrades, this request insults everyone with a brain in his head.

In recent years FIAT has laid off more than 50,000 workers in the auto sector alone and it still makes full use of the *Cassa Integrazione* (the Italian state's redundancy scheme). This is a clear demonstration that they want to make the most ruthless use of our labour-power. They want to link the very life of the working class to the ups and downs in the bosses' affairs. But, they say, if things go well for FIAT, then things go well for the workers too.

Well, FIAT is going full steam ahead (1,000,000,000,000 lire [£5000,000,000] profit in 1985) but we are more and more in the shit. That's why it's an insult. That's why we must reject Saturday work." Once more our comrade is interrupted by applause. "The truth", he continues, "is that they want to exploit the proletariat to the bone. The truth is that wage cuts serve to fill the bosses' cash boxes. Almost 60% of FIAT's profits are derived from Government securities and these profits too, like the others, are paid for by the workers.

We must throw off the fear, the apathy that they've all played on and say NO to Saturday working.

Certainly it won't be easy. Since the union defends the bosses' interests we find ourselves between the hammer and the anvil, where the one is the union and the other is capital. The FLM, which basically approves of Saturday working, proposed back in December that we should work on two Saturdays in exchange for staying at home on Christmas Eve and Boxing Day (See *BATTAGLIA Comunista* #11 1985). Now we can see what they were trying to do then. The FLM and FIAT were preparing the ground for breaking the taboo of free Saturdays. - My God, so it's possible to work on Saturdays! In return, they tell us, we'll re-employ 400 laid-off workers and your demands in the dispute will be discussed. Comrades, this is no more than the ghost of a dispute. A dispute which is conducted by gathering signatures is embarrassing. Since when has the working class fought its battles by means of signatures? It's time to put an end to this. Every time they have to give us crumbs they ask for our soul in return.

Continued on p 3

OPEN MEETING

LONDON SATURDAY MAY 24th
2.30 p.m.
CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQ. WC
"THE PRESENT PERIOD AND THE TASKS
OF COMMUNISTS"



Continued from p 2

Communist Work at FIAT

This is what happened with the return to austerity measures. In fact Visintini*very opportunistically increased the price of petrol before the return of these measures. But the return to pillage (the austerity measures) was also preceded by the cut, as I've already said, in the scala mobile and also by the severe measures in the finance bill (Italian budget). We can no longer say that what the bosses give us with one hand they take with the other. Now what they give us with one hand they take away with three! They are octupuses comrades. The promised re-employment of laid-off workers won't happen because FIAT has all of a sudden become generous. Romiti² put it extremely clearly: not a single worker more than the company needs to cover the exigencies of production. There we have it: they need the 400 workers for their own purposes.

They are making fun of us workers. The re-employment of the 400 and the increase in the 14th installment of the scala mobile must be brought about without us giving anything in return. There must be a struggle for a reduction in our hours without any concessions on flexibility, without any increase in exploitation and without any reduction in wages.

I call on you, comrades, to struggle, to mobilise. Let's organise autonomously. Let's no longer entrust our future to anyone but ourselves."

In this manner our comrade concluded his intervention, in the midst of applause from a packed hall.

Other speakers followed, putting forward various positions which - even if some were anchored in a "critical fashion" to the union's position - couldn't fail to bring out the correctness of our comrade's denunciations. At the end of the meeting some workers complimented him on his intervention. The initial "atmosphere" had certainly changed, the meeting was certainly more "lively" than usual.

Let's be clear. We are under no illusions. We are certain that Saturday working will be introduced without a single blow; that the unions will sign the agreement without consulting the workers who will once again find themselves in the iron vice of the unions and bosses. But we are also certain that this is the path for communists to follow: the constant denunciation amongst the workers of the misdeeds of "their" organisations; the stressing of the need for autonomous organisation; the spreading of the communist programme. For communists not to carry out these tasks is tantamount to committing a crime. Where there are proletarians communists have the duty and obligation to make their voice heard.

P.S. As might have been expected, the union signed the agreement without listening to anyone. We should underline here, as our comrade did in the meeting, how the "democratic" papers (like L'Unita) lied in order to convince people that it was correct to sign the agreement. What they said in fact was that the existing contract gave Agnelli (the FIAT boss) the right to compel workers to work on Saturdays. That's a lie! Above all, we should stress that the contract was a first-class fraud. Among other things it didn't talk about compulsory work, nor did it talk about collective decisions to work, but only about individual ones.

If you are on the side of the bosses you must follow their interests no matter what. You only have to listen to the unions:

"We greet the reversal of a tendency in industrial relations with this agreement. FIAT", they say, "has been compelled to retreat by the struggle of the workers"(sic!)

FOOTNOTES

* Italian Finance Minister

² Managing Director of Fiat

Imperialism

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

interests of US capital in the deepest sense. Reagan's palpable mountains of lies are believed because the US ruling class need to believe them. Thus even the voice of US liberalism, the Washington Post, urges more support for Reagan. After the attack on Libya the paper printed an article which argued for more international terrorism - by the USA.

"The Soviet Union has passed the apogee of its doomed attempt to keep pace with the West... The sensible way to respond to the Soviet decline is by hastening it. Policy should be: no detente, and more of the Reagan doctrine of increasing the cost of the Soviet Empire by supporting insurrections at its margins (Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola)."

What has held Congress back from more enthusiastic support for Reagan is not "world opinion" (i.e. world press opinion) nor moral anguish over support for a gang of ex-Somoza thugs and the international piracy of mining the harbours of a country officially not at war. The only consideration of the US ruling class liberals is not to get involved in another war like Vietnam in which thousands of US citizens would get killed. And there is certainly no hesitation amongst Congressmen to vote ten times the money Reagan is asking for the "Contras" to the Afghan guerrillas.

"FREEDOM FIGHTERS" OR IMPERIALIST PAWNS?

Just as the USSR in the past supported movements of so-called "national liberation" so today the USA calls the forces it is arming against the pro-Russian regimes in Angola, Afghanistan and Nicaragua "freedom fighters". And the fate of these struggles like that of the Palestinians show that there is no longer any "progressive" content to national struggles. However anti-imperialist guerrilla movements try to be they cannot achieve the defeat of one imperialism without becoming the pawn of another. And the cynical way in which the two super-powers have sustained their clients for decades in Africa, Asia and Latin America shows that they only anti-imperialist struggle must be against both blocs. The particular obscenity of the present US war drive should not blind workers to the imperialist nature of the present-day regime in Moscow which is "socialist" only in its chosen name. Because it is the weaker capitalism we should not make the mistake of concluding that it is either more peaceful or less imperialist than the USA. The "national" struggles which both blocs support are simply rehearsals for the only solution which capitalism knows for its crisis - world imperialist war. The only force capable of giving history a different course is the international working class. Only a world revolution engulfing every country and ultimately paralysing the imperialist metropolises can strangle capitalism's war drive.

