

WORKERS VOICE

COMMUNIST
WORKERS
ORGANISATION

CONTENTS
SCANDANAVIA FRANCE
SPORTS AID WAPPING

JUNE '86
29 30p

CAPITALISM KILLS!

Sooner . . .

1986 has not been a good year for defenders of the capitalist system or those who hope to reform it out of existence. The bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi was not to wipe out a hornets nest of terrorists but was a significant step towards a third world war. Whilst many have taken comfort in the fact that the USSR must have known in advance about the raid on Libya they completely miss the real point. Libya was an easy target precisely because Gadaffi had refused to cooperate with Russian plans to have a base in the Mediterranean. For the Russian imperialists Gadaffi got what he deserved (and Russian technicians who refused to take part in the defence of Libya only underline this).

THE WESTERN BLOC CONSOLIDATES

But the most significant point about the raid on Libya was the part it played in consolidating the Western bloc behind the United States. Since it has become obvious that the USA is using every economic means at its disposal try to revive its economy at the expense of its Western allies the US satellites have begun to get decidedly edgy and awkward over a whole range of policies (from exchange rates to Nicaragua). Libya solved all that. Whilst initial reaction was hostile (Thatcher being the only exception) Reagan has gradually won the support of all the leading Western countries. By using the US bases in Britain (which were militarily unnecessary) he made sure he was not isolated and didn't allow the EEC to take up a united position (the price of this was his support for the new extradition treaty now going through Congress which the British Government wants to get IRA suspects in New England). Thatcher's stance at the Tokyo Summit only set the seal on this manoeuvring and led to all the seven most powerful countries in the West agreeing to new and more aggressive measures against "terrorism". Since then Reagan has announced not only more nuclear tests but also the development of new nerve gases. His latest announcement is that he intends to abandon the SALT II accords. Despite the kicks and screams of the other NATO countries they are no more capable of opposing these new steps towards war than they were to prevent the Tripoli bombings. Faced with its continuing budget deficit and a falling dollar the economic crisis still haunts US capitalism. In addition the various disasters to Challenger and the other NASA programmes have been a great military setback. As these difficulties mount the US



TRIPOLI: THE MORNING AFTER

will be less willing to accept reversals in foreign policy (as it did in the 1970s) and the possibilities of it taking us down the same road that capitalism has already travelled twice this century. [Our response to the bombing of Libya in the form of a statement of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party is printed on p.2]

NATURAL DISASTERS OR MAN-MADE HORRORS?

If capitalism offers us nothing in the long-term except world war it certainly has nothing to offer humanity in the present. To the decade and a half long African famine (see p.3) can now be added the latest, most devastating nuclear accident in history. There is nothing natural about nuclear disaster but the event at Chernobyl underlines what internationalists have argued for decades. Russia is not only not socialist but it operates on the same profit considerations as the West (however this may be disguised by its state monopoly control of the economy). It has exposed the myth of "socialist planning" in the USSR since in response to questions about why Chernobyl was situated in the centre of a large population complex government spokesmen have stressed "reasons of cost". The same reasons of cost which led to savings on building the power station without a concrete safety jacket and which led to the irradiation of thousands. East and West capitalism has demonstrated that it is today a system whose continued existence is incompatible with the future of humanity.

Today capitalism has created a situation where the horrors of war, famine and epidemics can objectively be overcome but only if the fetters of capitalism itself are broken. Objective need now implies the socialisation of the productive forces and their planning on a world scale i.e. communism. Only the international working class which is placed in the same situation of exploitation and which everywhere produces the wealth which the capitalists dispose for their nefarious ends can create the new society. Today the working class worldwide is mounting increasing resistance to austerity everywhere. But these struggles, like those in Belgium are either isolated in one country or like that at Wapping solely fought out by one section of

the class. The workers have to fight on their own terrain and this means they must create their own organs of struggle divorced from all the forms of class conciliation, including the unions, which capitalism tries to impose upon them. Above all the working class must create its own international revolutionary party to lead the struggle world wide. It is for this reason that the CWO has affiliated in the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party. We have a world to win. Join us!

. . . or later



CLEANING UP AFTER CHERNOBYL

WORKERS MUST DESTROY IT

Neither Reagan and his allies Nor Gadaffi and his friends

A STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

WORKERS, COMRADES

Recent events in the Mediterranean have opened up a dramatic new situation in the world: the sounds of war have reached the citadels of Europe. Since the end of the Second World War local conflicts often disguised as wars of national liberation, have characterised the daily existence of the world but in the last year they have increased and become more serious. Until now these conflicts and massacres, though carried out with arms from the metropolitan imperialist countries have been confined to the periphery of the capitalist world. Now a taboo has been broken: they are threatening to involve Europe.

Wars have always been fought under pretexts which have nothing to do with the real reason for the conflict and today is no different. The USA's excuse for launching missiles at a small state like Libya is terrorism. Even the USA's allies are only pretending to believe this arrogant absurdity! But long before they got drunk on Reaganite ideology it was already well-known that the USA wanted to strike at Russian interests in the Middle East, where (especially in Syria) the USSR has recently reaped some notable diplomatic successes in getting its own, equally imperialist hands, on the Middle East.

WORKERS, COMRADES

Since the foundation of the state of Israel which exists only through the support of Western imperialism and which is opposed by the USSR through the medium of Arab nationalism, there has been a crisis in the Middle East. But today that crisis has worsened and dangerously widened. Added to the traditional rivalry between the USA and USSR is a new clash on interests in the Western bloc. For some time the USA has been pushing for a reduction in the economic links between the EEC and the Arab world. The USA wants that area all to itself. This led to the diplomatic tension between the USA and Europe and to this attempt by the US to break the link between Europe and the Middle East. At the same time tensions in other areas of the world; in Central America, Asia and Africa, are mounting. The political, diplomatic and military crises are all a product of the cycle of capital accumulation. The Second World War closed one of these cycles and opened up another. Since the early 70s this cycle has arrived at its period of crisis. And the capitalist crisis, as always, poses only one alternative - either imperialist war or proletarian revolution. The bourgeoisie is now tending towards war but for workers and communists the slogan is

NEITHER REAGAN AND HIS ALLIES
NOR GHADAFY AND HIS ALLIES

WORKERS, COMRADES

Throughout the world capitalism has attempted to stave off its profits crisis by attacking the working class. Every government of every political shade (whether Labour,

Social Democrat, Conservative, Liberal or military) has used the same policy of reducing wage and unemployment benefit levels and intensifying exploitation. AND STILL THE CRISIS GOES ON! Thus at the same time as attacking the working class every bourgeois bloc or government is also attacking the opposing bloc or bourgeoisie. This is why the political crises are increasing and international tensions are worsening. And in the conflict unleashed by these tensions it is still the working class which pays the highest price since the dead are always workers. This is why the working class MUST NOT LINE UP WITH EITHER SIDE BUT MUST COUNTER ATTACK ON ITS OWN TERRAIN.

WORKERS, COMRADES

The old counter-revolutionary myths have either collapsed or are in the process of collapsing. The USSR and the so-called socialist countries are not socialist but (state) capitalist like all other countries in the world. The so-called Communist Parties are not communist but bourgeois, like all other parties which give support to wars in parliaments.

In Poland in 1980, in the great miners strike in Britain, in the French steel industry, in the Tunisian "bread revolt", in the strikes against the war in Iran and Iraq, and in dozens of other episodes, our class has shown, and is still showing its vitality. Our class is alive and is faced with a dramatic choice; either delay breaking out of the ideological, political and trade unionist cage which the previous counter-revolutionary period has woven around it and thus submit to war, massacre and destruction; or, vigorously take up its own struggles again in order to defend itself from capitalism's attacks and to push back all attempts to make it pay for capitalism's crisis. The revival of class struggle is the only way in which capitalist war can be stopped. This must culminate in a revolution which creates a world fit for humanity.

Attacks on wages and jobs must be fought with a determination which takes the struggle beyond the limits of capitalism itself. Workers must respond to bourgeois calls to join its war fronts by striking in defence of their autonomous interests - for decent wages and better living standards.

