

## Ravenscraig Must Fight!

WORKERS OF RAVENSCRAIG!

With the announcement of the closure of the Ravenscraig strip mill, the destruction of the remains of the steel industry in Scotland has begun. The Tory government admits that by 1994 what remains of the Craig will be allowed to disappear off the map.

This has been the reward for your ever increasing productivity (that means exploitation) since the 1980 strike. This is the reward for working during the miners' strike, believing Thatcher's promise that she would "never forget" the Ravenscraig workers' refusal to help the miners. If you lick the arses of the bosses and government, you get shat on.

BUT HOW DO WE FIGHT?

The lessons of all the struggles of the 1980's are the same. No one section of the working class, fighting on its own, can defeat the ruling class and its plans for unemployment. Whether we look at the steel strike of 1980, the miners' strike of 1984-5, or the Wapping printworkers' struggle of 1987, it is no different. TOGETHER these workers could have taken on the government and its police, prevented scabbing, and won. Individually they were doomed, and paid the lesson. United we stand, divided we fall is as true today as it was a century ago.

And uniting the class struggle means going outside of and beyond any struggle the trades unions are willing to wage. Remember that just as Sirs of the ISTC refused to call on other workers to support the steelworkers in 1980, he fought tooth and nail to keep the steelworkers out of the miners' strike.

And all the talk of a new buyer for Ravenscraig is a ploy, to get you to sit around and behave, until it is too late. Workers at Caterpillar, Gartcosh and elsewhere wasted their time looking for a new capitalist to exploit them, instead of trying to spread their struggle to the rest of the working class.

Meanwhile, all sorts of riff raff in the "All Scotland Campaign", M.P.'s, churchmen, councillors and others will make a lot of noise "on your behalf", trying to persuade British Steel to "change its mind". But in the words of the "Internationale",

"No saviours from on high will deliver us".

The fight of the class must be a fight BY the class.

WHICH MEANS?

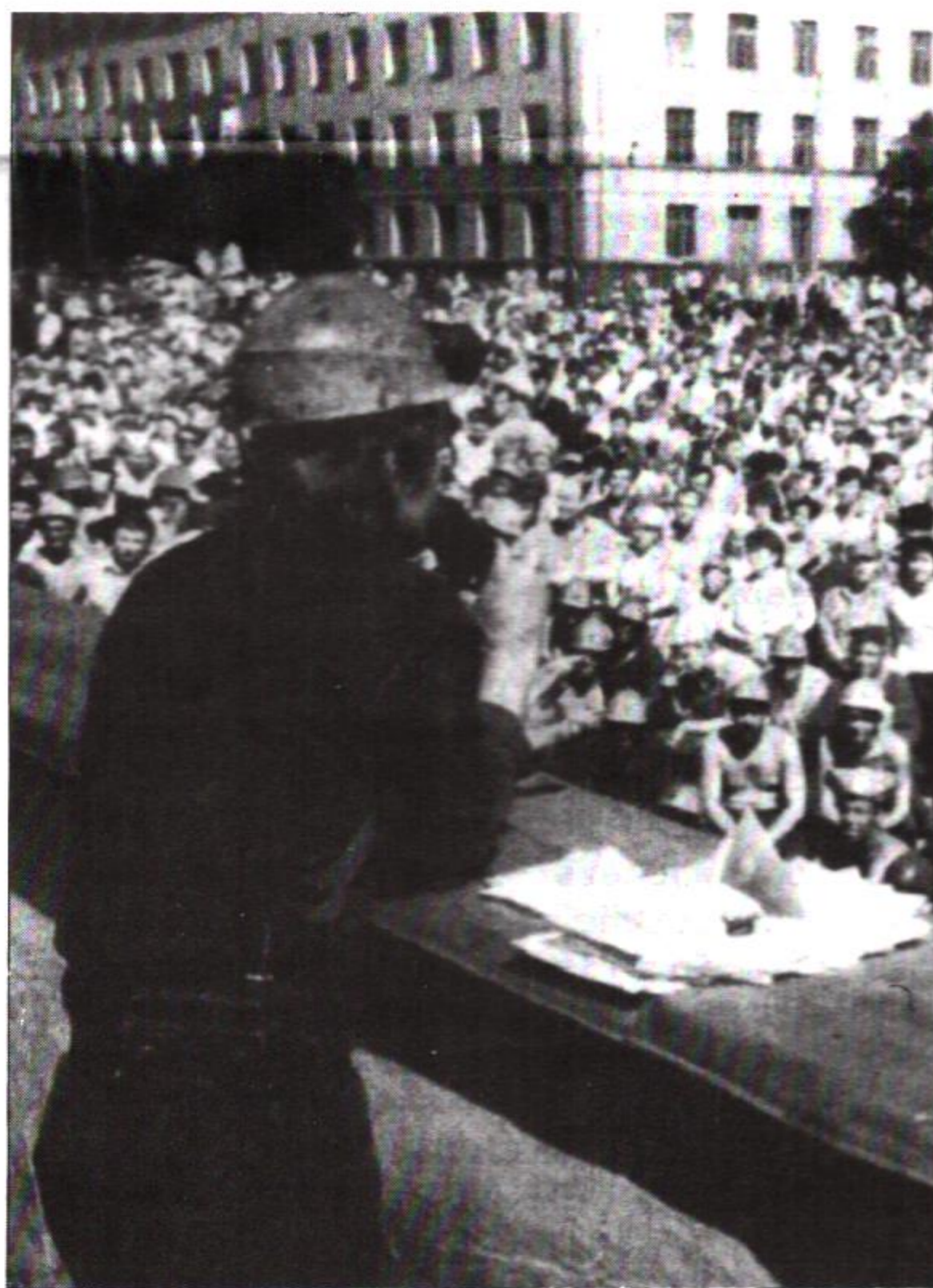
A fight to the death: if you've no guts for it, pack it in now.

In the first place there must be an immediate shutdown of the steel industry in Scotland, and attempts to spread the strike to the rest of the industry, and companies outside British Steel.

# Against Nationalism Against Capitalist Democracy For Workers Internationalism!

The end of the world is not nigh nor is the end of capitalism (unfortunately) yet in sight. But the turmoil of the last few months in Eastern Europe have been very useful to the ruling class in the West as a diversion hiding the increasing disintegration of the entire global capitalist economy. Wherever you look the symptoms of the chaos caused by the crisis are apparent.

In Ethiopia famine threatens the lives of a million people as a result of wars nurtured by the capitalist and imperialist powers. In Kashmir "the world's largest democracy" has unleashed its troops in the biggest wave of state-sponsored terrorism to be found anywhere. Massacres, rapes and looting are daily occurrences. Throughout the periphery of the capitalist system the ranks of the hungry, the unemployed and the totally destitute are daily growing. Governments



Class struggle - the only way forward for workers

like that of Collor in Brazil are imposing such austerity programmes that life has become barely tolerable for millions of workers and semi-proletarians. And we say nothing here about Lebanon, Gaza, Burma, Cambodia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mozambique...

But the periphery of capitalism is nearer than we in the industrialised West sometimes think. Even in rich Europe we are seeing new social problems arise to compound old ones. This can be particularly seen in Italy at the moment. Here there has been a rapid growth of immigration from the increasingly desperate economic situation of the countries of North Africa. And suddenly Italy too is experiencing the same kind of racism all too familiar in Britain and France as some sections of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie find a ready-made target for the problems of the capitalist crisis in Italy: with racist attacks on many African workers who either have a marginal existence or do the most menial and badly-paid work of society. Even wonderfully social democratic Sweden has been experiencing racist attacks

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The Poll Tax Struggle

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Rumania under Democracy

ICC and the Eastern Bloc

The Battle of the Boyne

Mad Cow Disease

against migrant workers who have fled the turmoil of Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Ethiopia.

When these recent refugees from the devastation caused by the capitalist crisis in what used to be called "the Third World" are added to existing capitalist problems - like the homelessness which has created a "cardboard city" in the heart of London or the poverty which has marginalised 20% of the population of the USA - we can see that the periphery's problems are already on the doorstep of the capitalist metropolises. But such poverty in itself does not lead to renewal of class consciousness. Instead it provokes an attitude of despair. This is the breeding ground for a bourgeois response like racism. But racism is only the ugliest and crudest of the ideologies that the present incipient barbarism of capitalism is producing. On a far more organised and global level the big battalions of the bourgeoisie are banging the drum of nationalism and democracy.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE EASTERN BLOC

Nationalism and the belief in the renewing power of democracy are most evident in the Eastern bloc. The disintegration of the Warsaw Pact has led to the collapse of the old Russian Empire itself. Even Gorbachev, who had hoped to lead the USSR to a new era is losing hope of holding the USSR together to act as an important part of a new imperialist alliance. Instead he is having to face the fact that economic restructuring is impossible in the middle of an economic crisis when there is no other course but massive frontal attacks on the working class. The question now is how the bourgeoisie of the so-called Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is going to convince the working class that more sacrifices are required.