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

R.P. AN INTERIM OBITUARY

For the moment at least, we have decided to make RP23 the last Revolutionary Perspectives. There is a practical and a political reason for this. The practical reason is that the CWO has taken on the production of Communist Review, the theoretical organ of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party, and is unable to take on the work of producing two theoretical journals. The political reason is that, during RP's existence, the CWO has traversed the road from being a group with councilist origins to being the heritors of the Italian Left's traditions. In this sense, RP has done its work of re-introducing to the British scene the doctrines of revolutionary Marxism.

However, we will re-issue the most important texts from RP in pamphlet form, as we have already done with texts on economics from RP's 2 and 8.

NB. We will honour existing subscriptions to RP by either transferring them to CR or by extending them if they a joint subscriptions.

BACK ISSUES OF REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES.

No 14; Main text is, "Communist Organisation", which deals with the role and function of the Party.

No 15; Main text is, "Marxism and Ireland", this outlines the history of Ireland, and combats reactionary nationalism.

No 16; Main text is on "Factory groups", and describes how communists try and relate to the daily struggles of the class.

No 17; Main text is on "Imperialism", and deals with the theories of Luxemburg, Bukharin and Lenin.

No 18; Sold out.

No 19; Main text is on, "Theories of State Capitalism", which surveys the Russian economy, and demonstrates its capitalist nature.

No 20; Main text is on, "The Democratic Revolution", and shows, by a critique of the (now) C.P. of Iran, that it is "a programme for the past".

No 21; Main text is on, "Class consciousness in the Marxist perspective", and emphasises the role of the Party against ideas of a spontaneist nature.

No 22; Main text is on, "The Origins of Trotskyism", and shows that this tendency has its origins in the counter-revolution.

Orders, with payment, to the group address. Copies are £1.00 each post paid. ONLY the above are available.



The Leftists and South Africa

ANTI-APARTHEID OR

INTRODUCTION

In a spiral of social conflict that threatens to get out of hand, with the death toll rising daily in wave after wave of black revolt against the hated apartheid system, the South African capitalist class, caught in an acute economic crisis, is becoming aware of the need to dismantle and eventually abolish the outmoded system of exploitation. Radical changes in the structure of its state would however be necessary before this could go ahead, and in the event of an escalation in the class struggle which this might precipitate, groups and parties of the Left would be necessary on the ground to ensure that struggles were contained within acceptable limits.

CRISIS OF APARTHEID.

The key to understanding the present turmoil lies in the fact that South Africa is now in the throes of its worse economic crisis since 1929. Between 1978-84 the economy grew by 3% compared to 7% in the '60s; there was an actual decline in GDP in 82-83 and it is likely to fall this year; inflation is 17% and interest rates 25%; corporate bankruptcies are running at 70 per month.

At the level of external economic linkages there are two major causes of the slowdown. The first involves the country's export position. Exports account for 25% of GDP and gold for almost one half, by value, of South Africa's exports. Able to ride out the storms of the mid '70's global crisis by taking advantage of rocketing gold prices, over the past four years the price of gold, as of other export minerals, has plummeted. South Africa depends heavily on the rest of Africa as a market: over 1/2 its chemical exports and about 1/3 of its machinery and equipment manufacture were sold in Africa during the '70s. The crisis gripping the African continent has dried up many of these markets.

Secondly, investments in South Africa now bear amuch greater risk premium, and since 1982, foreign capital's share of new fixed capital formation has declined sharply. Net foreign investments in South Africa's private companies fell by 360 million dollars between 1976 and 1984 (i.e. after the Soweto uprising). Nevertheless, South Africa has managed to preserve a long-term net surplus of capital inflows. This is mainly because the government and nationalised industries have dramatically increased their international borrowings. According to Federal Reserve Bank data, the value of loans by US banks to private and public South African borrowers rose from 1 billion dollars to 4.3 billion dollars between 1980 and 1984. However, the strings attached have been given a sharp pull in February this year by South Africa's imperialist masters, when, as a measure of their increasing anxiety, they announced the unprecedented step of freezing all further loans till current interest was repaid.

An additional burden on South African capital is state spending which accounts for 25% of GDP. In order to maintain its social base the African state has to subsidise its white farmers and civil servants - 1/3 of all white workers are employed in the public sector. The defence budget for its huge military force has doubled over the past 4 years and at the same time a vast repressive apparatus of police, prison camps, spies etc has to be maintained.

In a desperate effort to maintain its competitiveness on the world market (the rate of return on capital is now 5% compared with 20% a decade ago) the South African ruling class is forced to raise rates of exploitation to unbearable levels. The antiquated system of Apartheid is now a major obstacle to capitalist accumulation. Other than the immense social conflict and human suffering which it incurs, it is incapable of providing the necessary ammounts of skilled labour and prevents labour mobility. With the traditionally profitable automobile industry of the Eastern Cape now in chronic recession and many US manufacturing corporations now showing book losses, the situation is deteriorating with unemployment escalating, and reports of malnutrition in the townships

common. Figures for unemployment were 68% up in 1985 compared with 1984, and it is now running at 30% among black workers (an official under-estimation).

A particular fallacy of some leftist organisations (such as the Revolutionary Communist Party) is to propagate the view that Apartheid is not an irrational historical hangover but an indispensable feature of South African capitalism for not only maintaining the boundaries of exploitation but for extending them. (See the RCP pamphlet "Black Blood On British Hands".)

On the contrary the more advanced elements in the South African ruling class are those grouped around the Anglo-American Corporation and the Progressive Federal Party - and increasingly their views are being echoed among the die-hards - have recognised the need for the modernisation and eventual abolition of Apartheid. And this has been the consensus of South Africa's imperialist backers for at least a decade. American Secretary of State George Shultz emphasised this recently by stating that there was no longer any dispute among Americans about Apartheid: "The present system is doomed....The only alternative to a radical violent outcome is a political accommodation now, before it is too late. We look to the government of South Africa to work with blacks, black leaders and others in their country to bring it to an end." (New York Times Nov. '85)

Why has the Botha regime, installed in 1978 on the platform of a reform strategy, been unable to carry out the bidding of their masters? The answer lies in South Africa's special position on the global imperialist chess-board and in the fact that the African National Council (ANC), the main bourgeois democratic opposition force, is still linked with Russian Imperialism.