When the bourgeoisie does launch its war it will demand national unity and solidarity, in short, an end to the class struggle. Such social peace is the ideal condition for imperialist war. Our response must be to

RELAUNCH THE CLASS STRUGGLE
STRIKE AND BLOCK ALL PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION
SHATTER THE SOCIAL PEACE

WORKERS, COMRADES

The immediate class struggle can and must give rise to the revolutionary perspective of socialism: of a new order founded on production linked to human need

not profits and based on the organised power of the producers themselves. The condition for the realisation of this perspective is the re-birth and re-inforcement of the party of the communist revolution. The programme of the communist revolution, its strategic and tactical plan for the proletarian assault on bourgeois power, must again become current within our class and must become the reference point for the class struggle.

The revival of the communist programme means a hard and long struggle against the reactionary and opportunist forces which lead the proletarian masses towards bourgeois goals. It means theoretical, political and organisational confrontation with an adversary which is still strong inside the working class.

Capital is international, the proletariat is international and the revolutionary party must be international and centralised with a single programme for the entire world working class. It is in this perspective that the organisations affiliated to the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party are struggling.

WORKERS, COMRADES

The IBRP appeals to the whole proletarian vanguard to unite their efforts to relaunch the struggle against the capitalist crisis and the wars it unleashes in a commitment towards building the revolutionary party.

AID OUR ORGANISATIONS!

UNITE WITH THEM!

The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party and its affiliated organisations (Internationalist Communist Party - Italy, Communist Workers Organisation - UK, French Committee of the Bureau, Lal Pataka - India.

This leaflet has been given out wherever organisations or sympathisers of the Bureau are to be found and it has been published in Italian, English, French, Bengali, Farsi and Arabic. For further information or more copies for distribution write to the address below.

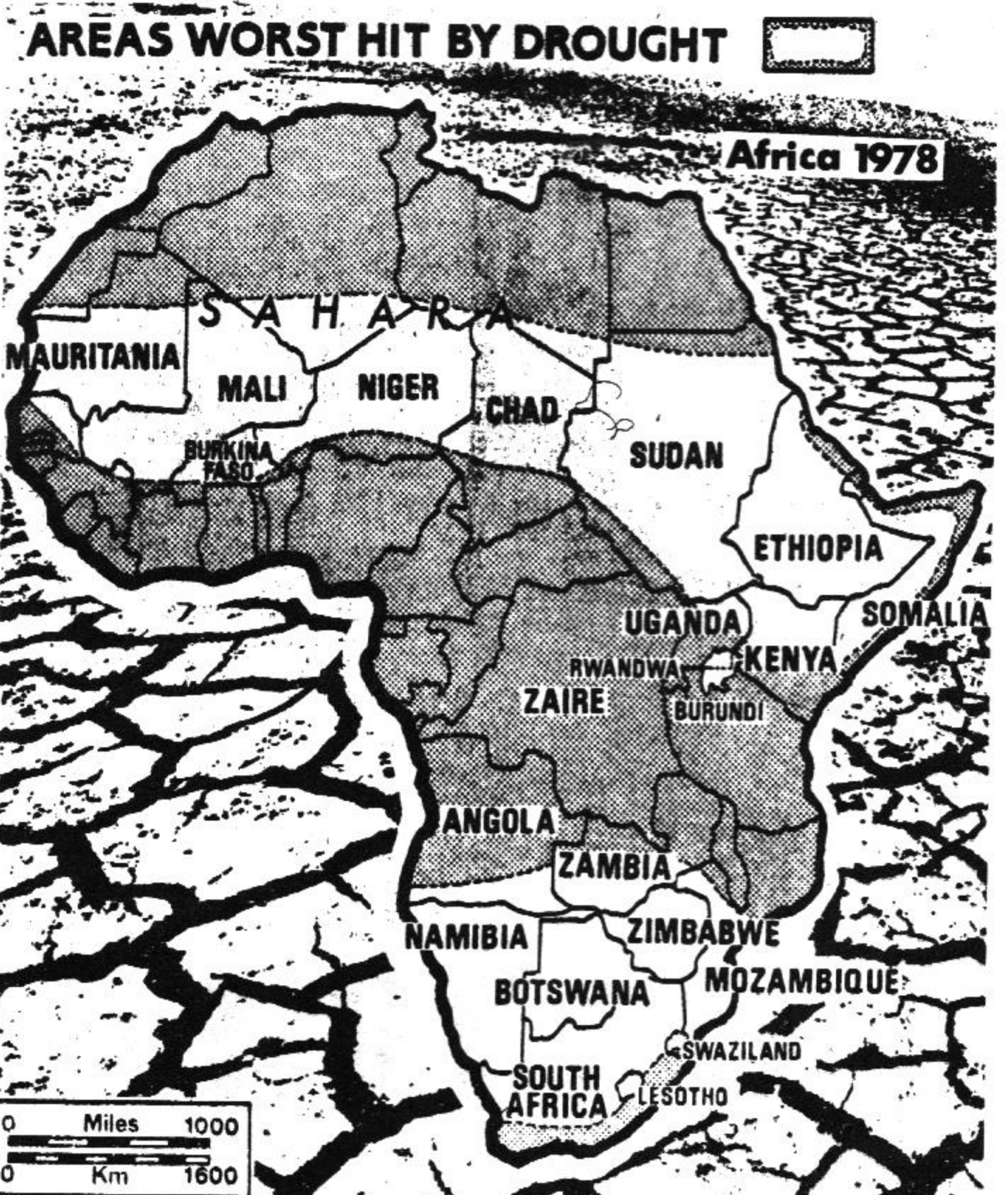
APRIL, 1986

Sport Aid: Who runs the World?

On Sunday, May 25th over 20 million people world-wide took part in the so-called "Race Against Time" to raise money for African famine relief. It is not for communists to dwell on the good intentions or otherwise of those taking part but to explain what it was all about. Whilst Geldof has claimed that his aim is to get "the politicians to do something" in actual fact this huge media event (in which not a few personal fortunes were made) is a total diversion of people's energies from the real cause of Africa's famines.

First of all Africa's famines, as the map below clearly shows, are much older than Live Aid. Hitherto they have received scant attention from the Western media. It was only when the famines reached a self-styled 'Marxist' controlled area in Ethiopia that the pictures of starving, fly-covered children began to reach our screens. Previously the 15 year old drought in Burkina Faso ("Where?" most people will say), Mali and Central Africa have received scarcely a mention. Now Bob Geldof has discovered, as he said in Hyde Park to the 250,000 waiting to run that "Africa needs us". The truth of the matter is that if there had been no 'us' (i.e. the northern, metropolitan imperialist powers of both Western and Eastern blocs) there would have been a lot less famine. Let us explain.

Since the 2nd World War all of Africa (except Namibia) has won political independence from



লালপটাকা

NOW AVAILABLE!

- 'লাল পটাকা' এখানে কোথা থেকে, যাকে কোথায়?
- রাজনৈতিক-সংস্কৃতিক আন্দোলনকে পুঁজির দুই হুক।
- বিশ্বের পাটের অভ্যুত্থানে আন্তর্জাতিক ব্রাহ্মণের যন্ত্রণা ও সংকট।
- 'নির্বাসিত' শ্রমিক সংকটের সমাধান করতে পারে না।
— কামাল হোসেন, কলকাতা, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ।

বিশ্বের পাটের অভ্যুত্থানে আন্তর্জাতিক ব্রাহ্মণের যন্ত্রণা ও সংকটের সমাধান করতে পারে না।

মুদ্রিত, ১৯৮৬
সংস্করণ-১
১৫ পৃষ্ঠা

FOR BENGALI READERS LAL PATAKA, THE Bengali language publication of the supporters of the International Bureau in India is now available. Write to: Lal Pataka, Dalmadla Road, Bishnupur 722122, Bankura, West Bengal, INDIA for rates.

An Early Spring in Scandinavia

A year ago, in Workers Voice 22 we wrote an article on the mass strikes in Denmark which had taken place throughout the Spring of 1985. We reported how, in a country of just 5 million people, over 300,000 workers came out on strike at the end of March, closing schools, hospitals and Post Offices. How bus services and ferries came to a standstill and how airports ceased to operate. How the unions had great difficulty in gaining control of the strike wave and how it wasn't until mid-April that they managed to come to the rescue of the Danish ruling class. How the lack of experience of the Danish working class and the lack of any revolutionary force there allowed the masses to hand over control of their struggle to the agents of reconciliation: the unions. After listing details of the events which took place we wrote:

"Such are the bare facts of the matter but they don't tell the full story which reveals how the inexorable advance of the capitalist crisis is provoking greater and more militant responses from workers everywhere."