One answer is the nationalist movement. And by this we don't just mean the Baltic and Caucasian republics but also within Russia itself. So decrepit has the economic crisis made the Russian Empire that even some of the Russian ruling class wants to abandon it! This not only underlines the severity of the economic crisis in the East but also that the local bourgeoisie have not been slow to find ideological baggage to win support. By

# B.S.E. Another Strain of Capitalist Madness

The sight of the Minister of Agriculture feeding his four year old child a beefburger in front of a crowd of press photographers could hardly have been reassuring to anyone seeking more scientific evidence that there is no risk to health from eating good old British beef. Even more disturbing were Mr Gummer's attempts to deny the existence of a problem by blaming vegetarians and the tabloid press for whipping-up public fears against the natural source of protein of the true Brit. Yet what the Minister cannot deny is that his Ministry has already seen fit to authorise the compulsory slaughter of 30,000 cattle with obvious signs of madness; that hitherto cattle have apparently not been susceptible to this bovine form of scrapie (a disease well-known in sheep for hundreds of years). When the Ministry has recognised the need to eliminate 30,000 cattle from the food chain we can be sure there is some basis for doubting the usual official phrases of there being no danger to health.

From the evidence so far it appears a likely possibility that this bovine form of brain disease has been transmitted via the food chain as a consequence of incorporating remains of infected sheep into cattle feed. If this turns out to be the case it will be a remarkable indictment of the complacency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries who blithely accepted the view that scrapie couldn't jump species. Another possible cause could be the relatively recent established practice of grinding up dead cows themselves as part of the ingredient of cattle cake. (Just as salmonella infected chickens were fed back to

battery litters thus universalising the disease.) Whatever the precise biological explanation, however, the more fundamental scientific reason for this latest outbreak of agricultural madness must be sought in the system which puts the ruthless pursuit of profit above anything else.

In the highly subsidised and protected agriculture of the capitalist metropolises tariff barriers are imposed on imported vegetable based proteins from the periphery. These could be used as a more natural and safer form of cattle fodder but of course are ruled out by farmers seeking to minimise their costs of production. As for the food manufacturers, equally concerned with maximising profits and nothing much else, they have developed techniques whereby the last ounce of tissue is literally scraped off the bones and included with offal for reconstitution into the cheapest meat products (tinned meat, burgers, etc.) As ever, it is the working class who run the highest risk, and not only from mad cow disease. BSE is only the latest example of the danger to health from capitalist farming practices and a food industry based on production for profit. It is the product of the same system which has nurtured salmonella in eggs, encouraged the use of carcinogenic pesticides on fruit, vegetables and flour, eroded the soil and polluted the water supply by the overuse of nitrates and other chemicals ... etc. etc. As we have said before,

"... the systematic poisoning of our food supply is not new and is no accident. It is the direct result of capitalist

farming and a food industry which put quantity and profit before quality and public health." (WV 46)

The sad fact is that BSE is a symptom of a much deeper malaise - the contradictions of highly advanced capitalist agriculture - which are not limited to the sphere of Mr Gummer's jurisdiction but spill over to the rest of the world and emphasise the desperate need for a cure. At a global level the madness of capitalist agriculture is even more apparent. For millions of people on the periphery of the capitalist system their problem is how to fend off starvation and malnutrition as once-flourishing traditional agricultural systems collapse under the burden of cash-crop production and the introduction of western farming techniques. On the other hand the big business which is advanced capitalist farming is not interested in selling its 'goods' to those who cannot afford to buy. So while token food packages are noisily distributed in the form of 'aid' from the imperialist metropolises, a large part of humanity is left on the brink of starvation while heavily-subsidised farmers in capitalism's industrial heartlands continue to increase yields by whatever means they can in order to maximise profits.

Like capitalism as a whole, the contradictions of capitalist agriculture run like inter-connected threads throughout the globe. It is nothing short of madness to imagine that anything less than a global revolution could begin to introduce some sanity into this most fundamental of human problems.

## For Workers Internationalism!

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playing on the cheap appeal to national sentiment the likes of Yeltsin (an opportunist, by any definition of the word, who will make alliance even with Stalinists to get into power) hopes to prepare the way for the much-needed attack on the working class. The watchwords and the tactics will be the same as those used throughout the history of capitalism. The workers will be told that they now have "freedom" (The fact that some (mainly international finance capitalists) will be free-er than others will be quietly forgotten.) They will be told that the "country" needs sacrifices from everybody (but it will not even be whispered that those who produce its real wealth will be called upon to make the sacrifice).

There is as yet no conscious working class response on the horizon, whatever militant fight workers put up against austerity. The great strikes of the Ukrainian and Siberian miners which we saw last summer will not be enough to resist the State if it can claim to represent "the democratic majority" and if workers, as in recent years in the West, leave each sector to fight alone. The various national bourgeoisies of the old Soviet Empire are fighting for their survival and will stop at nothing to make the workers pay for the restructuring of their political and economic power.

### POLAND'S RAILWAY STRIKE

The situation in Poland offers a glimpse of the future for all the workers in the Eastern bloc. After fighting against austerity plans by the Polish government for two decades the Polish workers gave their support to Solidarnosc. This completely hi-jacked the independent strike committees of the 1980 movement and turned itself into a bourgeois political party which now carries out the very plans that the workers opposed so successfully for so long. Inflation in hundreds of percent and a massive increase in unemployment (officially 400,000 since last January) are its solutions to the crisis of Polish capitalism. At first the workers, believing in Solidarnosc's promises, hoped that this was a temporary situation but eventually they began to recognise that they were to be made to pay for the crisis. In Workers Voice 50 we reported on the strikes in the mines and in the post offices, today the focus has switched to the railways. Information via the bourgeois press is still scarce and inadequate but the strike is clearly a serious one. Much of Poland's

chief exports (especially coal) reach the ports by rail and Lech Walesa has denounced the strikers as dupes of the former Communist Party claiming that their demands could lead to "civil war" (though craftily saying they have "genuine grievances"). However the Prime Minister, Mazowiecki, has used a more classical line in saying that the strike threatens "democracy". The workers are demanding a 20% wage increase and the sacking of the management but already they are beginning to voice more political demands. At the time of going to press the Polish Government was using the very modern tactic of conducting an opinion poll to try to demonstrate that the strikers were isolated. Equally in keeping with Western experience we find the unions (both of ex-Communist party and Solidarity origins) postponing a planned national strike for two weeks to give the State a breathing space "in the interests of the nation". None of these moves will be unfamiliar to workers in Britain who were faced with exactly the same kind of responses when capitalism in Britain went through its biggest restructuring process since the Second World war during the Eighties.

### LITHUANIAN NATIONALISM A BANKRUPT IDEOLOGY FOR A BANKRUPT ECONOMY

Nowhere is the illusion that nationalism and democracy are solutions to the economic crisis stronger than in the disintegrating Russian Empire, and especially in Lithuania.

The argument of the Lithuanian nationalist movement is that autonomy from the USSR's state central planning mechanism and an independent commercial policy will release the economic energies of the country. Since 1945 the Lithuanian industrial sector has benefitted from the planned economy to the extent that industry has grown from 10% to 60% of the GNP. Now the Lithuanian bourgeoisie hopes to get its hands on this productive apparatus and seek a new fortune by looking west.

But this is itself an illusion. Lithuania is so tied in with the economy of the USSR that, at least in the short term, it will find little alternative but to continue its economic reliance on the USSR. In fact, whatever political form its independence takes it is far more likely to share in the growing economic chaos of the USSR than to enjoy a new renaissance. But this is where nationalist ideology will come in as a useful mystification to tame the class struggle. If

Lithuania's economic problems can be blamed on outsiders then workers can be appealed on to "make sacrifices", "tighten belts" or "not hold the country to ransom" to ensure that strikes etc don't threaten bourgeois rule.

Lithuanian workers have so far swallowed the nationalist poison, or at least, as far as we know from our own wonderfully honest and informative press. At the same time ethnic Russian workers who make up a substantial portion of the working class in Lithuania are dutifully following the Moscow line and putting their weight against Lithuanian 'independence'. In short, there is little evidence of the working class transcending the nationalist illusions pedalled by the bourgeoisie and no sign that they are looking for their own solution to the crisis. However as we have seen in Poland, in the USSR itself, and in East Germany (see elsewhere in this issue) the numbers of strikes are on the increase. This suggests that some of the illusions about democracy and nationalism are beginning to wear off.

However there is a great difference between strikes in defence of immediate economic interest and a level of class consciousness which gives rise to new political organisations of the working class. As we have seen in Western Europe over the last decade the bourgeoisie can erode even the most militant and protracted resistance of the working class. Workers are isolated sector by sector and told that real change can only come through "consent" i.e. through the ballot box or that their actions to defend their living standards are "selfish" and against the national interest. These forces of democracy and nationalism are the key to the survival of the bourgeoisie throughout this long period of capitalist crisis.