THE STAKES OF IMPERIALISM

The West's financial involvement in South Africa is staggering by any yardstick; loan capital alone exceeds 25 billion dollars; 7-10% of the UK's entire overseas investments are tied up in South Africa. Fabulous profits have been reaped off the backs of South African workers; during the boom years, rates of return were 20-43% on capital invested, super-exploitation by any standards. Investments, however, had from the outset an important strategic dimension, linked to the expansion and defence of the Western alliance. The region's mineral resources are an indispensable element in the West's preparations for war against the Soviet bloc, which cannot allow their continued control by their adversary. Losing them would be an irreparable disaster for the West.

South Africa is a veritable storehouse of strategic metals, a leading producer of manganese, platinum, antimony and chromium. The latter is essential for the hardening of steel used in the armour plate of ships and tanks. Europe and Japan have no domestic sources and the US requires to import 80% of its domestic consumption.

South Africa is a trusted guardian of the huge quantities of Persian Gulf oil that travels round the Cape of Good Hope on their way to Europe and the Americas. The South Atlantic sea lanes are of immense economic and military importance. The Soviets have been building up their presence there since the West began to use the Falklands War as a testing ground for their naval capability.

South Africa is not only a regional gendarme - as was made clear by their use in the neutralisation and integration of Angola and Mozambique within the Western bloc - but a vital quarter-master as well. While it is vital for the West's geo-political aims that South Africa stabilises its internal regime, for fear that it may face another Iran '79, for the time being, in the face of mass resistance and mounting economic difficulties, it continues to bolster the present regime until such a time that a transition to a democratic liberal rule can be effected without a danger of either an escalation of the class struggle towards revolutionary dimensions or the losing of South Africa to the enemy camp. Neither

option would be in any way tolerable.

Today the objective of both wings of imperialism, conservative and liberal, is the same: an orderly reform of apartheid to dapple the South African government and power structure with enough black faces through some form of political compromise between the white supremacists and the aspirant black bourgeoisie, so that the seething black working class can be held at bay and exploitation can proceed as normal. The fact that the West is playing the anti-apartheid card is shown by the meeting between Rely of the Anglo-American and the ANC in Zambia. The Reaganites fear that Botha's fall might permit an already dangerous situation to get out of hand while the liberals, while seeing that Botha has outlived his usefulness, fail to perceive that the Botha strategy of the creation of a buffer of politically docile middle class blacks has been a patent failure, not through any lack of will to compromise - this has been the strategy since 1978 - but because the very ferocity of the class struggle itself permits no inter-racial settlement. The trail of burnt-out houses of collaborationists and the cadavers of all those engaged in implementing Botha's dirty work is testimony to this.

It is significant that the struggles of Soweto and Sharpeville of today have not become the cause-celebre they were for the liberals of Anti-Apartheid in the '60s and '70s because they have an increased proletarian content. The anger directed against the black cops and councillors are a direct refutation of black nationalist myths and a snub at the black consciousness which came in the wake of Soweto 1976. The liberals of the US anti-apartheid paint the conflict between moderate democrats and Reaganites as a moral crusade for black self-determination in South Africa. The political aims of the liberal factions of the bourgeoisie have the same end result as those of the Right: the saving of capitalism. The safest route, according to them, would be the ending, not the maintenance of apartheid.

LEFTISM

Having been largely successful in integrating the white working class politically and economically and in quelling the struggles of the black workers, while maintaining a rigid racist division between them, the South African ruling class during the post-war period has never had any need for a faction espousing a radical 'socialist' i.e. state-capitalist doctrine. Containment of the class struggle has meant that its politics have always been within the framework of white supremacy. A formal legal recognition of this was the passing of the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. But with the emergence of a manufacturing and mining proletariat, concentrated in the urban areas, increasingly conscious of its strategic position in the economy after a decade of bitter, virtually unrelenting class struggles, the South African ruling class are more than ever aware of the need for a new alignment of forces of the left in order to nullify any revolutionary threat, if need be to channel it in a state capitalist direction.

The banned ANC is emerging as capitalism's best hope. As Jesse Jackson, American civil rights politician said recently, "Those business leaders (Rely and co) defied Botha to meet with the ANC. They went because they knew where their economic future is, and it's not with Botha's apartheid government." (New York Times 3.11.85.) Rely was, of course, aware of the 'common ground' he shared with the ANC in the maintenance of a profitable South Africa in the face of violent revolt. As Mandela noted in his speech at the Rivonia trial in 1964 "The ANC has never at any period in its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has it to the best of my recollection, even condemned capitalist society." In September, while Botha's finance minister was visiting the US to round up funds to save South Africa's desperate financial situation, the ANC addressed "The People" of America as follows, "We appeal to all you to demand that American banks should insist that apartheid be

ANTI CAPITALIST ?

made to pay up for the 11.5 billion dollars that it owes". This call, of course, is really addressed to the banks. If apartheid were actually to pay up, the billions would have to be squeezed out of the hides of South Africa's workers, and the ANC would be called upon to administer that part of an extended state machine designed to dragoon, in a 'democratic' fashion of course, the black masses under their control. The ANC statement serves to announce that it will undertake to pay off South Africa's debt religiously once it has taken up the reins of government. Such co-operation with imperialism - the opposite of the Bolshevik repudiation of the Czarist debt - is not unprecedented in the current period. Paying off Somoza's bills was one of the first acts of the 'socialist'

Sandinista regime of Nicaragua. Events like these illustrate that the only 'liberation' from imperialism is the communist revolution not the installation into power of a fraction of the nationalist bourgeoisie.