A year on we can update the story. If anybody thought that Denmark '85 was a flash in the pan events in Scandinavia '86 were soon to prove them wrong. Denmark itself has moved backstage for the time being (largely due to a two year wage deal imposed by the unions in 1985) whilst Norway, Sweden and Finland have all moved into the spotlight in '86.

NORWAY: In Norway the worst labour disputes for 55 years have rocked the country in 1986. Class struggle affecting workers in clothing, construction, engineering, chemical, hotel and restaurant sectors has seriously worried the ruling class. All production of the oil rigs came to a halt in early April when 675 workers demanded 28% wage increases. The Norwegian state lost £8 million every day in lost revenue from oil production. By mid-April the disputes on the mainland were 'settled' (for the time being) but the oil workers' dispute raged on until 28th April.

SWEDEN: Late last year thousands of state-enrolled child day-care workers went on strike. They organised their struggle themselves, bypassing the unions and at a huge demonstration in Stockholm they carried banners reading, "The Unions are Our Death" and others with similar sentiments. At Borlänge in Koppaberg County a month-long strike of cleaning women, again going beyond the unions, with mass assemblies organised by the workers themselves, showed the anger and potential of the Scandinavian working class. Here too, however, it was only a matter of time before the unions

gained control of the action. Here too, as in Denmark, the inexperience of the working class and the non-existence of an independent party of the proletariat contributed to the isolation and eventual defeat.

FINLAND: Finland too has been very badly affected by strikes centred around public sector workers in Helsinki. The strike of civil servants which started on the 3rd April escalated by the 17th beyond Helsinki. By mid-April there was no train service connecting the capital to the rest of the country, no teaching in the universities, hardly any air services (international services to Finland were re-directed to Turku and Tampere), no postal service inside or to and from Finland. Cargo was piling up at the docks and no customs offices were manned. By mid-May unions representing 40,000 food workers accepted an eleventh hour settlement and called off planned strike action. Meanwhile, however, 10,000 building workers and 12,000 power supply workers had decided to step up stoppages. 17,000 electricians remain on strike at the time of writing.

THE UNIONS AS MANAGEMENT

The working class in Scandinavia faces a particularly competent bourgeoisie. The anti-working class nature of trades unions is well understood by the ruling class. Membership of a trade union is actively and often economically encouraged. Not having been a member of a trade union in a previous job often means not getting another job. The Social Democrats in Sweden, in power since 1931 (apart from 1976-82), have a dominating influence in all spheres of life. From a politically compliant civil service to an obedient mass media, from a Social Democrat-influenced adult education programme to a deeply integrated trades union apparatus.

Comments such as those offered by Ron Todd (General Secretary of the T&GWU) on the eve of the Scottish TUC Conference "If you want to see a Labour Government in power ... there has to be a form of discipline exercised by us. It's not going to be all grabs for the first two years." have been voiced for decades in Scandinavia. The only difference being that LO (the Swedish TUC) would not bother with the two years caveat. There it is taken as read that the unions and the government are on the same side and must therefore support each other. It is only the militancy of the working class that occasionally forces the unions to adopt a more radical sounding language.

Two important pieces of legislation implemented by the Social Democrats in the last ten years

underline the intelligence of the Swedish bourgeoisie. The law on joint decision making (Medbestämmandelagen) introduced in June 1976 was a successful attempt to bring the unions more into the decision making processes previously largely confined to company board rooms and ministerial office. The net result was a message driven down the workers' throats that "this is your company, you control it so it's in your own self-interest to moderate your wage claims and refrain from class struggle". The Liberals and Conservatives were ecstatic and supported the Social Democrats to a man. Ever since 1969/70 and the miners' strike which marked the re-awakening of the Swedish working class it was the task of the bourgeoisie to discover the best method of smothering the class struggle. For a while it appeared they had found the answer.

Upon their return to power in 1982 the Social Democrats introduced a similar piece of legislation on wage earner funds (Löntagarfonder). Here a percentage of company profits plus a tax on wages would go into various funds to be used for investment but "democratically controlled" by elected fund bureaucrats from the trades unions, working closely with managers of industry. It was the same message to the working class. The success of Swedish capitalism and the success of 'your' company is equal to your own self-interest. Don't rock the boat!

The image portrayed is consensus, rationality, national unity and a democratic decision making process. In truth it's all a myth. As the impact of the world crisis of capitalism begins to visit even these outposts of social peace these myths become all the more difficult to uphold. The slogan "The Unions are Our Death" is a welcome sign that very slowly the working class is being forced to confront these myths and to expose them for what they are. But the bourgeoisie is forever vigilant. The assassination of the Swedish Premier, Olof Palme, in March this year was a godsend for the ruling class. A time of national unity. Let's pull together. These were the clarion calls of the bourgeoisie. Some strikes were in fact called off by the unions, "out of respect" for Palme and Social Democracy. The contribution from the ruling class was redundancy notices in excess of 2,000 affecting workers at IM Ericssons electrical engineering and telecommunications, the mines at Stora Kopparberg and at Kockmus AB shipbuilding and marine equipment works. All this immediately following the death of Herr Palme. More recently PTK, the large white-collar union, is trying every trick in the book to head off a strike

Continued on p.7

European imperialism. But this is not the same thing as real independence. When the Europeans pulled out they left behind an elite educated in Paris or Oxford who presided over artificial creations posing as national states. Imbued with the ideology of development these countries sought to copy the models of the advanced countries, either by turning over the country's resources to Western multi-nationals or by copying the state capitalist model of Russia in an effort to "plan" development. In either case the same result has followed. The local bourgeoisies, faced with competition from their neighbours, have encouraged the break up of subsistence farming with its traditional techniques of leaving land fallow, by offering grants for those growing cash crops (like ground nuts, cocoa, etc) needed in the northern hemisphere. Capitalist agriculture was thus introduced and the African villagers became increasingly dependent on the money economy to buy the food that they were no longer growing for their own consumption. However, capitalist agriculture demands capital for fertiliser, for transport facilities, etc. and with the onset of the world capitalist crisis the commodity prices for Africa's cash crops collapsed. The loans from both Western Banks and East European governments now had to be supplemented by further short term loans, laughingly called 'aid' but which carried a higher interest rate alongside the shorter repayment terms, as well as usually being linked to purchase of the 'aid' countries exports. As a cure it is a bit like giving whisky to an alcoholic. And with no money for fertiliser the land becomes exhausted so that a national disaster (which Africa has faced scores of times in its history) becomes a major and irreversible ecological disaster with

the further encroachment of the desert on the available land.



This is the real legacy of imperialism in not only Africa but Asia and Latin America. How little the Sports Aid organisers understand this can be seen in their calls for the creditor countries to wipe out all Africa's debt. But to do this would be to bring down the banking system (which has already had several casualties in Europe and America) with unthinkable consequences for capitalists. However, not all Sports Aid supporters were so naive as to think that capitalism would act in anything but an imperialist way. Commenting on the May 25th "Race Against Time", BBC athletics commentator, Ron Pickering, announced to the gaping millions, "This is when we put market forces to their best possible use". A thought echoed a few days later by US Secretary of State, George Schultz, in the UN debate on Africa. He blamed the problems of Africa on the Africans themselves, not because they had welcomed too many loans, but because they had been too restrictive on 'free enterprise', "...they should have let more US capital into Africa". In fact the 'Live Aid', 'Band Aid',

'Sports Aid' spectacles all consist of a modern form of televised Victorian charity. The poor are either poor naturally or as a result of their own folly and it's up to the rich to give them a pittance to keep them alive. Of the real question, "What causes the poverty?" there is not even a whisper.