Only when the workers recognise that they are an internationally exploited class, that they have no country and that their democracy is not that of choosing a bourgeois leader once in five years will they be on the way to ending the misery of the capitalist system. But in this process they will have to acquire the consciousness to create political instruments to lead that struggle, both organs of the class as a whole such as workers councils, and bodies of politically active workers united in a common political organisation to combat the bankrupt ideologies of the capitalist class like nationalism and bourgeois democracy.

# Springtime In South Korea

Barely worth a mention by the stalwarts of the bourgeois press here has gone the intensity of the class struggle in South Korea's "Spring wage bargaining round".

Undaunted by the certainty of violent retaliation by the brutal S. Korean state (which had already announced that strikes would not be tolerated), workers of the Hyundai conglomerate's shipyard in the city of Ulsan set out to occupy their shipyard as part of a strike to maintain wage levels. True to form, the government replied by sending in 10,000 riot police equipped with tear gas and bulldozers. As always, the workers prepared to fight back. Over the last weekend in April the battle to win control over the yard spread into a general class confrontation throughout the city's streets, with workers from the Hyundai car plants coming out in support of their class comrades from the shipyard.

At the beginning of May S. Korea was beset by strikes and tens of thousands, apparently led by students, were demonstrating. In addition to protesting against the way S. Korean workers are treated when they demand a wage rise the students put forward demands for greater "democracy" and civil liberties. By the end of the month the press here wasn't even mentioning the shipyard workers but did report (in the Financial Times) that unions at the Hyundai car plant had accepted a deal "to end strikes at car plants" (25.5.90) despite the fact that only two days previously 16,955 workers had voted AGAINST the offer (of a 7.6% wage rise) with only 7,300 accepting. The same report adds that some workers have demanded the resignation of the union leadership whilst a small minority "are staging a protest in front of the union office".

So, despite the bravery of Korean workers in fighting for their immediate interests, the class struggle in S. Korea

still appears locked in a familiar impasse. Without a political programme or organisation of their own the struggle of the working class will continue to be contained by the state and the unions and diverted by the misguided liberal-democratic demands of the student movement. It is not that we internationalists are against basic human rights. On the contrary. However, we reject the notion that a better future for humanity as a whole can come out of taking up the obsolete historical programme of a national democratic revolution. Given the present orgy of democratic sloganeering over the collapse of Eastern Europe it's about time that the creed which has allowed western capitalism to seize the moral high ground lost some of its credibility amongst intellectuals in capitalism's periphery. "Freedom" - for monopoly capital to move round the world exploiting the cheapest wage labour. "Freedom" - for millionaire press barons to determine what is newsworthy. "Freedom" - for the working class to vote once in a while for one or other party of the capitalist class. "Freedom" - what does it mean for the world's working class?

Once workers begin to realise, not only that their interests lie elsewhere, but that it is possible to form an independent political organisation. Once intellectuals who are seeking to identify with the working class are prepared to look beyond nationalism and democracy, THEN workers' struggles like that in Korea will not be in vain for every defeat will be understood as part of a longer-term and world-wide battle. As we said in an article on the class struggle in Korea in WJ 37:

"... we are sure that reflection on the significance of today's struggles over the years ahead - by both workers and students sympathetic to them (and who we believe even now have access to revolutionary communist literature) - will provide the impetus for the development towards



Korean workers give the police a taste of their own medicine at Ulsan

genuine revolutionary organisations: Organisations which will expose the real meaning of liberal democratic demands and independent unions in the age of monopoly capitalism and counter them with the prospect of revolutionary organs and politics."

## The Rumanian Road to Re-Structuring Capitalism

The elections in Rumania in May brought to an end the first chapter of the evolution of events since the overthrow of Ceaucescu and his execution on Christmas Day last year. The next chapters will be much harder to write.

Rumania was the last of the Warsaw Pact countries where the Stalinist old guard fell from power in the events of last autumn-winter; and it was the only one where they refused to give up power without a struggle. Ceaucescu and his Securitate allies fought with all the means at their disposal, including the massacre at Timisoara (death toll now officially 95, not the thousands given to us by the democratic honest western media), to hold on to power, but this was not enough. The interplay of three factors led to his overthrow and death.

FIRSTLY. Given the success of the mobilisations against the old regimes elsewhere in Eastern Europe, a mass inter-class movement of the Rumanian people against the dictator occurred. Demonstrations, riots and strikes meant that the re-establishment of order would require massive repression. While Ceaucescu was prepared to deliver this, he was unable to.

SECONDLY. It is now clear that a section of the Rumanian establishment, both in the Army and the Party, fearing that Ceaucescu's overthrow would mean their overthrow as well, formed the National Salvation Front, and joined the popular mobilisations. Although Ceaucescu's overthrow was initiated by the mass of the population, his downfall was carried out by the Rumanian Army, which defeated the Securitate in pitched battle. We are now told that they were planning a coup all along but this, based only on the statements of government members, may be part of the attempt to legitimise their "revolutionary" role. The main point is that any potential for the state of social crisis to be transformed into one of class struggle was nipped in the bud by talk of national salvation and reconciliation. As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the class as a class was conspicuous by its POLITICAL absence.

THIRDLY. And this is at the root of events, it was clear that the former bloc master of Rumania, the USSR, would not give its former, albeit erratic, ally any help, as it had withdrawn help from Honecker, Zhivkov and Husak. Indeed, though refusing the intervention requested by the National Salvation Front, Gorbachev made clear from the outset his support for Ceaucescu's overthrow. The combination of these three factors, made the fall of the last bastion of Stalinism in the disintegrating Warsaw pact inevitable.

Although Rumania was the only former satellite state where a social movement and violent conflict accompanied the downfall of Stalinism, it should be clear that even if the

former elements of the ruling class now composing the National Salvation Front had NOT acted swiftly, then the social movement, even if it had intensified, would have simply been recuperated in a DIFFERENT way. This would possibly have meant, for example, the emergence of the kind of religious or bourgeois democratic organisations that have formed in Poland, Czechoslovakia etc. After forty years of Stalinist repression, and the equation of socialism with Ceaucescu's regime, and in the absence of any kind of proletarian leadership, the class could not have struck out on its own terrain, or not very far.

As it is, Ceaucescu's resistance, and his violent overthrow by elements of the old regime, has given them the halo of heroes and martyrs to much of the population, unlike elsewhere, where all the satraps bowed out with their masters. Bourgeois democratic elections in Hungary, Poland and the G.D.R. have reduced the former Communist Parties, even with their new names and "democratic" pretensions, to results of 11%, 13%, and 16% respectively, and to enforced and impotent opposition, as power has fallen to western oriented, free market political forces.

In Rumania things have taken a different form. Despite the return to the country of exiled multi-millionaires financing parties like the Peasants' Party, despite the antics offstage of the exiled Royal Family, and despite the western media involvement that has characterised events everywhere in Eastern Europe, the National Salvation Front (accused by its opponents, correctly, of being the former Communist Party in disguise), in elections which were marred only by minor irregularities, won the kind of victory - 85% of the votes cast - that the Stalinist parties used to claim in one candidate elections! The Liberals got about 10% and the Peasants' Party, 5%.

The western bourgeoisie has been at a loss to explain this phenomenon, putting it down to such factors as the effective and charismatic leadership of the Front's chief, Iliescu; as if things were that simple. The Hungarian C.P. had a "good" (in bourgeois terms) leader, but it flopped. Part of the reason we have already explained; Ceaucescu's resistance, and the Front's opposition, violent opposition, to him, baptised them with a legitimacy the bastard leadership of, eg Krenz, in the G.D.R. could never have. But could there be other factors? Judging only from bourgeois reporters, or edited interviews with Rumanian workers on television it is difficult to assess. But the Rumanian events came late, and their elections have come after some of the gloss has gone off of the democratic spring in Eastern Europe.

Two factors appear to be at work for Iliescu. One is that the working class in Rumania recognise that the Liberals

and the Peasant Party would remove job and social security. The Front has promised to maintain them. The second is that the Front has played the nationalist card with some success. A vote for the Front is a vote for the nation. With the control of all the TV stations it has not been too difficult for them to get this message across.

Thus Rumania has been different to, for example, the G.D.R., where many workers believe that after a short period of economic pain, the free market will solve their problems. To them, free market capitalism was some kind of magical Cargo Cult, where BMW's fall from the air, a Big Rock Candy Mountain of consumerism. Interviews by Western bourgeois sociologists with GDR workers show that they think or thought, along with access to western consumer goods, they will be able to keep subsidised rents, utilities and food, and that only a few "lazy" workers will be unemployed.

But already the dream is turning sour. Political liberalisation has led, not to democratic harmony, but to the upsurge of anti-Semitism, xenophobic impulses, and ethnic violence (Bulgaria, Rumania itself). And in economic terms the plight of Poland (1,000% inflation, 600,000 unemployed, massive wage cuts) as well as similar trends in Hungary and the G.D.R. have dimmed the dream of a consumerist paradise for the refugees from Stalinism. And the Front in Rumania was able to play on fears of a rush to western style economic management, in an economy which, to a far greater extent than the G.D.R. or Hungary, would be totally unable to compete in a free market. As the price to be paid for the Gadarene rush into the arms of Western capitalism becomes clearer, it may be that the elections in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia will produce results closer to Rumanian, than Polish, patterns. However, this does not affect the analysis that we have been developing for the last couple of years; the Warsaw Pact and Comecon are in the process of total disintegration, and the scramble for influence in the USSR's former empire in Eastern Europe is on, between American, European and Japanese imperialism. Any modest, or even spectacular recovery by the former Communist Parties, will NOT affect this trend.