The 'power sharing' the ANC is manoeuvring towards resembles the Zimbabwean capitalist solution of guaranteeing whites a fixed share in the government, including decisive ministries; or it might amount to dividing South Africa among its races and tribes in such a way that whites and co-operatives blacks like the thugmaster Buthelezi wielded a workable veto. In spite of the fact that the ANC can easily expose the more superficial aspects of the so-called 'liberalisation' measures, in the context of the historic decline of capitalism and the continued deepening of South Africa's economic malaise, it is impossible for it to play any progressive role. Any political compromise would reveal the opportunist nature of the ANC in the eyes of its black masses as they would have nothing to 'sell' but a programme of increased austerity accompanied by savage repression. The material social base in the form of a large black middle class, unlike in the US, does not exist in South Africa and the prospects of its development in the present situation look remote. In the absence of a buffer of privileged black strata, an 'in between' solution looks unlikely. The direction of South African society increasingly depends on the development of a class consciousness in the core concentrations of the urban black proletariat, and it is here that the ANC performs a most essential function for capital by latching on to workers' struggles in an opportunistic manner and diverting these on to a nationalist terrain.

The ANC contains several tendencies. Predominant are the liberal wing represented by Tambo and the Stalinist wing of the South African Communist Party, which is influential in the ANC's exiled labour arm - South Africa Congress of Trade Unions. Both agree on the ANC's programme of a non-racist capitalism for the present, leaving talk of socialism to the indefinite future. In line with its tactic of forming a 'bloc' of 'progressive forces' against Apartheid, the South African Communist Party (SACP) argue that the struggle is simply one for democratic rights for all, and not a class struggle. The SACP encouraged Mandela, Tambo and the other ANC leaders to see mass action as a means of putting pressures on the regime, and of helping to mobilise 'enlightened' opinion among whites in the West. As a result they help to spread the illusion that apartheid can be removed peacefully. For example in 1958 one CP member wrote,

"Revolution need not involve violence. There have been plenty examples in history where a combination of factors have been compelling enough to make a ruling class give way for urgent and overdue changes, without dragging the people through the agony of civil war".

A lesser known wing of the ANC is the Trotskyist "Marxist Workers Tendency" which has ties with the Militant Tendency of the British Labour Party. Expelled from the ANC last summer, the MWT argues that if the ANC should gain power, even with its pro-bourgeois ideology, it would be forced to create a 'workers state' i.e. the classical orthodox Trotskyist reasoning which led the Trotskyist groups after World War 2 into the camp of capital. Although they were never to grow into a sizeable force in South Africa, the Trotskyists were to have a political

impact out of proportion to their numbers, especially in the 30s and 40s. Although they recognised the political centrality of the working class, this was to be the force for 'national liberation', social revolution being part of a process of 'permanent revolution'. The politics and tactics of this conception were never grounded on an understanding of capitalism's entry into decadence, the implications of which meant that the proletariat had nothing to gain from a tactical alliance with any section of the bourgeoisie as all had become reactionary. Leftism of the Trotskyist brand stands in that line of tradition which accepts Lenin's theory of national self-determination. In 1935 Trotsky was to write:

"In so far as a victorious revolution will change the relation not only between the classes but also between the races and will assure to the blacks that place in the state that corresponds to their numbers, thus far will the social revolution in South Africa also have a national character." (On the South African Theses)

Statements of this sort are typical of the propaganda found among these leftist tendencies who have opportunistically turned themselves into appendages of the major bourgeois opposition force in South Africa.

The main political rivals of the ANC are the black nationalist organisations which rule out white participation in the South African 'revolution'. One of these, the Azanian Peoples Organisation (Azapo) labels itself a working class organisation, although it finds its base mainly among intellectuals and the petty bourgeoisie. It bases its politics on the completely false assumption that all blacks under South African conditions are working class. While recognising the ANC's capitulation to white liberals and capitalists - it condemned Kennedy's visit, which the ANC supported - AZAPO assumes that black nationalism is the answer. It has a 'marxist' radical wing to help insinuate itself among more advanced workers.

BLACK WORKERS.

While Leftist organisations differ in their political attitude to the various radical bourgeois opposition forces in South Africa, they have all applauded unanimously the emergence of black trade unionism, which now groups in its ranks around a million members, as high a proportion as in the US. Take, for example, the SWP:

"The only independent working class organisations in South Africa are the black trade unions. Their success... is an enormous political step forward." (S.A The Road to Revolution, A.Callinicos p.33)

While during capitalism's progressive ascendancy the unions were proletarian organisations, their function under the new conditions of permanent decline mean that they are no longer appropriate defensive instruments for the class which created them and only succeed in keeping the terms of reference and the tactics of workers struggles on a terrain which is favourable to capital - i.e. the unions divide the class into trade and sector and in the end deliver them bound and gagged to the employer.

Unlike those leftists whose policies can only serve to shore up capitalism, the South African ruling class were not under any illusions about the nature of trades unionism. The purpose of the legalisation of trades unions was made quite clear, "We are registering black unions in order to control their activities". (Fanie Botha, Minister of Manpower). Rosholt, chairman of the countries leading industrial corporation commented, "They must be seen as bodies which can possibly defuse labour unrest". On the emergence of the NUM, the Anglo-American Corporation actually gave it offices as well as negotiating rights.

However, in the early 1980's a more militant brand of trades unionism began to develop, in

the wake of a series of wildcat strikes. While it accused FOSATU of being too moderate and non political, the S.A.Allied Workers' Union adopted an aggressive, populist style. But despite their radical image, these new trades unions will play the same role as their predecessors; to control and derail the class struggle. This was clear in the gold workers strike of September 1985, when the NUM separated the struggle of the gold workers from the rest of the mining proletariat, and then negotiated separate deals with the gold companies, leaving the most militant mines isolated, and leading to its defeat.

OUR POSITION.

Our criticism of the bourgeois forces active in the struggle of the South African proletariat, does not mean that we stand aloof from the real social movement that is unfolding. The absence of a party, or even a communist organisation in the country, along with the divisions of the class on racial lines (and here we mean not simply black and white, but between black and Asian, and even among black workers themselves), means that we do not face a revolutionary situation in South Africa. But communists still have to work, initially among the diaspora, black and white, to form a communist nucleus, which can relate to the movement in that country.

This means that we must call for working class unity, across racial divides, and denounce the programmes of the various leftist and nationalist groupings, exposing their capitalist nature. But we cannot do this from the sidelines, we must make clear that we support all demands for the ending of specific indignities and super-exploitation of any section of the class. But while we call for the overthrow of the apartheid regime, by mass working class struggle, we make it quite clear at all times, that this in no way amounts to political support for any of the reformist or nationalist groupings who seek to replace it. Opportunism consists not in making specific demands, which occasionally may formally overlap with what is demanded by the political forces of capitalism, but in the failure to pose these demands in a different framework from those of the enemies of working class liberation.