"It is easy to understand the desire of so-called 'society' to come to the assistance of the starving, to ameliorate their lot. This 'society' is itself part of the bourgeois order. The famine threatens to create serious disturbances and possibly the destruction of the entire bourgeois order. Hence the efforts of the well-to-do to mitigate the effects of the famine are quite natural. Psychologically this talk of feeding the starving is nothing but an expression of the saccharine sweet sentimentality so characteristic of our intelligentsia." [Lenin on the Russian famine of 1891-2]

Workers of the metropolises can do something for the starving of the 'Third World', not in the immediate sense of charitable self-gratification of the charity organisers. They have a much bigger task. They have to destroy the system of exploitation which has led to the looting of the southern hemisphere. This does not require a spirit of Christian self-denial but a determination not to be fobbed off in the pursuit of their own interests by capitalist arguments about 'austerity', the 'national interest', etc. In doing this they will be entering a political struggle which will ultimately lead to the destruction of capitalism itself. Only when workers "run the world" will the evils of imperialism be banished.

NUCLEAR RUSSIAN

The precarious nature of human existence under capitalism was highlighted by the accident at the nuclear power station at Chernobyl. An explosion - a fairly minor one initially - led to the release of a radioactive cloud which spread over most of Europe, leading to a ban in many areas on the consumption of milk, rain water and leaf vegetables for several days. In addition the potentially much more dangerous "melt-down" of the reactor, with catastrophic effects, was narrowly avoided. At the time of writing at least 23 people have been killed, with the likelihood of several hundred further deaths in Europe over the next few years, and some 200 or more injured. Though leading to many less immediate deaths than many other industrial accidents, notably Seveso in Italy and Bhopal in India, the impact of Chernobyl was much greater on popular consciousness because of the political importance of, and hazards of, nuclear power.

The reaction of western imperialist governments and media to the disaster was predictable. The new-style government of Gorbachev has been scoring several propaganda victories recently in the run up to the arms limitation talks at Geneva (nuclear test freeze, etc.) The west was able to use the events at Chernobyl to renew the attack against the "evil Empire", by portraying its rulers as apparently callous towards the misfortunes of its own population in the aftermath of the explosion. The hypocrisy in this is evident, when we consider the near melt down that happened in the USA at the Three Mile Island reactor, when, by a miracle, no one was killed. And closer at home we have the disaster at Windscale, now Sellafield, in 1957, which resulted in 35 fatalities, and the report on which was not published in our "democratic" society, "on security grounds".

The opportunity to make some economic gain was also too good to miss. The hard pressed agricultural sector of the EEC has been suffering for some time with COMECON produce being dumped at low prices within its boundaries, and all produce from the Eastern bloc was banned. The absurdity of this is clear, when it is considered that the Nordic countries experienced higher radiation levels than Bulgaria or Roumania, and Austria in the heart of E. Europe, was excluded. As if fall out respected the political divisions of imperialism! But the psychosis whipped up proved to be counter-productive, as it was revealed that instead of simply being a stick to beat the Russians with, it was leading to a widespread fear of nuclear power in general. At this point it was suggested that Chernobyl proved the inferiority of Russian technology to that of the west, and such accidents could not happen here. In fact, though the reactor at Chernobyl is of a different design from those in the west, there has never been any suggestion from the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) that it is any less "safe" than its competitors. And the fiasco of NASA's recent Challenger rocket does not lead to unbounded faith in western technology. "Chernobyl is everywhere" as slogans which appeared in west Germany correctly said.

NUCLEAR POWER AND RUSSIA'S ECONOMY

Whatever the results of the inquiry into the cause of the accident at Chernobyl, one thing is certain: it will not cause the Russians to reverse their introduction of further nuclear power stations. It may seem incredible that the country with the world's largest reserves of coal, gas and oil, should play Russian roulette with nuclear power. The reasons why it does are central to the accumulation problems of Russian state capitalism. Russia imports large quantities of technology from eastern Europe, and from the west, to re-equip and modernise its industrial base. To pay for this its resources are limited; agricultural exports and the dumping of consumer goods, like cars, go some of the way to meeting the bill. But the bulk of its hard currency foreign exchange is gained from energy exports; oil and gas between them count for over 70% of exports

to the western bloc, for which the new pipeline from Siberia to western Europe was built. Nuclear power, now producing 20% of Russia's power, and scheduled to rise still further, fills the domestic energy gap. To halt its nuclear programme would lead Russia to switch oil and gas to domestic consumption, and to a drastic loss of export earnings. This in turn would seriously undermine its ability to keep pace technologically and militarily with western imperialism.

The other country to whom nuclear power is as vital is Britain, the sick man of western Europe. It is only by its export of oil and gas that Britain is now able to stay solvent, so catastrophically has its manufacturing position declined.

THE NATURE OF NUCLEAR POWER

For communists, nuclear power is another aspect of the barbarity of capitalism in its pursuit of profit, another threat, like acid rain or the destruction of the ozone layer, to life on the planet. Nuclear research and plant was originally directed towards military purposes, and Windscale and Chernobyl itself, built as sources of plutonium, which is essential in the manufacture of nuclear weapons. Plutonium is produced in the "controlled explosion" that is the source of nuclear power. The utilisation of the vast amounts of energy released in this process was hailed as a wonderful example of the peaceful use of the secrets of the atom by its developers. Another aspect of nuclear power, once the vast initial outlays are made, is the low generating costs per unit of electricity - as much as 50% lower than coal or oil. Despite this, nuclear power was still a very peripheral source of energy till the capitalist crisis of the late 60s and early 70s; as late

as that period Britain produced only 2% of her power from nuclear plants, roughly the same as from hydro-electricity. The onset of the capitalist crisis increased the importance of nuclear power in many ways.

In the first place, after the crisis began to hit, the importance of cheapening the costs of raw materials, of which energy is one, assumed greater importance. This was given additional importance with the development of the so-called oil crisis of 1973, when the oil states quadrupled oil prices. The development of nuclear power was seen as one of the ways of breaking the monopoly position of the oil shieks, and pressurising them to reduce prices again. Of course, another was the development of other fuels; the revival of the coal industry in Britain for example. But this too created problems, in the form of the militancy of the miners, and their massive fights of 74 and 80-81. Nuclear power was partly seen as the answer here. Incidentally, there was none so enthusiastic for nuclear power as Tony Benn, when Energy Minister in the Labour government of 74-9. Many new nuclear stations were commissioned, and some built to be able to use a variety of fuels. Hunterston for example runs on either coal or nuclear fuel; during the recent miners' strike when it was blockaded, it increased nuclear generation.

The result of this has been a huge expansion in Europe's nuclear industry in the last 10-15 years. Britain, Italy and Germany all now generate about 20% of their power from nuclear sources, and western Europe, with 210 plants, has over half the world's nuclear power plants. The headlong dash into nuclear power is, then, the result of the capitalist crisis, and the interplay of its various component parts.





ROULETTE

AN ENERGY CRISIS?

There is no such thing as "an energy crisis", any more than there is a "food crisis", there is only a crisis of capitalism. Even with its inefficient agriculture, capitalism produces enough to feed the world, but dumps "surplus" in the sea, or stockpiles in order to maintain prices and profits. Similarly, even at present levels of consumption, there is enough oil to last the world for several hundred years, and coal for even longer, not to mention natural gas, hydro-electric power etc. And this is at present levels of consumption, not taking into account the vast amounts of energy wasted by capitalism in military and non productive activities.

It is true that these fuels will not last for ever, even though more deposits will be found in future. But the time allowed by existing deposits allows for the development of alternative sources of fuel, such as wave, wind and solar power. Capitalism's experts tell us that these are too expensive, but it isn't long ago they were telling us that it would be too expensive to take oil from the north sea, or from under the polar ice cap. These sources of power along with hydro-electricity which still has massive scope for expansion, also have the advantage of being non-polluting.

It is also true, as the advocates of nuclear power tell us, that present alternative methods of power generation are far from blameless. Oil and coal fired power stations are the main sources of acid rain, which has killed more people and caused more damage to the environment than nuclear power. But this begs the question. Acid rain can be eliminated. And as we argued previously, in "Marxism and Nature: the Acid Rain Issue", in Workers Voice No.23, when the costs of acid rain pollution exceed the extra profits gained from failing to eliminate it, capitalism will enforce measures to reduce the problem to "acceptable" levels, since the removal of acid rain emissions, though expensive, is technically quite feasible.

