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A New World Disorder

For over a year the ruling classes in the West have been drooling over the supposed "collapse of communism" in Eastern Europe. This is particularly galling for internationalist communists like ourselves who have always resisted the idea that Russia etc. had anything to do with communism. What we have always argued is that what workers in Eastern Europe faced was not "the dictatorship of the proletariat" (which they themselves will control) but the dictatorship of a state capitalist ruling class. Naturally such views haven't made much impact on the capitalist lie machine. This is now turning out such novelties as we have reached "the end of history". By this they mean that now the West has won there will be no challenge ever again to capitalist rule.

This idea of "the end of history" is actually a deliberate irony on what Marx said. For him the achievement of communism (the real thing) would be the "beginning of real human history". In this society there would be no national frontiers, no class differences and decisions taken collectively by producers. In his words "the free development of each would be the condition for the free development of all". This may seem a long way from reality at present but how close to reality have our capitalist rulers been recently? During the last twelve months capitalist propaganda and global reality have become more and more divorced.

One of President Bush's justifications for the build-up of US troops in the Gulf was that the

US was acting as a policeman for "a new international order" overseen by the ever-so United Nations. This new world order would be characterised by freedom and economic well-being for the citizens of the planet.

Reality is rather different. On the very day in November when the USA and 33 other nations signed yet another disarmament treaty for Europe in Paris, 200,000 more troops were joining the most powerful armada in history, in the Gulf. Not to be outdone the British decided the next day to double their contingent to 35,000. To conflict in the

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Down with Imperialist War!

Down with Capitalist Peace!

For Class War against Recession and Austerity!

According to the Financial Times the President of the USA has, at different times, given nine separate reasons why the US has had to go to war with Iraq. We can forget all the ones about creating "a new world order" of international harmony. We've heard all the rubbish about wars to end all wars too many times. As long as the capitalist system and its drive for profit exists there will always be war. The real reason for this "battle to save Western civilisation" is control of oil (and the strategic interests connected to it). Neither the USA nor its puppet, the United Nations have shown much enthusiasm for defending the rights of small nations like East Timor (invaded and still occupied by Indonesia more than ten years ago), or for that matter Grenada or Panama (where 7000 died as against 300 in Kuwait).

Pouring Oil on Troubled Gulf Waters

However the question of oil and the strategic position of the Gulf have made this area central to imperialist domination for over a century. In the 1890s Lord Curzon, later the British Viceroy in India, was arguing for reinforcement of the British Protectorate in Kuwait in order to control the head of the Gulf from any German threat (posed by a projected Berlin to Baghdad Railway). Today the conflict is not only about confining Iraq in Basra but also about control of oil supplies. However it is not just about cheap oil. A rise in the price of oil is actually in the interests of the three main antagonists in the Gulf. The destruction of the Kuwaiti oilfields where extraction costs are the cheapest in the world (thus helping to lower the general price of oil) would be a disaster for non-oil producing

hilation by the USA and British troops. The British and Americans would thus become the biggest gainers of all. A price rise in oil would make Texan oil wells (where production costs are the highest in the world) viable again and many could re-open. Bush is, after all, a Texan! The same argument holds good for British North Sea production which has high development costs. For both these states, with their severe economic problems, it gives them the chance to pass the worst pain of the crisis onto their non-oil producing - but economically more successful - allies like the Japanese and Germans. This explains the different attitude towards the use of force taken by the British and Americans compared to the rest of the industrialised countries.

The Strategic Control of the Middle East

But that is not all. Even if Iraq withdrew from Kuwait that would not be enough for Western imperialism. Saddam would still be left with a powerful army and his prestige may not be undermined in Arab eyes for having tried to stand up to the West. He is being seen as the next Nasser who almost unified Arab nationalism in the 1950s. The US Army is going to be in Saudi Arabia for a long time unless the war also destroys the Iraqi Army (whose power was created in the last decade by the West in its efforts to destroy the Iranian regime). "Iraq must be destroyed" is the cry going up in the US Senate. Pax Americana and the defence of the US colony of Israel demand it.

To support Saddam is to support Imperialism

The vicious warmongering of the West (which was using Kuwaiti intransigence over debt repayments as a means to discipline Iraq when the war with Iran was over) doesn't mean that we should support Saddam and his Iraqi regime as the leftist organisations like the Socialist Workers Party, The Revolutionary Communist Party, Workers Power etc have done. For real socialists "the workers have no country" and the situation of our class sisters and brothers in Iraq is even more oppressive than in most other countries. Saddam's regime is not a plucky little resistance fighter against the great imperialist powers. It is an ex-puppet of the West which is trying to restructure the imperialist order so that Iraq dominates the Arab world and the Middle East. It is the task of the workers to destroy all imperialist orders not take sides in the creation of new ones. Those organisations who support Saddam reveal themselves as part of the capitalist "solution" to the Gulf conflict. They have nothing to offer the working class.