COMMUNIST REVIEW

Organ of the International Bureau
for the Revolutionary Party

Number 3 is now available and contains:

Communique from revolutionaries in Mexico on the earthquake;

PCInt's Draft Theses on the Tasks of Communists in Capitalism's Periphery;

Correspondence with revolutionaries in India.

Price: £1.00 [inc. p&p] from the group address.

THE 1916 EASTER RISING

Recently Republicans and their leftist sympathisers have been commemorating the 70th anniversary of the abortive 'Easter Rising' of 1916. Because of its continuing centrality in Republican ideology and their propaganda towards workers, we are taking this opportunity to examine its real significance. The following text shows that far from confirming the correctness of working class participation in national uprisings in the period of imperialism, 1916 actually represents the collapse of the independent Irish workers' movement in its capitulation to bourgeois nationalism, with important implications for the subsequent defeat of workers struggles in Ireland after the First World War.

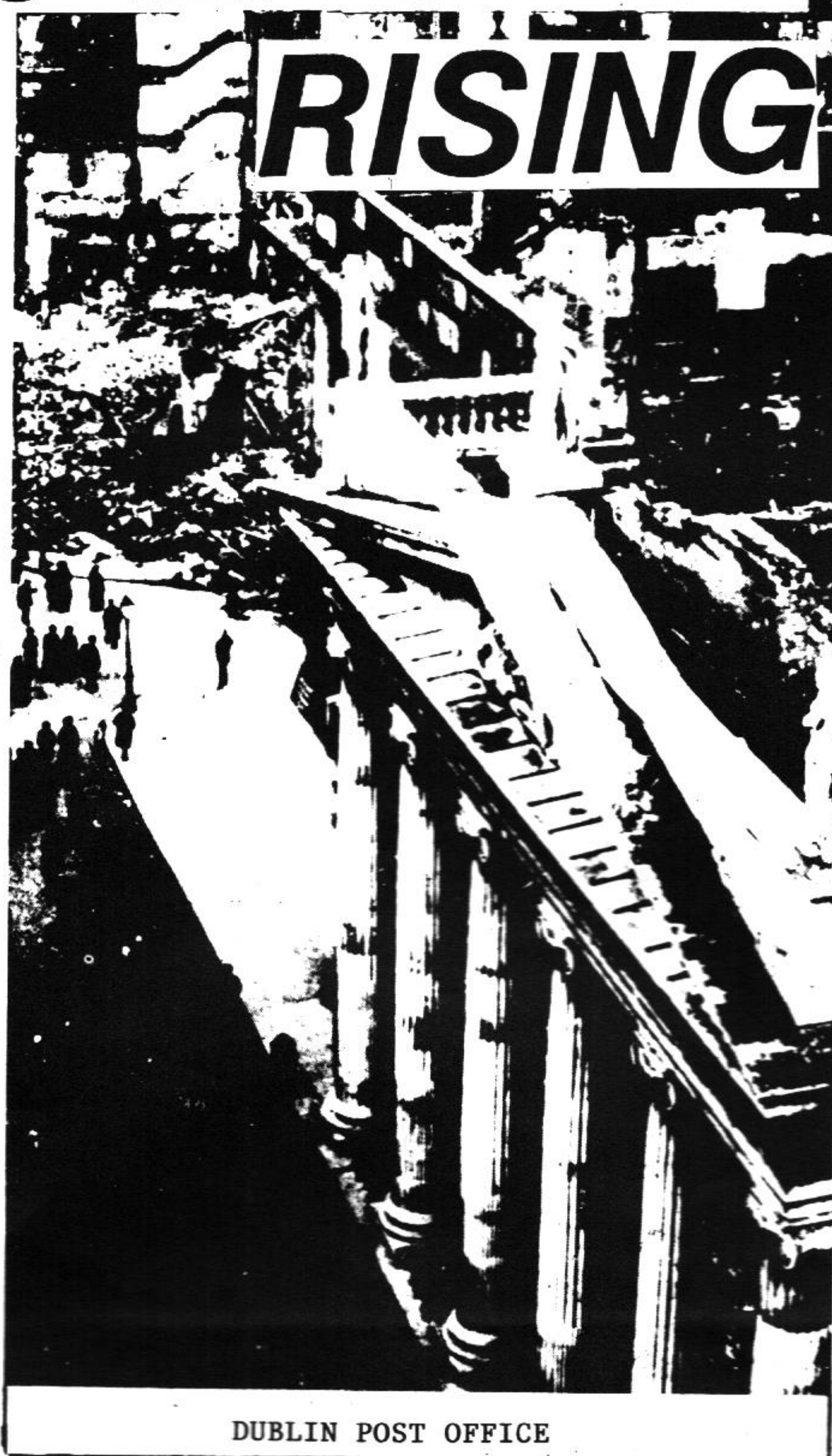
JAMES CONNOLLY AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

In 1916 sections of the Irish petty-bourgeoisie led by the radical part of the nationalist intelligentsia allied with James Connolly's armed wing of the working class carried out an insurrection against the British administration of Ireland, fighting for an independent republic, but with Connolly also fighting for a wider goal - social revolution. However, from its very outset the Dublin Rising of Easter Week 1916 was doomed to failure. Not only did 1916 give the Republican movement its martyrology and nationalism a popular base, the Irish socialist movement, already weakened by the defeat of the 1913 Dublin Lock Out strike, became subordinate to nationalism, retreating into trade union building and reformism.

Why should James Connolly, founder of the Irish Socialist Republican Party (1896), and apparently quite aware that the interests of the working class are opposed to those of the bourgeoisie, have seen a bourgeois national revolution as a necessity before a fight for socialism could be started? The answer only becomes comprehensible when it is realised that Connolly made serious concessions to bourgeois ideology, and not only on religion (i.e. in private he was an atheist, in public he posed as a Catholic) but also in his confusions on nationalism. Basically, while Connolly drew much inspiration from the theory and practice of the Marxist socialist movement, his general political approach (profoundly influenced by the syndicalism and mechanical materialism of the early British workers' movement) was some distance from that of Marx and Lenin.

Connolly, who never really grasped the bourgeois nature of the nation, or sufficiently understood the dangerous role of nationalism as a counter-weight to the revolutionary energies of the working class, despite his courageous anti-war stance in 1914, rapidly gravitated away from his defence of workers' political independence and the prospect of a proletarian solution to the imperialist slaughter. Working with a mechanical concept of a 'two-stage' revolution, in which the achievement of national independence and the establishment of a bourgeois-democratic Republic were seen as being the precursor to socialism at a later date, Connolly abandoned independent class terrain and entered the national movement in an alliance with nationalist forces fighting for national self-determination.