The victory of the Front in Rumania may have brought a temporary political stability to the country. With his mandate from the election, Iliescu can now feel free to deal with the embarrassing daily anti-communist and xenophobic demonstrations that have continued in Bucharest. But the economic problems still remain, the poisoned chalice bequeathed by Ceaucescu. With the disintegration of Comecon, Iliescu will have to look for aid outside the country, and that means to the EEC, USA or Japan. And for that the political and economic price will be the same as elsewhere, though possibly introduced more gradually (Rumania's debt problems are not so acute as elsewhere in the East); the liberalisation of the market, restoration of private property in land etc. The social convulsions that this has led to elsewhere, will not be avoided in Rumania. The workers there, as elsewhere, will find that though bourgeois democratic capitalism smells sweet, it is, as the old slogan of '68 said, "a carnivorous flower."

# Convulsions in Eastern Europe and Wind from the ICC

The period which we are living through represents one of the most dramatic changes in human history and, by overthrowing the balance of power established at the end of the Second World War, has opened up a new era of uncertainty. For the groups of the internationalist communist left the collapse of the Stalinist regimes does not pose any fundamentally new political problem since we have always argued that these regimes were never socialist but capitalist and were thus prone to the same crises arising from the capitalist cycle of accumulation. However we cannot pretend that we anticipated the collapse of Stalinism in the manner which took place in November and December of 1989. We had always expected the task of dismantling those regimes would fall to the workers who were exploited by them. **The new situation requires us all to re-examine our analyses and ruthlessly criticise what is now inadequate.** We have no need to fear any admission of error. On the contrary it is more dangerous to say and do nothing. As Lenin said when re-arming the Bolshevik Party in 1917 "we must know how to supplement and amend old formulas" (The Dual Power, Selected Works Vol.2 p.34). In such circumstances it is important that the widest and frankest discussion takes place between revolutionary groups. It was in this sense that we thought we would reply to the polemic initiated by the International Communist Current in their press (starting in February of this year).

However, as all the groups which adhere to the proletarian political camp will be aware, the sectarian and destructive nature of the ICC's version of polemics usually manages to blur the real issues. The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party usually dismisses their idle chatterings as a diversion from the real need to provide the world working class with a coherent explanation of what is going on in these times of historic turmoil. However all the ICC has done is to begin a sectarian and childish campaign against us which, if it is not contradicted may come to be accepted as the truth by those who haven't the access to publications in different languages (and this means especially ICC members and ex-members in Britain).

As the main target of this attack has been the Italian affiliate of the IBRP, the Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista) we have given space in this issue of Workers Voice to their initial response which appeared in the April 1990 (Year 44, No.4) of Battaglia Comunista. However as this response was written before the publication of the ICC's International Review No.61 which contains a more sustained form of misrepresentation, the Editorial Board of WV have decided to make a few introductory remarks.

The campaign started in the French publication of the ICC (from which all the other ICC sections take their views with dismally little of their own initiative), Revolution Internationale No.187 (February 1990). On the back page there is an article entitled "Battaglia Comunista taken in by Bourgeois Propaganda". The argument of this text was that BC hadn't seen any crisis in the East and now saw the opening up of the Eastern bloc as a way out of the capitalist crisis by offering new markets for Western capitalists. They used an article in Battaglia Comunista of October 1989 to support this accusation. However to arrive at this they quote very selectively from the article. In reality, after speculating about the bourgeoisie's hopes about new markets, the BC article concludes (and this follows directly the bit quoted by the ICC in IR61 p.20)

"Looking at it more closely however the disintegratory tendencies are much the more marked. It is enough to look at what is happening in the Soviet Union where a large number of the Republics are demanding autonomy or call for separation from the centre". The article finishes by saying that apart from a few highly developed countries the rest of the world faces nothing but hunger, poverty and war. Hardly the analysis of a group "taken in by bourgeois propaganda" about

a brave new world! WR uses the same technique when analysing the positions of the CWO over the imminent collapse of the USSR. We argued that the economic crisis had forced the Russian bourgeoisie to think the unthinkable and try to control the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact but the ICC present the question as if we had espoused Gorbachev's forlorn perspectives.

Equally the accusation that BC were slow to see the crisis of the East is absolutely untrue. There are dozens of examples but the first that came to hand was the front page of Battaglia Comunista No. 3 for March 1988. This article on "The USSR between perestroika and national revolts" states quite clearly that "the various problems (of the USSR) have as their basis the acute violence of the economic crisis". We could go on but we think the point has been made. Just as we showed in WV 50 over its lies about the class struggle in Norway the ICC is prepared to falsify anything as systematically as the bourgeois press to sustain itself in its self-proclaimed role (more stridently clamoured today than for over a decade) as the leading proletarian organisation. But this brings us to what the real issue is for the ICC.

## MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL WHO WAS THE UNCLEARST OF US ALL?

The ICC have quite rightly seen that how revolutionary organisations respond to what is going on in the world is a test of their capacity to contribute to the future world party of the proletariat. However they have become a little edgy about their own capacity. In the CWO we noted the slowness of the ICC to recognise the break-up of the Eastern bloc (and privately thought that the ICC would manage to eventually square what was happening with its own perspectives by insisting that it was the result of the subterranean maturation of consciousness of the Eastern bloc workers). However WE did not try to seize the moral high ground and rush to condemn the ICC for its insistence as late as October that the Stalinist system would not collapse. This issue is too important for us all to engage in such childishness. Nor did we respond to their stupid polemic in WR 125 about our supposed pacifism over the imminent collapse of the Soviet bloc. However it has clearly been a worry (for WR if not for RI which normally doesn't acknowledge the CWO's existence) that the CWO was quicker to see the collapse of Stalinism than "the most coherent reference point in the political milieu" (The ICC, referring to itself, International Review 61 p.23). Not only did it acknowledge that WR125 was wrong (this in itself is "an event of world historical significance") but even that we were the first to spot this collapse in April 1989. Whilst RI prefers to ignore our supposed prescience and prefers to indulge in general mud-slinging at the International Bureau as a whole (by throwing in a 'reminder' to its readers that the CWO called for "Revolution Now" over Poland in 1981, despite the fact that we never held such a position), WR uses a far more subtle tactic. Whilst RI was out to demonstrate the utter stupidity of the entire IBRP, WR is more concerned to manufacture a split between BC and the CWO. Thus WR repeats the slanders of RI about BC but, after praising the CWO, tells its readers that the CWO only got it right "empirically" and that we have no method to explain what is really going on.

What the ICC means is that we don't share their fundamentally idealist method for analysing the world. For the last twenty years the ICC have proclaimed the inexorable rise of the proletariat through a series of waves of struggle. **We, preferring reality to dogma, and the analysis of the real course of the crisis and its contradictory effects on class consciousness, have argued that since the beginning of the 1980s the working class has been fighting a series of failed rearguard battles. Our perception is that the bourgeoisie, whilst not having defeated the class in a historical sense, has been able to push it further and further into retreat.** Today, with the impact of the crisis of the Eastern bloc the ICC is beginning to conclude the same thing. However, far from recognising the past errors of their perspectives they use the collapse of Stalinism in the East as an alibi to explain today's supposed decline in class consciousness in the West. It is only last November that they were concluding that "Only the development of class combats in the great industrial concentrations of Western Europe can give a perspective to the workers struggles that will appear in the East". (WR129 p.5) But now, suddenly, we are in "a period of reflux in the consciousness of the class" (IR61 p. 23). The ICC has often chided the IBRP for holding an analysis of despair. Yet this analysis has not prevented us from forming the Bureau and extending its influence to other countries, however minimally, nor from carrying out the other

basic tasks of a political organisation of our class. The real danger is for those who have been driven onto the rocks by the present wind from the East and have not got the theoretical preparation for it. We know that this is why the ICC has experienced "delays and errors" in dealing with the Eastern bloc and we suspect that this is what lies behind the ICC's unscrupulous and vindictive campaign against the Bureau.

## THE WAY FORWARD

However let us assure the comrades that we have not been basking in any feeling of superiority about being the first in the revolutionary milieu to see the collapse of Stalinism. We can see too many past theoretical preoccupations of ours which need to be re-considered to afford such a luxury. **Our agenda is to re-examine our analysis of state capitalism (something which has been in train now for a couple of years), to try to get a firmer understanding of the internationalisation of capital in the present period, and to understand the operation of global imperialism more precisely than we have done up to the present time. These are not the tasks of a single organisation or tendency but should involve all who wish to see the strongest programmatic foundation for the revival of the world communist movement.** But this requires a new seriousness in polemic and debate. To say things like "for them, in essence, the party, communist consciousness, is something that comes from 'outside' the class." (WR133 on Battaglia) is simply not true and reveals only a calculated lack of seriousness in argument by the ICC. Small wonder that many communists refuse to debate with them at all.