The problems with nuclear power, are on quite a different scale. Firstly there is the possibility of an explosion or melt down of the reactor, which would have the effect of a nuclear bomb, leading to devastation and huge amounts of radio-active fall out. A coal-fired power station could be destroyed, or a hydro dam burst, but the effects would be nowhere as disastrous in the short or long term.

The technocrats tell us that with failsafe and containment features, such dangers could be eliminated; they told us that Three Mile Island and Chernobyl could never happen. But for the sake of argument, let's concede this point. Even if it is true, nuclear plants produce huge amounts of radioactive waste, which has to be disposed of. So called low-level waste, radioactive material which has a short life-span, is often simply piped into the sea, leading to the so-called cancer clusters which surround nuclear plants. The OECD backed Convention on Dumping proposed that this waste should be collected and dumped in the deep Pacific and Atlantic oceans; the effect of this on the food chain needs little elaboration. But this is not the main problem.

The so called high level nuclear wastes are a problem which, except from shooting them into space, the nuclearists have no solution. At the moment these are stored in cooling ponds, until they can be combined into manageable substances, and after several decades of cooling, buried. Enormous dangers of leakage exist at all stages, and even when buried, from earthquakes or even minor earth movements. We don't want to turn this into a technical treatise, but the problems of dismantling a spent reactor are not likely to be simple, and no way of disposing of the waste from uranium mining has been found,

"It was recently estimated that the

USA alone possesses some 100 million cubic metres of unprotected cappings (waste) and that by the year 2000 Canada will have 300 million tons of it."

("Nuclear Waste" in World View, 1985)

Some of these waste radioactive materials are lethal for 2500 years. None of these problems exist with alternative forms of power generation.

What will capitalism do? As always, it will operate on the basis of profit. Nuclear power was expanded for reasons of profit, but now its economic advantages are being eroded. On the one hand, the monopoly power of the oil shieks has been broken, and the price of oil at the pipeline fallen by half; it is unlikely to rise to the levels of 1973-83 gain. On the other hand, the recent set backs, even before Chernobyl, mean that construction costs of nuclear plants have risen, and the problems of waste disposal are now assuming mega million financial dimensions.

While it is unlikely that capitalism will scrap nuclear power, at least until the occurrence of a few disasters that will make Chernobyl look insignificant, it is unlikely that the world wide rush into nuclear power will continue.

COMMUNISTS AND NUCLEAR POWER

Communists are totally opposed to the idea that there will be a role for nuclear power in the society of the future, which will eliminate many of the present, wasteful, uses of energy, and develop alternative sources of power to the full. In the peripheral regions especially, solar power will have a great role to play. Even if these forms of power require more cost in human labour, communism will be willing to pay the price.

But this perspective does not mean that we can have any common cause with today's anti-nuclear movement. Here we can do no better than to repeat what we have already said about the ecological manifestation of the marginalist critique of capitalism.

"The Marxist critique of capitalism centres on its fundamental contradiction, that is its inability to overcome its economic crises, except by means which ensure that the next crisis is even deeper. It further shows that the only way out of these crises is the working class struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. The petty-bourgeois or "utopian" critique of capitalism on the other hand concentrates on the secondary manifestations of capitalism's basic contradiction, takes them as primary, and argues that by challenging these, capitalism can be overthrown. Thus the petty-bourgeoisie marginalises the anti-capitalist struggle from the class front to the areas of sexuality, disarmament, racialism and environmental issues...

Communists argue that there is no way that capitalism can be forced, or reformed into reducing pollution to a socially acceptable level. (But) against the ecologists, Marxists also argue that capitalism will not destroy the planet either. Once the problems of pollution are perceived capitalism, through its state, will enforce measures on the anarchy of competing capitalists to keep the problem within acceptable limits (acceptable for capitalism that is, not for humanity)...

Environmental catastrophe is not the real crisis of capitalism, nor are the ecologists its real critics; its real crisis lies in its inability to pro-

duce profitably, and its real enemy, which it attacks as a consequence, is the working class." ("Marxism and Nature" W.V. 23 p.4,5.)

But this does not mean that there is absolutely nothing to be done at the moment. When seamen from many countries refuse to carry out the dumping of nuclear waste in the sea, we give them our support, and introduce a communist perspective into their actions. Similarly, the demand by power station workers for their nuclear plants to be converted to conventional fuels for safety reasons, is one we endorse, just as we endorse their struggle to maintain their wages against the effects of inflation. But we never sieze the wrong end of the stick, and argue that such struggles, without a communist revolution, can remove the horrors of the capitalist domination of our planet. Only in a communist society will nuclear power become a barbaric footnote in the history of technology.

75 pence

REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

23

Theoretical Journal of the Communist Workers Organisation

Plus - Tertiarisation : A Contemporary Myth

Now Out

SUBSCRIBE

A year's subscription to Workers Voice is £3 (nine issues) or £4 for those from abroad (to cover postage).

A combined subscription for Workers Voice and Communist Review (central organ of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party) is £5 (UK) or £6 (abroad).

If you sympathise with the work of the CWO why not take out a supporters subscription of £10? Please make cheques and international money orders payable to "CWO" only.

BM BOX CWO, LONDON WC1 3XX.

CWO, P.O. BOX 145, Head Post Office, GLASGOW G2 1AA.

France: Elections Change Nothing

The following article is translated from *Revue Communiste*, the French journal of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party, but its content will appear very familiar to British workers. Not only does it give us a reminder that it was the Labour Government of 1974-9 which originally started the austerity policies carried on by the Thatcher government but it also shows that the capitalist crisis is forcing the ruling class in every country to opt for the "team" which can best guarantee the imposition of attacks on the working class. Whether it is a government of the Left or the Right means little to the working class when the only difference is a matter of rhetoric.

In May 1981, following the coming to power of the Socialist and Communist Parties, we wrote "The more things change, the more they remain the same". We can repeat this today without fear of contradiction. This is not because we are clairvoyant but because the Marxist method of analysis which we use is the only method capable of giving a correct interpretation of reality in its process of becoming, of identifying the social forces involved and the irreconcilable antagonisms which divide them; and of understanding the direction of their movement, in terms of both immediate tendencies and historic perspectives.

More concretely, we take the opportunity of this recent mini-upheaval amongst the powers-that-be to proceed to an examination of the achievements of five years of Left Government: both in relation to the generous promises formulated during the election campaign of 1981, and in relation to the behaviour of this same left-wing which is now united in the ranks of the opposition, vis-a-vis the working class and the struggles that will develop. For there can be no doubt that the Socialist Party - following the trail trodden by the Communist Party since summer 1984 - will attempt to use the workers' discontent to clear itself of its own past crimes.

FROM THE STATE OF GRACE TO THE STATE OF AUSTERITY

Many still remember the extraordinary jubilation which accompanied the Left's coming to power. Leftists brought out the red flags and placards and sang songs of revolution. According to some people here, France had not known such an atmosphere since the "Liberation". It was as though an entire country were emerging from a long period of lethargy to make an important rendez-vous with history. Some enthusiasts etched comparisons with the Popular Front of the 1930's while others saw the same spirit of the "great" Jaurès invigorating a population which had languished under the cudgel of a power-hungry right-wing government.

However, once the electoral incense had dispersed, the "Socialist" government had to return to the realities of the world below, which bears, alas, no relation to the rose-fragrant nirvana shimmering from the election posters ... Under the pretext of the disastrous heritage left by the Right, Mauroy's 'Socialist' government brought in the first austerity measures and brutally killed the illusions caused by the guarded increase in family allowances in the first days of the inauguration. Just like their predecessors, with the same calculating cynicism, the Socialist and Communist ministers made use of the summer holidays to raise the prices of public

services, transport and taxes. Rents and electricity went up 15%, gas went up by 17%, rail fares by 10% ... And this was only a foretaste, for a little while later came the four-month wage freeze. In the name of fighting inflation, the Left applied the ancient formula of making the workers pay for the problems of the capitalist system of exploitation in maintaining a level of profit compatible with its need to develop the economy: intensified exploitation, impoverishment of the working class by putting pressure on wages, social assistance and unemployment benefits ... It was already a far cry from candidate Mitterand's 110 proposals, when it had been a question of "reducing unemployment" of "changing society" and carrying out "fair policies"...