Now while in the 19th century national wars and movements for independence were generally part



DUBLIN POST OFFICE

of the progressive development of the capitalist mode of production; with the beginning of the decay of capitalism, associated with the global operation of the law of value and the division of the world among several by imperialist powers, the development of any national capital onto the world market in any meaningful independent fashion became impossible. National liberation struggles were transformed into struggles between rival imperialist powers in which the working class had nothing to gain and very much to lose. The period when workers could support national liberation came to a definitive close in 1914. In the epoch of crises, wars and social decomposition, all possible socialist support for one bourgeois bloc against another was a thing of the past. Without delving deeply into the complexities of the pre-1914 debates amongst revolutionary Marxists on the national question, it was the arguments of Rosa Luxemburg against the possibility of progressive national wars in the period of imperialism, rather than those of Lenin (who was to see 1916 as a blow to imperialism which supported his belief that workers still ought to participate in national movements) which were to be confirmed by the experience of the Easter Rising.

Thus Connolly's weak theoretical roots (and those of the Irish workers' movement more generally) and his opportunist position after 1914, were to lead directly to the tragic and suicidal 1916 putsch, and the submergence of the working class in reactionary nationalist ideology.

POLITICAL FORCES AND SOCIAL CLASSES TO THE EASTER RISING

With the outbreak of imperialist conflict in 1914 most bourgeois protagonists in the tangled and bitter 'Irish Question' accepted the postponement of Home Rule until the end of the war. At this time the strongest organised political force in the southern part of Ireland was the Irish Parliamentary Party led by John Redmond, embodying the interests of the internal bourgeoisie.

These political interests were mainly a Home Rule state with close economic links to Britain. To secure this end, Redmond and other members of his party functioned as recruiting sergeants for the British army, triggering a split in the Irish Volunteers (a force created in November 1913 as a counter to the Ulster Volunteers, an organisation originally formed to fight against Home Rule). The members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), Sinn Fein and other radical nationalists in the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers split from the Redmondites, taking around 12,000 of the most active Volunteers with them. The radical nationalists in the Irish Volunteers were united on opposition to Redmond's recruiting policy, and on a longer term, for the goal of an independent Ireland. But they were divided on tactics. The 'moderate' wing, including the Chief of Staff MacNeill, followed a cautious and defensive policy, and held that unless the Government should attempt to impose conscription on Ireland or the Germans should invade Ireland, developments after the war had ended would show if an armed struggle was necessary. The more 'radical' wing was mainly (but not exclusively) composed of IRB members. They agreed that before the war ended the independence of Ireland should be asserted in arms. But among these it is also possible to distinguish between a 'left' wing and a 'right' wing; the right wing solely building on the traditional Fenian maxim that "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity", and saw German help as a necessity for the rising (including Roger Casement and Tom Clarke), and shared with the moderate wing (also including Sinn Fein leader Arthur Griffith) an openly hostile attitude towards the labour movement. The left wing was less explicitly anti-labour. This section consisted of people like Ceannt, MacDonnagh and the leading 'brain' Patrick Pearse. The ideology to which the IRB adhered and which is mainly found in the writings of Pearse (in which not surprisingly the concepts of class and class interest are always absent) was typically petty-bourgeois. As was their way of organising; a secret, oathbound society, the IRB worked to take over the Irish Volunteers, and in order to plan a national rising, secretly set up its own Military Council, which only involved the very few IRB members who were also in the leadership of the Volunteers.

As James Larkin left Ireland for the USA in October 1914, James Connolly became leader of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and the Irish Citizen Army (a workers' defensive force created after the strike breaking strong-arm methods used in the 1913 Dublin Lock Out), as well as the editor of the paper Irish Worker. At the outbreak of the war, Connolly had immediately taken the standpoint to back working class resistance against the war, e.g. he advocated industrial actions, such as a transport strike to refuse agricultural products to leave Ireland, whereby Ireland might "...yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last war lord." ["A Continental Revolution", Forward, August 15th 1914.] And like Lenin and a few other European labour leaders, Connolly was horrified when he learnt that most of the other labour leaders supported their respective bourgeoisies in the war.

But Connolly saw the socialist revolution as part of a broader struggle for national self-determination. Thus he thought that even if socialism was not possible for the whole of Europe convulsed in capitalist war, then at least it was still feasible for Ireland. So the two major strategic problems of the Irish working class movement which Connolly attempted to solve were, first,

Continued on p 7

Ireland Continued from p 6

should the Irish working class work with other revolutionary elements towards the radicalisation of the European (and especially the British) labour movement, or should the Irish working class align with anti-British nationalist forces in Ireland and with them attempt a blow against imperialism. When the opportunist alignment was decided upon (on the basis of Connolly's weak internationalism), this involved the second problem, that of alliance with the non-working class anti-British forces. Since Connolly believed that the working class should lead and not just tail the national movement, and the only working class organisation that could do this was the Irish Citizen Army, the alliance with the nationalist forces came about through joint actions between the ICA and the Irish Volunteers.

Thus Connolly, as a representative of the labour movement, participated in anti-British activities with representatives from Sinn Fein, the IRB and the Irish Volunteers - publicly against recruiting of Irishmen for the British army and secretly to establish contact with Germany. During all of 1915 the Irish Volunteers and the ICA trained their military forces. In late 1915, more and more critical of the Volunteers, the ICA openly declared that they would start an insurrection alone (having only little more than 200 armed men!) if the Volunteers would not co-operate, and hereby they hoped to force the more radical elements of the Volunteers to come out in support. The disagreement between the IRB Military Council and Connolly can only be understood if it is realised that since he (wrongly) saw the national rising and national independence as part of a social revolution, a step towards socialism, such a revolution, to be successful, would need mass support, a support which could only be gained by rallying for these ideas actively and openly. Thus Connolly, as General Secretary of the ITGWU, propagated his betrayal of workers political autonomy through his involvement in economic struggles, work for labour candidates in Dublin municipal elections, and at the same time attempted to 'link' these aspects in the struggle against 'economic conscription' (the attempt by employers by economic pressure to force their employees into the British army). On the other hand, the Military Council of the IRB was planning an insurrection in a typical petty-bourgeois putsch manner. It attempted to plan it secretly in order not to alienate the moderate part of the leadership of the Volunteers and in order to surprise the British administration. Obviously, this also meant lack of open rallying for the rising. As Connolly was not involved in the IRB circles, he took the lack of public propaganda to mean that the moderates had taken over the leadership of the Volunteers.