CWO MAY 1990

## International Communist Current

# From ideological dilettantes to professional falsifiers

(Translated from Battaglia Comunista 4 (Year 44) April 1990)

It is our custom to make available to all comrades who come to our head office - whether or not they are members - the press of all the groups we exchange with or subscribe to. We reserve a special place for that of the ICC. Whoever sets foot in our office cannot avoid encountering Revolution Internationale both in its Italian and French versions or World Revolution in English. We do so because we are interested in knowing and making known other positions and other analyses; but, in the case of RI - we confess - it is rare not to find something to laugh at. We photocopied, enlarged and affixed to a wall of our Milan office the article from RI No. 188 entitled "Facing the convulsions of Stalinism. The irresponsible infatuations of Battaglia Comunista and the FOR". [1] Why so much attention? With this hotchpotch of clumsy falsifications, of banality sold as a marxist analysis the ICC has excelled itself; still, even clowns have their moment of glory.

In the editorial of BC No.1 (Year 47) "Ceausescu is Dead but Capitalism lives on" it says:

"... little effort has been devoted to the investigation of the motor force of the crisis which has changed the face of so-called real socialism. And this obscures the fact that the new course has had to open the way to a further real and true insurrection whilst in the other Eastern bloc countries the leading groups of the "ancien regime" have run up the white flag without a shot being fired." And after examining the state of the Roumanian economy stressing the role of foreign debt it concludes: "From this point of view Roumania appears to be the first medium-sized industrialised country where the world economic crisis which has brought back the infernal mechanism that sustains the debt/interest spiral, has given way to a real and true popular insurrection with the consequent defeat of the Ceausescu government". We don't think there can be any doubt that the insurrection is understood as a consequence of the crisis and that it is itself qualified as popular and not as

socialist or proletarian. But let's glance at what RI comes out with. "The concessions of the revolutionary milieu to bourgeois ideology have led the comrades of B.C. to take up the idea according to which ..." the motor force of the crisis which has changed the world of "real socialism" resides "in a genuine popular insurrection which led to the fall of Ceaucescu".

That "resides in a genuine popular insurrection" is the link which joins together two sentences which are separated by two columns. The possibility that we are dealing with an error in translation can thus be excluded. Clearly there is a definite aim to defame and distort our positions. Can it be an accident that the article which appears in the Italian edition makes no mention of such a gross falsification?

Leaving this aside though, there is an equally strong current running through what the ICC is saying: that is the need to deepen in some way the substance of the differences between us. Thus in a follow-up to the article we are accused of having already suddenly changed position in the light of recent events in China and now we are portrayed as seeing the crisis in the Warsaw Pact bloc, just like the Chinese events, as the beginning of a pre-revolutionary period with the class struggle manifesting itself clearly through these individual events. Now, we have always maintained (and anyone who wants to check can do so by reading the numerous articles in *Battaglia Comunista* or *Prometeo* 13) that the crisis which has hit China, Russia and its satellites, even in its specificities, is linked to the same cyclical crisis which from the beginning of the Seventies has affected first the countries of the Western bloc (United States and Western Europe) and which now affects the Eastern bloc. The difference is that the West has more refined mechanisms available for managing the crisis and has been able to dilute it both in time and space by shoving the enormous costs onto the most peripheral areas (Latin America, Africa and some parts of Asia). The East on the other hand, without similar mechanisms of amortisation, risks outright collapse. There is nothing about the events which occurred throughout 1989 and which are still occurring to invalidate our fundamental thesis. The perspective that such a situation is opening up cannot be underestimated and is not being adequately taken into consideration - not only by the revolutionary milieu, but by everyone involved in politics. In particular, we are talking about a structural crisis and even of the potential for a revival of the class struggle in the areas in question and at an international level. From this point of view, the question which we have repeatedly raised is answered by the fact that in such a contest the response of the masses and of the working class itself (determined by their tragic conditions of life), in the absence of a genuine class political reference point, necessarily and for a whole period, can only be channelled and controlled by ideologies of the class enemy such as nationalism, democratism, ethnic and religious conflict. But this has nothing to do with the explosive character of these movements and, above all, doesn't absolve us from searching for the most appropriate forms of intervention since the sort of class demands which necessarily are tending to emerge can be reconstituted on autonomous proletarian ground.

For the ICC the question simply doesn't exist. What happened in Romania? "A vulgar coup d'etat". And in China? "A struggle between rival bourgeois gangs." Thus, the participation of thousands of starving proletarians in this "vulgarity" is something that can only interest the opportunists of BC. The fact is we are in the presence of an organisation so closed in on itself that it is more likely to declare that China is the Man in the Moon than reconsider the brainchild of their own heads in the light of the facts. When faced with somewhat less bizarre reasoning the ICC does not hesitate to falsify the argument, almost as if by attributing errors to others its own nonsense can be transformed into pure Marxist science. In this case the ICC is trying to deny the possibility of situations favourable to a revival of the class struggle occurring outside of Western Europe. This is because they are starting from the notion that the proletariat spontaneously acquires its own class consciousness, even up to the point of spontaneously furnishing itself with the revolutionary party. For them an upturn in the class struggle is only possible where class consciousness has been maintained at its highest level, "... it is the level of consciousness of the battalions of the most experienced of the world proletariat which is the determining factor ... and not where the working class is at its weakest, most mystified, most subjected by bourgeois ideology." Further,

"It must be stated that the more History accelerates, the more the programmatic feebleness of these groups obliges

them to move out of step with the reality which is developing under their eyes. Thus, in the Autumn of 1983, when there was a real development in the class struggle in the countries central to capitalism, when the most experienced proletariat in the world was tending more and more to break out of the trade union frame, the majority of the groups in the revolutionary milieu remained indifferent, incapable of recognising the advances in the class struggle. Conversely, when the proletariat quits its own class terrain and allows itself to be harnessed behind bourgeois mystifications, when it is massacred for interests which are not its own, as is the case today in the Eastern countries, so these same revolutionary organisations go into ecstasies about the "great step forward" in the class struggle, even going so far as to proclaim that a pre-revolutionary, insurrectionary situation has opened up in these countries." (RI 188 p.5)

Thus there is nothing to be done about the proletariat of the East. The spirit of self-consciousness - via the intercession of the ICC - has only kissed the forehead of the West European proletariat and, as everyone knows, the holy spirit only performs a miracle once. The fact that since 1983 until today this miracle has produced nothing more than economic struggles which have never been capable of generalising themselves must be due to the blindness of those who don't believe in miracles. A strange way of evaluating "levels of consciousness" this, which relies more on one's own desires than on the actual facts. - So much so that an insurrection with so many dead, wounded, assaults on the presidential palace etc., are an invention of BC while 'facts', which have had a good seven years to become obvious and which have still to do so, can be the determining factor behind the acceleration of history. If you follow this argument the present break-up of the international equilibrium, the downfall of the Stalinist regimes, the nationalist fragmentation of the USSR, have all been determined by the strikes in Western Europe in 1983. We are presented with a real paradox, but for the ICC it's easy enough to get out of it: simply quote from BC. We refer again to the incriminating article, "In Romania all the objective and almost all the subjective conditions existed for the insurrection to develop into a real and proper social revolution; but the absence of an authentic political force of the class left the field free for those forces which were pursuing policies for the maintenance of bourgeois productive relations." A rather unhappy formulation on our part? You could say so. In the context of the article it was aiming to highlight the dangers stemming from Stalinism which, even at the moment of its decline, to the extent that it was seen as synonymous with socialism, acted as a formidable obstacle to the revival of the class struggle and allowed bourgeois forces to channel the anger of the working class towards false objectives even though the ruling class and its apparatus of power were being

dismantled, as in Romania. This is also ground for careful reflection because there are consequences for the proletariat in Western Europe. But for the ICC it is only a cue for nullifying everything. Look, BC were wrong and if BC was wrong then nothing has happened in the East and so they climb up onto the podium and give us a lecture: "Now in the Marxist vision the maturity of subjective conditions is nothing other than the degree of consciousness reached by the masses in their aims and method of struggle. In particular, this maturity is expressed through the self-organisation of the proletariat as a class, by the rise of ... the workers councils ... It is still necessary to understand that it is precisely the degree of political consciousness which exists in the whole of the working class which constitutes the condition for the growth of the revolutionary party." (ibid pp4-5) So, no councils, no party, no consciousness, no revolution. No doubts cross their minds that, perhaps, the sequence is not so much logical as dialectical and, for that reason, the relationship they make between consciousness and the class party is simplistic and therefore, although the one is unthinkable without a certain level of class consciousness being dictated by the material conditions of capitalist society, the other is destined to produce at the most, insurrections, even councils, but not a socialist revolution. But actually for the ICC nothing like this can happen in the East, not even a revival of the class struggle and this is why we are classified as opportunists and dreamers. However, the mystery remains as to why the "experienced battalions" - who haven't even formed a soviet, apart from the two exceptions of Germany and France in 1919 and 1871; nor, as far as we are aware, have they a revolutionary party (since that's what we're all trying to reconstruct) - have been predestined for the revolution for at least twenty years; or rather ever since the ICC, after its founders took, let's call it, an ideological-tourist holiday,[2] was constituted. Is this where the real mystery lies?