In fact an examination of the balance sheet of the policies pursued between 1981 and 1986 easily reveals the gap between the promises and the actuality, whatever the Socialist Party says when it boasts of having carried out 90% of its commitments. On all the basic issues the choices made have been in complete agreement with the fundamental requirements of capitalism in crisis. Let the reader judge.

THE QUESTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Nobody has forgotten that the Left proposed reducing unemployment by expanding popular consumption (which was to stir the sleeping economy to life) and by creating jobs for young people. In fact, despite the many expedients used to camouflage the statistics, unemployment is still increasing. Thus unemployed people who have reached the end of their official entitlements are no longer

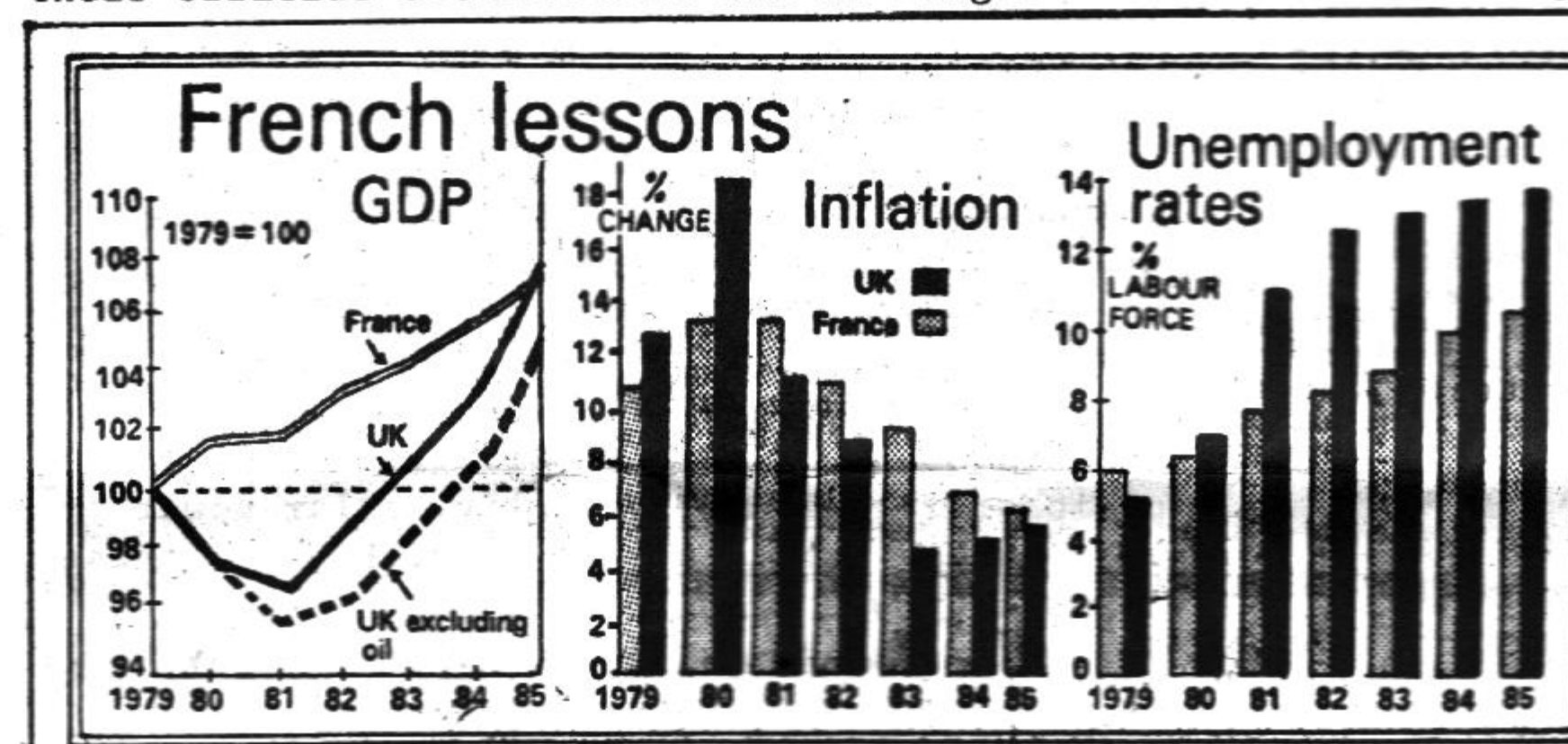
there are the bailiffs who appear to seize from families who can no longer pay off debts contracted before they became unemployed.

This is perhaps what the Socialist Party means by "peaceful compulsion". But the force of capitalism is anything but that: from the landlords who throw workers onto the streets through the "socialist" police who put down strikes and hunt down immigrants, through the bailiffs and the judges who condemn and imprison, to the new priests like Coluche who make religious efforts to bring back a smile to the faces of those left behind by the new growth.

UNCERTAINTY AND FLEXIBILITY OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES

This should not delude anyone into thinking that workers in employment are rolling in abundance. Wages have fallen back in relation to prices and the derisory increases in the minimum wage are a long way from covering increases in the cost of living over these last few years. The so-called "politics of truth" on the wages front by the Socialist and Communist Parties has essentially consisted in making everyone tighten their belts by submitting wages to the demands of an economy in trouble.

We have already shown that it was precisely when the Socialist Party/Communist Party entente was at its height - with Communist ministers participating in the drawing up and application of anti-worker measures - that the wages freeze was imposed and that this in itself was nothing other than a step towards the definitive de-indexation of wages in relation to prices.



This table (from the *Guardian*, Nov. 28th, 1985) is supposed to show how successful the French Socialist government has been. In fact it shows a remarkable parallel with the record of the British Tories

counted. It is estimated that more than 30% of unemployed people have been struck off the official lists and are without an income. But that's not all. The Left has terminated the 90% earnings related scheme which several years ago was applicable in cases of dismissal for economic reasons, and it has completely revised the benefits system in such a way that the unemployed receive less money on the fallacious pretext of a derisory prolongation of their "rights". More than 60% of registered unemployed receive less than 2,250F (£220) per month.

But this is not all. In order to reduce the official figures even more, the Left has systematically resorted to spurious training schemes for the young unemployed who, in return for wages which are often even lower than unemployment benefit, have permitted the removal of more than 400,000 young people from the official lists, allowing them to be temporarily included amongst those working. Let us point out that it was a "Communist" minister who developed the training schemes.

There are probably now more than 3,500,000 people unemployed and the increasing poverty generated by this phenomenon is becoming an ever more urgent issue... Just as Reagan's America has its soup kitchens, this year Mitterand's France has seen the appearance of charity restaurants and the re-emergence of charitable associations based on bourgeois moralism and devoted to the cause of the poor and compassion for the "afflicted". Likewise, families affected by unemployment are no longer able to pay rent and electricity bills. Thus, quite recently, the electricity board announced it has had to send out more than 3 million reminder letters for unpaid bills. The same service has cut off electricity in more than 500,000 homes, where the occupants have failed to pay bills for months. The same is happening with the authorities responsible for council housing in the big towns, which are initiating proceedings against recalcitrant tenants. And here again

In all firms, nationalised or not, rationalisation of production has meant lay-offs and an increased workload for those remaining in work. The redundancies have been introduced in the same spirit of rationalisation of the productive apparatus and they have been accompanied by the same attenuating measures as produced by the Right: assistance in the repatriation of immigrants, bonuses for voluntary departures and phantom retraining courses, all of which have no other aim but to fragment the reactions of the laid-off workers to their common problem. Bit by bit, different sections experience the trimming-down of "excess" manpower and on each occasion that the workers have attempted to respond collectively to these attacks, the forces of order have been sent out en masse to rapidly re-establish social peace. We will develop this point further a little later.

One of the major contributions of the politicians of the Left to the responsible management of the economic apparatus has been the institutionalisation of the precarious and uncertain nature of employment and wages. Full-time, secure employment is becoming more and more an exception, with the norm being increasingly temporary, part-time, itinerant and flexible-hour working. Likewise, wages have lost the few guarantees they had in order to be subjected to the demands of profitability and competition, to the point of appearing increasingly as a mere accessory factor. In a nutshell, workers should, according to the bourgeoisie, become accustomed to accepting things as they are: in a difficult economic situation they cannot have everything (a "good" job and a "good" wage); and if they want to keep their jobs they must make concessions on wages.