Pacifism to the rescue of Imperialism

Equally hostile to the interests of the working class are the pacifists. At first they didn't mobilise too seriously and the demonstrations for peace attracted few supporters. As January

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A New World Disorder

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Gulf we could add a whole host of further bloody conflicts.

The end of the Cold War hasn't prevented the Khmer Rouge (who have their own vision of what "a new order" means) from benefitting from Western aid. Even though Vietnam has all but pulled out of Cambodia, it's former puppet is still being punished for the defeat of the USA there 15 years ago. Meanwhile in Central America the end of the Cold War has brought some change. The USA has reneged on its promises to the Nicaraguans about the aid they would get if they got rid of the Sandinista government. And there is no peace dividend either for the peasants of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras who are caught in the crossfire between the guerrilla factions and the army death squads as they fight for control of the local capitalist state.

But it is in Africa where the bloodiest horrors and the most barbaric civil wars are being perpetrated. According to Oxfam, in the so-called front line states of Southern Africa half a million children have been orphaned, 1.5 millions have been killed and a further 8 millions have been forced to flee their homes. Add to this the latest outbreak of the ten year old civil war in Somalia and the continuing conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia and Liberia where 20 millions more face starvation today as a result, and you can understand how ordered the capitalist world really is. It is not "acts of God" or natural disaster but capitalist profits which are at the root of these conflicts. In these areas the state is still the main source of wealth and its control is what these different elites are fighting for. The weapons they use (sold to boost the exports of the metropolitan nations), the factions of the local ruling class which are created and supported, the increasingly debt-ridden fragile economies; are all the product of the world capitalist system.

Areas which were once agriculturally rich and self-supporting have become poor and semi-desert as they have tried to grow cash crops instead of food in an effort to pay the interest on the debt that was incurred when these countries' ruling classes borrowed from the international finance capitalists to try to industrialise. But as the crisis of the capitalist world went up commodity prices plunged and interest rates went up. In real terms these areas are now totally bankrupt and the only discussions that take place in the IMF and in the World Bank is how to squeeze something out of them in the form of interest payments. There has been no peace dividend for the capitalist periphery where, as the following table shows the conditions of life for more and more people have been getting markedly worse over the last thirty years.

GDP per capita % of World's Population	1960's	1990
Industrialised Wealthy Nations	28.5	22.6
Catching up with the Wealthiest	25.2	2.6
Losing Ground in GDP	43.2	51.1
Absolute Decline in per capita GDP	3.1	23.6

Source: *The Guardian* 24.12.90

Even this gives a rosier picture than reality for the masses. In all these societies the concentration of wealth at the top of societies means that the actual GDP per capita is even lower.

And into this "grave new world" the capitalists can only pour more misery. Take, for example, the recent stalemate in the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) in Brussels in December. The main talking point was the question of agriculture where the USA (now that the Cold War is over) have started turning the heat on their erstwhile "European partners". The USA wants to bring its own budget deficit down by cutting its own subsidies to US farmers but it can't do this unless the EEC cuts its own massive farming subsidies to its inefficient agricultural sector. The EEC offered to make a 30% cut in its subsidy but this was not enough for the USA since that would still leave the EEC subsidy 30% higher than the existing US subsidy, as the following table shows.

Government Support for Agriculture as a % of Total Value of Agricultural Production

United States	20
EC	40
Japan	70

Source: OECD

According to the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation the G7 countries (the world's seven richest economies) subsidise agriculture to the tune of \$250 billions. The EEC alone spends 50% of its budget to subsidise farmers to go on producing unsellable butter mountains and wine lakes etc. So much for the virtue of the free market which is being urged on the citizens of Eastern Europe! Grim reality in the era of monopoly state capitalism dictates that the market has a regulating rather than controlling role on the global economy. GATT actually came into existence after the Second World War to avoid the tariff wars which had been a feature of capitalism in the years before the First and Second World War. Tariffs have usually been kept fairly low but the free trade notion was simply undermined by other means, most notably the adoption of less and less hidden subsidies on a wide variety of commodities. The USA is particularly attacking the EEC because it is the richest market and is becoming the most exclusive. According to the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* the EEC,