Giorgio

[1] Ferment Ouvrier Revolutionnaire, founded by Grandizo Munis, who died last year, publishes *Alarmer* in French and *Alarma* in Spanish.

[2] This refers to the fact that the founders of the group Internationalisme, the direct ancestors of the ICC, proclaimed in the late 1940s that world war was the only thing on the agenda and abandoned Europe for South America whence they emerged in 1967 at the onset of the present crisis brought about at the opening up of the third global cycle of capitalist accumulation. The same mechanistic thinking which led to this voluntary abandonment of political work still dominates the ICC.

## International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

The Platform and statutes of the Bureau are now available in English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Bengali and Farsi. The Bureau also publishes a central organ in English, **COMMUNIST REVIEW** as well as **Lal Pataka** (Red Flag) in Bengali, **Revue Communiste** in French, **International Notes** in Farsi and **Prometeo** and **Battaglia Comunista** in Italian. Please write to the appropriate address below

CWO BM Box CWO, London WC1N 3XX

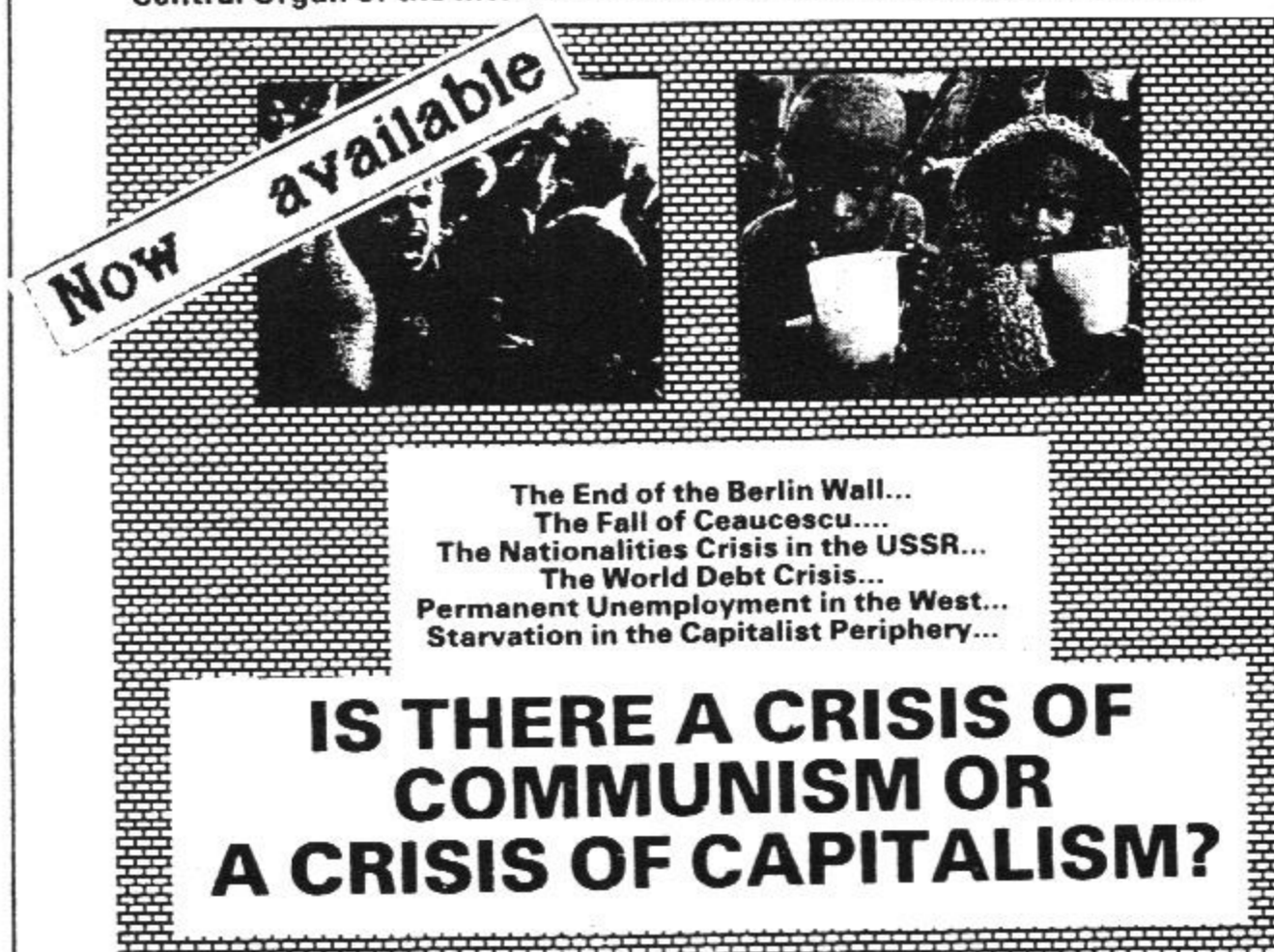
Partito Comunista Internazionalista, CP 1753, 20101 Milano, Italy

Lal Pataka, GPO Box 2594, Calcutta - 700001, India

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## COMMUNIST REVIEW 8

Central Organ of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party



Also in this issue:

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# A Communist Intervention in East Germany

After the disintegration of the Russian imperialist bloc in the last half of last year, a period of enormous flux in the political life of the countries of that bloc was initiated. This flux manifested itself on the bourgeois terrain [1] in the creation of a mass of parties (36 in Czechoslovakia, 35 in East Germany), but on the working class terrain, no Party of the proletarian masses. This, in itself, is not surprising, for in the East, just as in the West, the bourgeoisie monopolise the media and set the political agenda, but it does not mean that workers were untouched by the upheavals. On the contrary, the collapse of Stalinism and the consequent restructuring of the economies of the East call forth contradictions which will be felt physically by the working class more than by any other class, and therefore are grasped on the level of consciousness by at least part of the working class. The chief of these contradictions is between the lies of the bourgeoisie (which exceed even the number of their parties) and the reality that these promises are either entirely untrue or will benefit nonproletarian strata at the expense of the proletariat. Concretely, Western (or near Western) bourgeois conditions of life for the Eastern bourgeoisie, redundancies and speed-ups for the workers.

In this situation it would be surprising if workers did not separate out into a whole spectrum of opinions with those that believe in the propaganda of the West with its fairy stories of democracy and prosperity for all, at one end, and those who see that the workers must pay for all this democracy and prosperity for others, at the other. This process of separation implies a flux in consciousness and an openness to new ideas.

It is in this context that the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (comprising the CWO, the Partito Comunista Internazionale (Battaglia Comunista) and Lal Pataka), the Mexican group Comunismo and the Austrian Gruppe Internationalistische Kommunisten (GIK) decided to intervene in Eastern Europe. The basis for this intervention was the Address to the Workers of Eastern Europe.

## THE ADDRESS

As the Address was published in draft form in Workers' Voice 50 and a translation of the final form is available from the group address (£1), we will only give an outline of it here.

In the Address we describe the events of November and December 1989 in class terms, showing how they will benefit Western and Eastern capitalists. The society which had existed previously was characterised as being state-capitalist, and thus susceptible to the world capitalist crisis. Its necessary restructuring will be at the expense of the workers.

We attack "democracy" as a mask for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and warn against the dangers from the Stalinists and the unions.

By examining the history of the Russian revolution we draw programmatic points and explain Stalinism as emerging from the defeat of the Communist project in Russia.

These programmatic points can be summarised, at the expense of some important detail, thus: 1) soviets are the historically discovered for of the dictatorship of the proletariat. A socialist transformation of society requires that the Party of that transformation exerts the decisive influence over the soviets; 2) statification of the means of production is not socialism. At most, it is a step on the way to socialism, but it can only be this under the dictatorship of the proletariat; 3) socialism must be international; 4) the working class must have a true class party.

## OUR ACTIVITY IN EAST GERMANY

Here we will deal with the second of our interventions in the GDR. This was carried

out in the week preceeding Easter by one comrade from the GIK and one from the CWO, and followed an intervention by the GIK.

Our first impression of the GDR was amazement that there had ever been anyone who argued that the superior economic performance of the Eastern bloc was "proof" of its socialism. Everywhere there were signs of backwardness: the means of communication (roads that looked unrepaired since Hitler built the Autobahns, an antiquated telephone system), the inefficiency of products like the famous (or infamous!) Trabant car, and of production with factories belching out fumes everywhere. And the GDR was the powerhouse of the East!