In order to sanction this state of affairs at the judicial level, two Bills were patiently elaborated under the Left parliament. If they have been wisely left to lie in the ministers' drawers all through the electoral campaign, they will undoubtedly re-emerge in

OPEN MEETINGS

BRISTOL: "The Revolutionary Alternative, An Introduction to the Communist Workers Organisation" Saturday, June 7th: 7.30 p.m. The Crown, Old Market (Lawfords Gate)

LEEDS: "Towards a Revolutionary Party, What the CWO Stands For" Wednesday, June 18th: 8.00 p.m. Trades Club, Savile Mount, Leeds 7.



» coming weeks and come into effect with the symbolic seal of parliament.

The first of these Bills concerns the flexibility of working hours and is already applied by many managers who have not waited for any special legislation. It is no new thing for the capitalists to dispose of labour power just as they please. Nevertheless, the law on flexibility will allow the attack to move on to a higher lever, in that it will end distinctions between remuneration of different working hours; it will also permit in certain cases the inclusion of bonuses in the basic wage, thus lowering the latter.

The other Bill concerns the suppression of administrative permission to make lay-offs, which never was intended to prevent lay-offs but only to retard them and spread them out a little. Throughout the last few months the applications for permission to dismiss workers have increased at such a rate that the relevant authorities complained about being unable to keep up. It was therefore necessary to find a more appropriate means to give carte blanche to employers to dispose instantly of any manpower judged excessive.

It must not be forgotten that it was the ministers of the Left who technically initiated these two anti-worker Bills, even if they pretend to oppose them when they come up before parliament.

THE AMPUTATION OF SOCIAL BENEFITS

In the name of the healthy management of social expenditure the Left proceeded to attack post-war social "gains". It was the "Communist" minister of Health, RALite, who opened the way to the dismantlement of the social structure which originated in May 1936 and was completed after the Liberation. In this way we have seen the introduction of a set hospital fee, which applies even to pensioners, and a 1% increase in national insurance contributions. In general workers have had to pay more to receive less (reduced reimbursement of hospital, dental and medical expenses) ... up to the point where it is necessary to contribute to an additional scheme if one wishes to be properly covered for medical expenses.

Thus, these men of the Left who flatter themselves on being concerned with social welfare have proved themselves to be just as merciless as the "retrograde" Right they never cease to denounce. And the mini-measures like the fifth week of paid leave or retirement at 60 (to name but two) will not be enough to make the memory of the common experience of the Socialist and Communist Parties in power less painful.

What good is the gift of an extra week's holiday when workers have not the means to go on holiday? It obviously means a week less at work (at least for those who did not already have five weeks) but when this must be spent in one's suburban flat, one is far from perceiving it as a historic conquest. Again, this is the type of measure that costs nothing and gives the workers a little time to catch their breath before returning to the onslaught of sacrifices and increased productivity. Historically, paid holidays have only been granted in order to keep the workforce in a state where it is capable of producing the maximum surplus value. Capitalism has only ever considered its subjects as commodities to be used according to its own requirements.

As for retirement at 60, of which we spoke in a previous issue, the least one can say is that it is far from arousing the enthusiasm of those who are retired. Proof lies in the fact that the bosses are increasingly introducing early retirement as a matter of course, as a disguised form of dismissal. This is because pensions are inadequate for basic needs. Many workers therefore see retirement, not as a means of enjoying what little capitalism has left them of their lives, but as an exacerbation of the privations endured during their working lives.

Here then is a synthesis of the achievements of the Left. They fall a long way short of the promises and a monster dose of cynicism is required to affirm today that these promises have been fulfilled. It's worth noting here that the Communist Party itself - when it left the government - considered, in the words of its General Secretary, that the work accomplished with its former partners had been "positive on the whole". In a speech at the beginning of the election

An Early Spring in Scandinavia

Continued from p.3
of 18,000 workers whilst attempting to appear as radical as possible.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS

Throughout the 70's, as the international crisis of capitalism was becoming increasingly apparent and its effects were being felt more and more, West Germany and Scandinavia were being held up as examples of the economic miracle of capitalism. Low unemployment and low inflation in the countries, we were told, were proof that capitalism could work - providing it was managed properly. Poor old Britain, France and Italy were simply suffering from bad management, incompetent governments. Thus the world crisis of capitalism was explained away. In fact these countries had been borrowing heavily for years, simply postponing the worst effects of the crisis. In Sweden the cumulative effect has been an increase between 1977 and 1985 of the national debt from Skr 105bn (105 thousand million crowns) to Skr 432bn with interest now 21% of the Swedish budget. The total national debt is now twice the size of one year's total national income. Interest payment is the largest item in the state budget. Sweden cannot reduce the national debt but is forced to borrow yet more to pay off old debts. In September last year Mr Bengt Dennis, governor of the Swedish Central Bank, was calling for a substantial tightening of economic policy to deal with the growing deficit on the balance of payments current account. His calls for cuts in state spending came at the same time as Mr Lennart Ljung, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, was

campaign Mauroy (Minister of Austerity) recollected that it was only at the end of the war that the work of the Popular Front had really been appreciated and as a consequence a certain period of time must elapse before the work of the Left in power would be duly appreciated!

And it is precisely these individuals, quite content with the policies they themselves executed, who are now preparing to make themselves the spokesmen of the workers' interests now that they find themselves in opposition. They will combine their efforts, partly by blaming each other. All this is in order to deflect the questions and answers which will emerge in the minds of those who are to suffer the heavy weight of the crisis upon their shoulders tomorrow as well as yesterday. - A crisis which the bourgeoisie proves incapable of resolving.

The balance sheet we have drawn up demonstrates clearly that the Left is no different from the Right: both defend capitalism against the proletariat. Between May 1981 and May 1986 there was no change of policy, neither did the Socialist Party move to the right, as the Communist Party would have us believe in its ever more radical speeches. All that has happened is a change in the exploiters at the service of the continuation of the capitalist system. The fact that Socialist and Communist ministers put on a 'mater dolorosa' expression whenever they announce an anti-working class measure renders them no less culpable. As marxists we are interested only in facts and their connections: we leave it to the metaphysicians to distinguish between mistaken sincerity and deliberate duplicity.

Moreover, it is not because we are eternally cynical masters of derision that we consider it important to point out the profoundly anti-working class nature of the policies carried out first by the Socialist/Communist team and then by the Socialists alone. It is because we realise that the policies carried out by these parties are the authentic expression of what they stand for: they are counter-revolutionary forces whose history is based upon the defeat of revolutionary struggles in the past; a defeat in which they participated and which they reinforced on both practical and ideological levels.

Our balance sheet is incomplete without an examination of the ways in which Socialist and Communist supporters reacted each time the workers refused to bow down to the measures directly attacking their material conditions of existence. This is what we propose to do in the second part of this article which will appear in a future issue.

calling for a massive Skr 125bn increase in spending on defence by 1992.

A recent OECD report (see the Financial Times of 15.4.86) points out that across the Kattegat in Denmark the current account deficit has reached Dkr 28bn (£2.2bn) or 4.6% of GDP in 1985. A deficit level which is "clearly unsuitable", particularly considering the already high level of Denmark's foreign debt which is currently equal to 40% of GDP.

Across the Skaggerak in Norway only the oil had helped avert the worst aspects of the crisis. And this will run out in about 10 years' time. If oil prices remain at their present levels much longer the crisis in all its severity will visit Norway much sooner. Aware of all this, Norway is frantically trying to re-invest its oil revenues, the effect of which has contributed to the recent unrest there. It was in opposition to an emergency package of austerity measures of spending cuts and tax increases that led to the downfall of Prime Minister Kare Willoch's Conservative Government on the 30th April. The incoming Prime Minister, Mrs Gro Bruntlant, wasted not time after coming to power before her Labour Government devalued the krona by 12%. This move was forced on the new administration by the wave of speculation currently building up against the currency. More than Nkr 11bn flowed out of the country in 10 days up to 11th May. Foreign exchange reserves have shrunk by Nkr 51bn to Nkr 75bn since last November. The current account surplus of Nkr 26bn in 1985 is likely to become a Nkr 30bn deficit in 1986 and inflation is expected to rise to 10% next year. The bourgeoisie is bouncing from wall to wall in its attempts to avert an inevitable crisis.