THE RISING AND ITS AFTERMATH

Worried that the ICA would ruin their plans by a premature move, IRB leaders approached Connolly, and during January 1916 he was informed of the plans for an insurrection and became a member of the Military Council. The time from late January was hence mainly used to prepare for the rising. Arrangements for a landing of a cargo of arms bought in Germany were made, and the arranging and training of the Volunteer troops all over the country were speeded up.

The actual incidents leading to the failure of the landing of the arms at the coast of Kerry, the failure to keep the planned rising a secret to the moderate leaders, and hence MacNeill's last moment decision to cancel the parades on Easter Sunday that were to result in a nation-wide insurrection, and the hectic hours in the Military Council to rearrange the plans into a rising on Easter Monday April 24th, have been told many times. One of the consequences was that only around 1,000 Volunteers and 220 of the ICA took part in the rising. They occupied strategic points in Dublin with the head-quarters in the General Post Office in the centre of Dublin, where also the Irish Republic

was proclaimed. Although a few hundred more joined the rebels and unco-ordinated risings occurred in a few counties, British troops outnumbered the rebels many times. After nearly a week of street fighting the rebels surrendered after the shelling of their head-quarters from an English gunboat placed on the river Liffey. While the proclamation of the Republic was phrased according to the petty-bourgeois mystical goals of the Volunteers, the ICA still seemed aware of their professed wider objectives. Connolly had addressed the ICA a week before the rising with the following naive words: "In the event of victory, hold on to your rifles, as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic as well as for political liberty."

Although workers' opinion in southern Ireland had generally been hostile towards the nationalist rebellion, the ferocity under martial law with which British troops dealt with the insurgents, helped to sway their opinion. Especially the executions of 15 of the leaders (in particular the seriously wounded Connolly, shot in a chair), but also the internment in English camps of about 2,000 people, of which only 170 were convicted and sent to prison, changed the attitude of many, and led to a tremendous boost for militant Republicanism.

Around this time the British army had many of their men slaughtered in the war, and among the dead were many Irish. Also the threat of conscription in Ireland was increased when in December a Conscription Bill was introduced in Britain. The value of wages and also of war allowances was undermined by price rises, and the stoppage of emigration to the USA, and fear of being conscripted if one worked in England, furthered social discontent which was successfully channelled into a reactionary nationalist void.

The working class, disorientated and weakened, had lost its main leader and theorist, Connolly, along with many other ICA members in the rising. The Irish labour movement eclipsed by nationalism was now led by men, such as Thomas Johnson and William O'Brien, who were self-claimed disciples of Connolly's teaching: socialism in the syndicalist inspired comprehension meant the building up of an industrial union, "...and when we find that we control the strategic industries in society, then society must bend to our will - or break" [Connolly: *Socialism Made Easy*, 1899], and hence only saw a reformist party taking part in parliamentary elections as a secondary tool in this struggle. Hence they concentrated on the dead-end of building up the trade unions. Although the ICA continued to exist until 1922, it was merely an appendage of the left wing of the Volunteers, devoid of any genuine socialist content.

Thus when after the end of the First World War the Irish workers took up the class struggle in earnest during the 1919-1921 Republican War of Independence, their efforts (as was those of the Belfast workers in 1919) were rapidly smothered by the nationalist bourgeoisie. And in 1922 the IRA (which emerged out of 1916) quashed the strike and expropriation movements of Cork and Limerick workers, with the open complicity of the trade unions.

CONCLUSIONS

Connolly with the ICA went "out to be slaughtered" [his own words] on Easter Monday 1916 under the suicidal illusion that once the ICA had become the driving force in the Republican movement this would mean that the working class, especially by industrial actions (which never materialised), would come out in spontaneous support or at least that when the working class had taken the lead in the national struggle they would be able to lead it, in the end, into a struggle for socialism. The actual effect of the 1916 Easter Rising was to give a substantial impetus to the Republican and nationalist movement which had been relatively weak among working class expressions beforehand. Thus the rising was no romantic 'do-or-die' act of heroism,

but an inglorious brutal defeat and surrendering of workers' independence. Not only was the experience of the proletarian revolutionary wave of 1917-1923 and its defeat to clarify to communists Connolly's confusions and errors on the socialist project but also confirmed that the lesson of events like 1916 is not to compromise with any faction of the bourgeoisie in the imperialist epoch, no matter what the apparent objective situation might suggest. In Ireland today this means no compromises with any brand of nationalism such as the IRA and Sinn Fein, who present themselves as "The Inheritors of 1916" [An Phoblacht/Republican News, 3/4/86], and must have their pseudo-socialism ruthlessly exposed [1].

The only real way forward for Irish workers is to recover their tradition of class struggle which has broken from the nationalist and sectarian ideologies of the ruling class (e.g. the Dublin Lock Out of 1913 and the strikes in Belfast 1919). Such a development cannot proceed on the basis of a 'celebration' of 1916 or of Connolly's capitulation to nationalism, but only on the theory and practice of the Communist Left.

[1] See *Workers Voice* N°26, "Sinn Fein: Socialist or Capitalist?"

REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES 15

Journal of the C.W.O.



MARXISM AND THE IRISH QUESTION.



also -
Interventions in France
Bukharin : review
War & Revolution



NOW AVAILABLE
£1 FROM GROUP ADDRESS

SUBSCRIBE

If you sympathise with the CWO's politics, take out a supporter's subscription of £10. Simple subscription: 6 issues *Workers Voice* Britain £2.50 Abroad £3.50 Combined subscription: 6 issues *Workers Voice* plus 2 copies *Communist Review* (theoretical journal of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party). Britain £7 Abroad £6

Addresses: BM BOX CWO, LONDON, WC1 3XX
CWO, PO BOX 145, HEAD POST
OFFICE, GLASGOW

Please make cheques payable to the
Communist Workers Organisation.