"... is one of the world's most powerful economic blocs which pursues trade politics instead of free trade, which keeps the competition offered by third countries at a distance because of the protectionist requirements of the domestic sector but which deploys cash and political pressure to gain admittance to foreign markets"

No wonder European countries are queuing up to join. Not only is agriculture supported to irrational lengths but areas such as textiles have been excluded from GATT despite the demands of the peripheral countries. In fact the Uruguay Round of GATT talks which began in

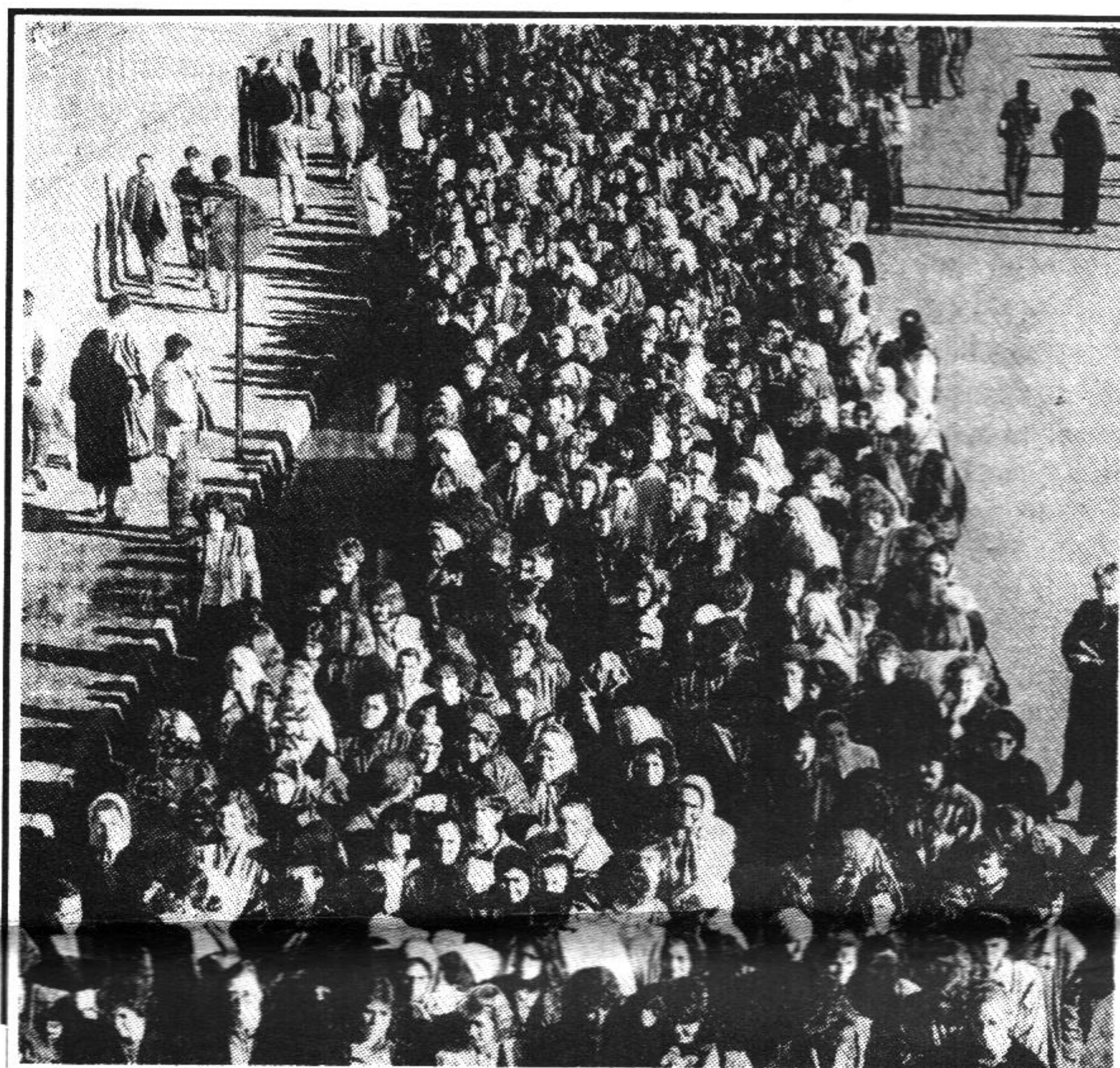
Turkish Miners Lead the Way in the Fight against Austerity and War

The Government of Turgut Ozal, the civilian front for the military regime of torture and repression for the last 10 years in Turkey is today facing its most serious crisis.