THE FUTURE

Gradually the working class is being forced to face the harsh reality that "even Scandinavia" is suffering from the economic crisis. Gradually the working class is being forced to confront the questions of 'How to organise?' and 'How to struggle?' Unfortunately a gradual worsening of living standards in itself is not enough to bring the working class to a level of consciousness necessary to realise that abolition of the wages system and the overthrow of capitalism offer the only solution to mankind. Were it so simple the revolution would have come and gone years ago. Even in those countries in the very centre of the heartlands of capitalism, those most seriously affected by the onslaughts of capitalism, Britain and Italy, for example, sentiments such as "defend the unions" and "defend our industry" are taking a considerable amount of time to shrug off. It is therefore absolutely crucial that revolutionaries be acutely aware of the indispensable role of revolutionary organisations to develop a clear strategy and precise tactics in order to win an ever-increasing practical presence in the battles the working class will undergo before the question of the seizure of power is on the order of the day.

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.

WORKERS VOICE



Wapping A Victory for the Unions! A Defeat for the Workers.

The strike at Wapping has turned into a long drawn-out bitter dispute. Increasing police violence against pickets and the continuous harassment of residents shows how far the British state is prepared to go to protect bosses' profits. Wapping has been turned into a police state. The freedom of movement of residents is restricted by the police in moves reminiscent of the miners strike.

The workers sacked by Murdoch can take little consolation in the fact that they're not the only ones to be sacked by the thousands. Workers everywhere are under attack. In the past few months thousands of redundancies have been announced in the shipyards, in British Rail, and in the Cornish tin mines to give a few examples. In B.R. alone 7,650 jobs will go over the next 3 years. In the past 6 months 35,000 NCB miners have lost their jobs. The NCB didn't even bother to stick to the review procedure which suggested that some jobs be phased out gradually. Before next April another 20,000 miners will be on the dole.

The newspaper industry has been amongst the most savage in its attack on its workers. Last year Maxwell sacked a quarter of his workforce from the Mirror plant and sacked Mirror workers who refused to scab. He has similar plans for the Daily Record. The Express sacked 2,500 workers, and along with the Financial Times increased the week. The Guardian followed suit, issuing its workers with an ultimatum over manning. When the Daily Telegraph moves to Docklands in September it will cut its workforce and is trying to get a binding no-strike agreement over those left.

UNIONS' RESPONSE

Since these attacks on members of the same unions are happening at the same time, why haven't all printworkers been called out in support of the strikers at Wapping? Brenda Deans' weak argument that supporting Murdoch's rivals is the same as supporting the strike is rubbish. In fact it's the other way round. Whilst other printers continue to work, the printers at Wapping remain isolated, and Dean and Dubbins are doing their best to keep it so. The bosses have managed to pick off one section of the workforce after the other, and the NUJ, Sogat, the NGA and the AUEW have

been happy to go along with this, "settling" one dispute after the other without using the joint strike action to get the best bargain -ing power for their members. Fleet Street print unions have just formally accepted a 3% pay offer, while Sogat members at the Eric Bemrose plant in Liverpool (who print the News of the World colour magazine)



won't be called out to take strike action in support of the Wapping strikers.

It is obvious from all this that the first priority of the unions is not to protect their members but to protect themselves. Brenda Dean is very clear about that. On April 22nd, talking of Sogats decision not to purge its contempt of court she said: "We believe the union must be kept intact and survive with its democracy protected. At the same time we are not prepared to abandon our members". But when it came down to it, one month later, protecting union funds was more important than protecting union members, and the union's contempt was purged. Dean explained why. On 20 May she said: "In parts of the union we were facing the possible break up of the union", ie there weren't enough funds to keep the union bureaucracy going, and the ban on Murdoch's titles had to be lifted so that Sogat could get its cash back. The original aim of all trades union funds since the nineteenth century has been to support member members on strike. But rather than paying out strike pay Sogat preferred to squander £250,000 on stickers and glossy posters appealing to "the public" not to buy Murdoch's papers. This was doomed to failure from the start and the Sun sells over 1 million copies more than its nearest tabloid rival, the Mirror. It is no coincidence that Sogat purged its contempt just when a lack of funds had started to bite. Some officials had lost their union cars and there was some concern about whether Sogat would be able to finance its bi-annual general meeting in June.

All 4 unions have faithfully stuck to legal -ity all the way through the strike. They have played the game of the courts to the detriment of their members. They now have weekly meetings with the police to discuss ways of keeping down violence on the picket line so that Murdoch's scab lorries can get out with as little fuss as possible. Scotland Yard said that senior officers had had a "useful exchange of views" with senior officials on how to minimise violence and keep the picket under control.

Obviously Sogat would prefer to conduct the strike through the ballot box. Dean's claim of 20 May that "there will be one group deciding the outcome of this dispute and that will be the membership involved in this dispute through a ballot" was met with jeers and slow hand claps by 2,500 angry printers. Making workers vote in isolation from each other, surrounded by media pressure and domestic financial difficulties would be the best way to demoralise the strikers and end the dispute. The 4 unions are preparing for an end to the strike and have surrounded themselves with financial advisers. Originally this was to work out the viability of Murdoch's first offer of the Grays Inn Road plant to

print a newspaper "supporting the Labour Party" plus £15 million in redundancy/severance pay. Now that this insulting offer has not weakened the resolve of the pickets Murdoch has upped it to the plants, plus £50 million in severance pay. This is still a con since only 10% of those could be employed in any new, viable printing operation but it has been music to the ears of union bosses who have instantly called for a ballot on it, despite vociferous opposition from pickets. But Dean has already let us know which way she'd like the vote to go. Interviewed on Radio 4's 6 o'clock news, she emphasised that the printers "had now been on strike for 18 weeks", and that they should be allowed to decide "individually", "in the quietness of their own home" in a ballot. This is precisely what the Tebbit laws were designed to do - give the union leaders greater control over the struggle of the workers and prevent the extension of the struggle. Brenda Dean has personified this more clearly than any other union leader in the strike. It is a clear illustration of how the Labour Party/TUC wing of the ruling class work hand in glove with other sections of the ruling class against the workers. All the calls by Dean for "outsiders" (i.e. other workers) to stay away from Wapping have been echoed by the TUC and Labour Party who have called on workers to wage only token struggles for their livelihoods whilst waiting for a general election for a chance to elect Labour.

WORKERS' RESPONSE

It's hardly surprising, then, that the effective actions of the dispute have been taken by workers themselves without the unions. Miners, railway workers, and the strikers of Silentnight have all joined the picket line at Wapping, and French workers armed with crowbars stopped a lorry in France carrying British newspapers and seized the Times. The growing dissatisfaction with the unions has also given rise to a rank-and-file movement of Sogat and NGA members. These members produce "Picket", a newsheet which, as it says itself, is the only bulletin which has kept workers informed on picket line activity. "Picket" has been at the forefront of secondary picketting at TNT depots and at Gray's Inn Road and Bouverie Street. Most importantly it isn't hampered by the union's sectionalist outlook and welcomes solidarity action by other workers regardless of which union they belong to.

"Picket" correctly points out that "union leaders won't organise the ranks, the striker strikers will have to do it themselves" (Picket 9). But this is only half the story. Trades unions act against the interests of the working class not because of corrupt leaders, but because their role is one of negotiating as large a share of the profits as possible. But when profits are low, the share they can negotiate is reduced and in times of harsh recession they are forced to help cut back the workforce in order that the industry survives, so that they can survive with it. No industry means no unions, and when unions are faced with supporting their own position, they'd rather betray their members a thousand times over. This is the logic of unions today and sincere militants who look to the union structure to defend their jobs and living standards will always be beaten by this logic. The way forward for the printers is to organise their strike themselves outside of trades unionism altogether, through strike committees with revocable delegates. The alternative is to rely on the well paid union officials who are currently leading them to betrayal.

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