THE BOSSES ARE UNITED

THE WORKERS ARE DIVIDED

The struggle at the News International plant at Wapping continues (after 2 months) and every day of the lockout underlines the nature of the present period. It is one in which the bosses are united in their offensive to lower the living standards of the working class which resists only when its immediate interests are threatened and is thus being picked off section by section. The printworkers, like the steelworkers and miners before them, are basically struggling alone. Despite impressive displays of solidarity on the picketline from the miners of Kent and South Wales, Port of London dockers and strikers from elsewhere in the country the element of real material solidarity to extend the struggle is missing. In fact the little effective solidarity action taken by workers in libraries and retail distribution who refused to handle News International papers has crumbled. This was sabotaged by their union leaders who did deals with the bosses and thus left militants open to victimisation.

THE CAPITALIST STATE IS UNITED BEHIND THE FLEET STREET BOSSES

But the implications of this are much wider than a dispute between a single employer and 5,5000 printworkers. It finds the workers ranged against a united ruling class prepared to wield the full powers of its repressive state apparatus. Whilst the printworkers are isolated the Fleet St. bosses are united in pursuit of a trail blazed by Eddie Shah at the Stockport Messenger. When he proved that newspaper production backed by endless police escorts could withstand siege by mass flying pickets and continued to distribute the way was open for bigger attacks by the rest of the newspaper bosses. Whilst Murdoch's move to Wapping is stealing the headlines the rest of the Fleet St. barons are achieving more draconian cuts than Murdoch through agreements with the unions. Closely following Murdoch comes Robert Maxwell, the multi-millionaire ex-Labour M.P. who wasn't satisfied until he had obtained a national daily to sound off in. Last December he got 2,000 redundancies at the Daily Mirror whilst today he is bludgeoning Scottish workers at the Daily Record into submission. And, just in case, he has surrounded his Glasgow plant with the same razor wire that Murdoch is using at Wapping. But these two megalomaniacs don't stand alone. The

Express has managed to get even more job cuts than Maxwell and has imposed a longer working week. So too has the Financial Times whilst the Guardian, like the Mail and Telegraph and home of the British "liberal conscience" has already warned of further job losses when it also moves to a dockland plant early next year.

None of this would be possible without a massive state outlay in protecting the Fleet St. bosses' plants from mass pickets. Important as it is for mouthing ruling class ideology of every shade, the press has been able to call massively on the full resources of the capitalist state to defeat the printworkers. The fragile sham of democracy which only works so long as the workers accept their slavery is daily exposed in this struggle. Mounted police charges followed by "snatch squads" or SPG riot thugs beating up pickets are now a commonplace part of the ruling class' tactics against workers. Just as in the miners' strike local residents are not regarded as innocent bystanders but are blockaded from their homes and forced to carry passes to get through police road blocks. The aim of this is to keep the printworkers isolated from other workers since the state knows that only if the workers are isolated from the sympathy and solidarity of other workers will it be able to get away with its violence with impunity.

THE UNIONS KEEP THE PRINTWORKERS ISOLATED

And their allies in policing the working class struggle are the unions who divide the workers. Whilst the Fleet St. bosses have reached a secret deal agreeing not to employ any of the 5,500 workers sacked by Murdoch the NGA, SOGAT, the NUJ and the AUEW are peddling the lie that Murdoch is just a rogue publisher who can be brought to his knees if the workers in the rest of Fleet St. keep working for his rivals. Under cover of a supposed fight with Murdoch they have thus negotiated (or are negotiating) job losses in excess of those sacked by Murdoch. Not only have they agreed to sackings at all other newspapers but also to worsening conditions such as longer hours and "more productivity" (i.e. more exploitation). Even the Good Friday holiday was abandoned at all but one national daily. Far from being ashamed of their record the leaders of the four main unions wrote a letter published in the Daily Mail boasting of their "reasonableness" in agreeing to sackings at non-Murdoch papers. They informed us that their only quarrel with News International was that Murdoch was using "unBritish union-busting tactics". In other words, British capitalists are OK, foreign capitalists are not. This reactionary nationalism is just an attempt to divert workers from the real issue of fighting for their jobs but it is the true voice of the unions. The 'new realism' of the unions is in fact nothing but a more explicit version of their old role as defenders of national capitalism. Today the unions and the Labour Party have taken to the logical conclusion of calling for import controls and measures to stop British multinationals investing in the USA (or like Westlands and BL, being taken over by US transnationals). But workers have no interest in who exploits them but in ending the system of exploitation which has spawned the unions themselves. Whilst the Trotskyist and neo-Trotskyist press tell us the same old story of 'bad' leaders they can never explain how yesterday's radical militant is always transformed into today's reactionary leader. The answer lies in the nature of the unions which are: nationalist; the mere bargainers of the price of wage labour (and therefore with a vested interest in perpetuating it); and the biggest obstacle to workers extending their struggles and generalising the fight to other sectors. Thus not only have we had SOGAT telling other workers to keep away from Wapping but

the Yorkshire NUM has also instructed its members that the dispute is none of their business. (Nor apparently are strikes in S. Yorkshire. The NUM refused to support a successful wildcat strike of 400 miners at Thurcroft Colliery, Rotherham who refused to work with two UDM workers.)

IS THERE A WAY FORWARD?

However, the unions will only be able to forge capitalist chains around workers so long as workers themselves continue to accept the unions' terms. This struggle cannot be won by picketing Wapping since the police can control a struggle which is concentrated on a limited geographical area. The Saturday night-out at Wapping has now degenerated into a ritual which perhaps holds up distribution for a few hours but, as those who have been on the pickets on every other day will tell you, only 100 or so printworkers man the lines whilst the majority of the sacked 5,500 who have hopes now only of a vague 'compensation' from union negotiations sit at home waiting for the struggle to end. Wapping is now a dangerous diversion which channels the rising anger of the working class into a manageable confrontation for the capitalist state. The real task and the real possibility of victory lies in the strategy we outlined at the beginning of this struggle:

All Fleet St. and provincial presses must come out;
All movement of papers must be stopped.
Fleet St. must be occupied and workers' strike bulletins produced.

The workers at News International cannot win on their own and there is a vast reservoir of class anger waiting to be tapped. Too long have the capitalist papers fed us their trivia and lies and a workers' bulletin would be a focus for all those workers who are struggling elsewhere to contact each other and unite their struggles. And united the working class has a potential power far greater than anything the bosses can draw on.

C.W.O.

I would like to find out more about the CWO ☐

I would like to help with the activity of the CWO ☐

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Send to: CWO, PO Box 145,
Head Post Office, Glasgow

REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

75 pence

23

Theoretical Journal of the Communist Workers Organisation



Plus - Tertiaryisation : A Contemporary Myth

Now Out