We distributed the Address in Zwickau, at the IFA Trabant works on the Sächsenring; in Dresden, on an industrial estate and at Robotron (an electrical goods manufacturer); in East Berlin outside a station in a working class district; in Merseburg at the Leuna chemical works and in Leipzig at the main station. At the same time we sold a special edition of Kommunistische Politik (the joint paper of the GIK and the West German group Internationale Revolutionäre Kommunisten [2]) on the evenings of November and December. Everywhere it was the same story: massive enthusiasm for the leaflet. Out of the 3,500 we distributed, three landed up on the ground, one was torn up. Everyone else queued for the leaflet. Of course, for reasons that can easily be guessed, there is a thirst for political literature of any kind in the GDR. Nevertheless, we were not silent while giving out the Address, and at least 80% of the recipients knew that the leaflet was left-wing, 60% that it was anti-Stalinist and communist in some sense. Some of their enthusiasm even spilled over to Red Army soldiers: one took the leaflet and another bought KomPol, agreeing with our verbal summary of the leaflet.

Against this generally good reception for the leaflet there were also peaks and troughs. The major troughs were three in number: at the Trabant works a substantial minority rejected the slogan "Against the redundancies", presumably believing the capitalist lie that greater efficiency will eventually lead back to full employment and a West German standard of living. In Dresden we attempted to leaflet an anti-Stasi demonstration, but 80% of our leaflets were returned as soon as people read the word "communist" - the problem here was that the demonstrators could not break with the mental equation "communist = Stalinist" in the context of the demonstration.

The third trough was also in Dresden. The previous GIK intervention had visited Dresden too. While they were there, a member of the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ - the youth wing of the Stalinist PDS (ex-SED)) asked them for a meeting. Our groups agreed to this, having nothing to lose by it.

At this meeting there were around 15 FDJ members and two "Nelken" (literally, "Carnations!") or members of the Vereinigte Linken (VL).

On our arrival, we noticed a portrait of Gorbachev, without the birthmark. This gave us the correct impression of these people immediately - even Gorbachev is too red for them!

The GIK comrade gave a talk which went over the ground of the Address. The meeting then responded. The FDJ want a humane capitalism, are unable to conceive of anything other than capitalism, and are horrified at the idea of excluding the capitalists from the Soviets, from political life, "because they, the capitalists, are people too". They said they agreed that the past 40 years in the GDR had not been the dictatorship of the proletariat, and then proceeded to argue against the dictatorship of the proletariat on the basis of the past 40 years!

Nevertheless, if we were wrong in meeting them, it is only on the basis of priorities,

not principle. They are, to a limited extent, open to new ideas. If this "openness" is in the main restricted to ideas which they think will enable them to continue as a bourgeois party, they are still more "open" than, for example, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, if only because of their situation.

Now the "peaks". At the Trabant plant workers who had read the Address requested copies to put through their neighbours' letter boxes. Here and elsewhere, hundreds of people agreed with our brief verbal summary "what was in power here was not socialism, but state-capitalism", and dozens agreed with longer discussions. These people bought KomPol (which was sold at four times and later at twice the cost of an average East German newspaper despite the far lower standard of production) and some agreed to subscribe to it. Many of them agreed to write to us after reading the Address.

From these discussions two things emerged, apart from the general agreement: 1) workers were involved, at least in Leipzig and Dresden, in the November demonstrations, and there were several one and two hour strikes. This is something the media hushed up at the time, and we were criticised for this. Nevertheless, our general thesis that the leadership was outside of the working class holds; 2) many "professionals" in the GDR consider themselves to be workers too.

## CONCLUSION

As we state in the Address, "It" [the restructuring required by capitalism] "means unemployment for millions and harder work for those still with a job". This is already being borne out by reports in the bourgeois press: "Productivity" [in the GDR] "is only 40% of that in West Germany... As a result, unemployment is likely to total about 2 million, 20 to 25% of the work force, compared with roughly 100,00 now." (FT, May 21 1990). This is what German unification means for German workers. As we said "capitalism, even with its 'democratic' mask, will be unable to satisfy workers' hopes for better living conditions".

Prior to the coming "closing down" of workers' hopes for a better life, we were honour bound to attempt to utilise the "opening up" in the East to build a revolutionary milieu there, to help workers take the first steps towards Eastern European sections of a world Internationalist Communist Party. So far we have fulfilled our obligation as regards the GDR, and we will make a similar intervention in Czechoslovakia. But this obligation continues, especially as the harsher side of Western democracy makes itself felt, and workers begin to fight back: "Strikes and protests by East German employees facing probable unemployment have multiplied." (FT, May 21 1990).

## NOTES

[1] That there is a bourgeoisie (a class which monopolises the means of production and, through wage labour, exploits those who are separated from those means) in the East should be obvious. However, bourgeois thick-headedness extends from the Trotskyists to the Financial Times: "East Germany's top managers stand accused by their workers, and many politicians, of relishing the transition from Communist boss to ruthless capitalist" (FT, May 25th 1990). What these managers are relishing is not their transformation from Communist boss (whatever that is) to capitalist, but an increase in their security as capitalists: yesterday they could not voice the mildest criticism of Honnecker, tomorrow they will enjoy the same freedom as the Union Carbide mass murderers of Bhopal!

[2] To contact the GIK, write only as follows:

Postfach 536  
A - 1061 Wien  
Austria.

Similarly, to contact the IRK, write only as follows:

KomPol Verlag  
zh. IRK  
Postfach 3041  
D - 7410 Reutlingen  
West Germany.

# The Poll Tax Struggle Goes On

The battles with the police during the poll tax demonstration of 31 March and the rioting which followed were an expression of elemental anger at this tax. They expressed the anger of some of those who have suffered the hardest blows from Thatcherism, those working for poverty wages, the unemployed, the young, the homeless. For the last decade Thatcherism has singled out these sections of the working class and attacked them mercilessly because they cannot fight back. By doing this it has attempted to drive wedges through the working class and divide workers to prevent any general fightback to increased exploitation and lower living standards. By marginalising the poorest and weakest sectors of the class it has also driven down the basic level of wages.

The poll tax is simply the latest in a series of attacks including higher rents, lower social security payments, the rundown of the health service, and forcing the young to work for starvation wages. On the 31 March, in response to police provocation, the anger boiled over and the centre of London was turned into a battlefield.

Though rioting cannot on its own achieve a better society, it expresses a will to combat the injustices of this society, which could become a will to fight for a new social order. Those who are fighting for the interests of the working class, while they may point to the limitations and weaknesses of rioting, cannot condemn it or fail to defend those captured by the police. The London events have revealed the real nature of many of those who claim to defend the interest of the workers - class enemies posing as friends.

## WORKERS' ENEMIES

The party which has roundly condemned the demonstrations and called for the savagest sentences on those arrested at the London demonstration is, of course, the Labour Party. The reason for this is that the Labour Party is simply the bosses' left wing party, a loyal party of capitalism which fundamentally supports the general aims of the Tories. The most important of these aims is to make British capitalism profitable again, and this means increasing the exploitation of the workers and lowering their living standards. As the latest policy review shows they support and will retain most of the Tory anti-working class laws (e.g. criminalising secondary picketing). The party maintains that the way to defeat the Poll Tax is to vote Labour in 1992. Though many workers believe this is it is completely untrue. The Labour Party wishes to keep alive the lie that workers can advance their interests through parliament. They pretend that workers struggles should be directed to parliament because they know that this is the way to defuse and defeat these struggles. The truth is that we live under the dictatorship of the capitalist class. Over a hundred years ago the British ruling class decided that they had nothing to fear from democracy. After all with control of the media they could ensure that only those parties which supported the continued existence of the capitalist system could be elected. Labour was only accepted into the fold once it had supported the war effort in the First World War. Parliament is therefore just a device the ruling capitalist class use to disguise who really rules.

What do they offer us for the Poll Tax? Even if Labour were elected in 1992, they would only abolish the tax after two further years, (i.e. 1994) before they brought in their own tax. In other words we have to pay the tax for the next four years! Meanwhile the Labour councils continue to collect the tax and prosecute those who can't or won't pay.

The trade unions have not supported the demonstrations. They called for "legal" protest and supported the lies of the Labour party. The particular unions involved in the collection of the tax, e.g. NALGO, have refused to support their members who won't collect the tax!

The left fringes of the Labour Party, e.g. Militant, have similarly revealed their

anti-working class character. The Militant leadership of the "Anti-Poll Tax Federation" announced after the London battles that they would hand over names and photographs of the rioters to the police. To put it plainly they offered to help the bosses mercenaries in their job of oppressing workers and forcing us to submit to the injustices of capitalism.

On the edges of the fringe of the "labour movement" there stands the SWP. Arguing that workers are not confident enough to take on the bosses on their own, they say that we must pressurise the union bureaucracy into leading the struggle against the Poll Tax. This argument falls down on at least two counts: firstly, the union bureaucracy has no interest in promoting the kind of autonomous struggle that has a chance of success; rather, if such a struggle existed, they would attempt to lead it back onto the terrain of the bosses' legality and parliamentary niceties.

Secondly, how do you put pressure on the bureaucracy if working class struggle does not already exist? The whole argument about pressurising the bureaucracy leads to the channeling of such workers' confidence and combativity that exists into a campaign to bring the struggle under the control of the enemies of class struggle. The SWP's way forward is a dead end.

This is the so-called "labour" movement, the so-called "friends of the working class". The Labour Party screws the tax out of us, the unions isolate anyone who won't help the bosses screw us, and when we dare to defend ourselves the so-called "left" wing of the Labour party denounces us to the police!

The real aim of the so-called "labour" movement is to undermine real resistance to this tax. Any fightback needs to be outside of and against this labour movement.

## THE FIGHTBACK

For most workers there is no choice of whether to oppose this tax. They cannot pay and are forced to fight. The most effective way to defeat the tax would be through a campaign of strikes against the tax. For those workers in work this is the way forward. The demand should be the abolition of the tax for all workers and the strikes should be organised to do the maximum damage to the bosses' economy. Such a campaign should be organised outside of and against the unions.

At the same time a defensive guerilla campaign should be conducted against the tax. We should not pay the tax and obstruct the authorities at every stage when they try to get it out of us. We should support organised local resistance to the bailiffs when they try to seize the possessions of those who have not paid.

## THE FUTURE

Although this is a particularly unjust tax it is simply another of the injustices of capitalist society. As long as capitalist society exists the bosses will continue to attack us as this is the only way they can restore falling profit rates and so the only way the system can survive. To end these attacks once and for all the working class needs to destroy capitalism and create a communist world. This has nothing to do with the state capitalist system which is collapsing in Eastern Europe, but is production for human needs planned and organised on a world scale by the working class. Defensive struggles like those against the poll tax need to become part of a more general struggle to destroy capitalism and give the working class the programme for building communism. The first step towards achieving this is the creation of a political party which unites those who are most conscious of the need to end capitalism and build a classless society without exploitation. It is to this end that revolutionaries must intervene in the Poll Tax struggle.

# Ravenscraig

Continued from front page

Without Ravenscraig, much of the metal using industry in Western Scotland will go to the wall. It is in other workers' interest to support you. A series of one day solidarity strikes and demonstrations should be called.

Link up with all other workers threatened by redundancies, e.g. the Imperial Tobacco workers in Glasgow, in joint meetings and demonstrations. Spread the struggle to the unemployed, many of whom are former steel workers themselves.

Elect a strike committee independent of ISTC control, and call regular mass meetings. Keep control of the struggle away from those groups who would smother your anger in useless campaigns.

## AND THE FUTURE.

All the illusions of an economic recovery, which we've been deafened with for five years, have vanished. British capitalism is in a state of grave crisis, with inflation rocketing and unemployment set to start climbing again. Only by class struggle will workers be able to defend themselves in the years ahead, as world capitalism's problems worsen.

Some await a change of government, promising better times. What good has that done the workers in Poland, where the new Solidarity government is smashing strikes, just as the old Stalinist government did? Labour will be no better; last time they increased unemployment by 250%, and used the trades unions to keep down wages.

NO TO THE CLOSURE OF THE CRAIG!

FOR A UNITED WORKING CLASS RESPONSE TO THE ATTACK!

## C.W.O

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# 1690 And All That

Continued from back page

all capitalist social relations. Not that the fight against sectarianism should stabilise social life in Ireland, but that it should unify workers - Protestant and Catholic, North and South - in a struggle to destroy a crisis ridden social system which doles out austerity to its victims no matter what their historical origin. The bourgeoisie likes to make believe such social revolutions do not exist. This is why it has sanitised its own bloody past at the Boyne into an interesting historical curio!

For contact with the CWO in Ireland write as follows;

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# workers VOICE

COMMUNIST • WORKERS • ORGANISATION

## 1690 And All That



July the twelfth this year marks the 300th anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne. This will come as no surprise to those unlucky enough to be within earshot of the thousands of loyalist bandmen and assorted Orange maniacs who are celebrating the event in Ulster, Scotland and around the globe. This is however simply par for the course, and just an extended version of the process of ritualised confrontation which takes place every summer in Northern Ireland.

What has been more unexpected has been the reaction of the bourgeois "establishment" which through the mass media, education and exhibitions seems to have taken the initiative in celebrations which it previously fought shy of. The reason for this is not purely cultural dallying. The efforts in fact reflect the priorities of the ruling class, and the strategies of the British government in particular.

### HISTORY LESSON

Funnily enough it is the capitalist class who have more cause than most to celebrate the victory of "King Billy" at the Boyne and more decisive subsequent battles. The struggle between William of Orange and James II was part of a revolution which secured the hegemonic position of the mercantilist bourgeoisie (as represented by Parliament) and which struck a final blow to feudalism in England. The rise of capitalism also involved the fight for colonies, and in appeasing France, William was supported by, among others, the Pope as a temporal monarch. For this reason if no other, the later suggestion by orange and green nationalists that the conflict had a religious basis, is patently ridiculous. As throughout Irish history religion was used as an ad hoc justification when motives were economic, strategic or political.

Sectarianism as we know it today, has its origins in the Home Rule crisis of the late 19th century, and its use by the ruling class grew enormously with the creation of the state of Northern Ireland, where the ideology became semi-official and ingrained in daily life and popular culture. The top-heavy repressive apparatus of the Stormont regime (with its inbuilt sectarian bias) placated not only the political and military uncertainties of the Ulster bosses, but also aimed at the complete integration of the Protestant working class into the "Unionist bloc". The ruling ideology which whipped up fears about a direct outside threat to the state was easily pliable into a weapon against any movement which offered the perspective of working class independence from Unionism.

But it was the functioning of the Northern Ireland state itself, which bound the bulk of the Protestant working class to Loyalism and to distrust of supposedly alien Catholics. The "Orange State", by openly discriminating against Catholics, by largely excluding them from all but the most menial types of government employment, and by maintaining a type of exceptional legislation (the Special Powers Act) and a partisan judicial and police system, demonstrated that it took the threat of subversion seriously. No opportunity was lost by the Unionist leadership to call for increased vigilance against "the enemy within", and hence increased sectarian suspicion.

This is the basic tradition from which the present debacle in Northern Ireland draws its strength. Today's bastardised version of the Unionists, though castrated by the demise of any significant locally based bourgeoisie, attempt to fan the flames of sectarianism by portraying the Anglo-Irish Agreement and similar initiatives as threats to the Northern Ireland state. The farcical aspect of this is that the old sectarian rantings have now become an embarrassing obstacle to the ruling class proper (ie: the Western bloc as a whole) in its efforts to stabilise the situation in Ireland.

Since the first imposition of direct rule from London in March 1972 the central strategy of the ruling class has always seen the dismantling of sectarian Unionist practices as the means by which the UK's most troublesome and costly region could be pacified. The idea was that Catholic workers could be won away from the IRA by demonstrating that major restructuring of the state was taking place for their benefit, while Unionism, denied direct power, would negate its traditional character, allowing the liberal wing to split and become the party of government in cooperation with Catholic representatives. The problem for the British state was that such was the identification of Protestant security with a particular type of close local political control

of the forces of repression, that it was the populism of those such as Paisley rather than Unionism's "reasonable men" that was encouraged by the reforms. Their resistance to British and Irish initiatives continues to form the back-drop which explains the vociferousness and violence of the Tercentenary celebrations. The "establishment's" celebrations are nothing more than the cultural arm of British policy in action.

### FIGHTING BACK

How then are socialists to respond to these ideological attacks from both the Unionist neanderthal right and the "liberal" state. How can workers fight against the divisive poison of sectarianism without allaying themselves with the bosses who seek a return to stable conditions where exploitation can continue along "normal" Western European lines.

Of course for the various Trotskyist and Stalinoid groups of Britain and Ireland, this is simply not a problem. For them the Protestant workers have been bought off, "identify" with their exploiters, and should be ignored or at best patronised. However for Marxists the ideology and institutions of Unionism represent the hegemony of the ruling class OVER the workers, corresponding to the hegemony of Republicanism over Catholic workers; something the leftists are less willing to deal with.

On the other hand we have elements which fetishise anti-sectarianism, turning it into an ideology in itself which is completely acceptable to capitalism. The Irish congress of Trade Unions and especially the so-called Worker's Party are classic examples of how a purely pacifist attitude to the question of sectarianism leads the working class back onto the bourgeois terrain of conventional social democratic activities. Not only is it futile to attempt to reform away particular repulsive aspects of capitalist domination (such as the divisions it throws up within the working class) without challenging directly the system from which they come, it is also positively dangerous. Groups which claim to represent the working class end up fighting shoulder to shoulder beside the capitalist state for the restoration of "normal society". Note for example the Worker's Party's latest popular pamphlet where they call for the workers to get behind the RUC and the army!

The communist position on sectarianism shares nothing with any of these strategies which see a return to capitalist normality in Ulster as a gain for the working class. On the contrary, we see the destruction of these false divisions within the class only as a first necessary step in the destruction of

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## C.W.O.

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