Since November 30th 48,000 miners have maintained a completely solid and active strike involving daily demonstrations of 20,000 or more in the main town of Zonguldak on the Black Sea. After a decade of repression and austerity the purchasing power of Turkish workers is half what it was in 1980. The miners demands for wage increases of 400 -

state's claim that the strike is illegal. Nor have they listened to the cries of the politicians that the country is in danger from the war in the Gulf. In fact the Turkish Army of 650,000 conscripts armed with antiquated British tanks and US aircraft have not fought an external enemy for 60 years. They are however very experienced at massacring workers and Kurdish villagers.

Ozal, ever the friend of the US and Britain, gambled that cutting the oil pipeline from Iraq would pay dividends. It hasn't. Turkey has



One of the Zonguldak miners' daily demonstrations.

500% have brought out solidarity action of other workers. On January 3rd 1.5 million workers from steel works, car and textile factories and in government service all over the country struck for similar demands. The union Türk-İs has tried to hold the workers back but the loss of members to smaller and more militant bodies had forced it to support a one day general strike. This is a manoeuvre to try to calm the workers but despite the fact that they are faced with political manoeuvres and army tanks they have not been frightened by the

had a few planes from NATO but nothing to relieve the economic problems which sanctions have brought him. Already the Commander in Chief of the Army has resigned and he has lost several important Ministers. The Turkish miners have set us a great example. They have ignored all pleas to be patriotic at a time of national crisis. They have taken enough austerity to make the bosses millions. They have recognised that this is the best time to fight back. It is a lead which should be followed by workers everywhere.

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 **Revue Communiste** in French, **Internationalist Notes** in Farsi and **Prometeo and Battaglia Comunista** in Italian. Please write to the appropriate address below (PCInt for Internationalist Notes)

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1986 have seen a massive increase in protectionism in the metropolises as they strive to head off the worst effects of the world capitalist crisis. The December stalemate in the Uruguay Round is a sign of more serious crisis and conflict. An unravelling of GATT would unleash the trade war which has been threatening for some time. The world would divide into three new blocs with Japan dominating the Pacific and the EEC gobbling up the economically digestible bits of the old Soviet Empire. As for the USA Bush has already called for an all-American free trade area and visited Mexico, Argentina and Chile recently to try to cement it. The world may seem to be more formless since the collapse of the Soviet rivalry to the USA but the present chaos seems to be tending towards a new and unstable division of the world. The previous two imperialist wars this century were preceded by trade wars. Those who talk of the "end of history" should perhaps watch just how quickly it can accelerate, especially under the new world disorder.

The Crisis in the USSR

From Perestroika to Katastroika

The half decade since Gorbachev assumed control of the Soviet Union has been one of the most disastrous periods in its entire history. Starting out with brave promises of 'glasnost' (moves towards 'democratic' rights and freedoms), and 'perestroika' (a reconstruction of the economy along market lines), Gorbachev did enjoy a honeymoon period with wide sectors of the Russian population initially. But what have been the end results of his initiatives?

Internationally the last five years have seen the almost total collapse of Soviet influence worldwide. This started with its withdrawal from Latin America, Africa and Asia and the admission, in the words of Shevardnadze, that "Russia was not to be considered a world power". Hard on the heels followed the collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, gained due to its participation in the Second Imperialist War. From being one of the two 'superpowers', the Soviet Union now functions only as an appendage of other imperialisms. For the moment, this is the U.S.A., tomorrow it could be a German-dominated European imperialism.

Domestically things have fared little better. The fraying of Soviet influence has continued within its boundaries, with the various non-Russian republics, which constitute 40% of the Soviet population, becoming restive and the wide spread of inter-ethnic or anti-Soviet violence. Economically perestroika has failed too. Designed to cut the productivity gap with the west, and catch up economically, it has worsened the situation. Soviet industrial production grew by only about 1% per annum 1980-5; when Gorbachev came to power this increased for a couple of years by 4% per annum. Then it stagnated for a few more years, and last year fell by 3% - the first official Soviet fall since 1928. Although this is no catastrophic fall, it has been compounded by the breakdown of the central distribution mechanism. The move towards a market system has led to producers selling where they can make most profit - often abroad - and to the disruption of food supplies to the towns, particularly Moscow and Leningrad. This has worsened the already endemic Soviet corruption, and led to the widespread introduction of rationing.

All this leads us to pose the question being asked by many; is the Soviet Union falling apart? Will the collapse of Eastern Europe be followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union itself?

AN OBITUARY TOO FAR

Mark Twain once announced that his obituary was a 'little premature', and we feel that it is the same with those who prophesy the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union. Possibly this might surprise our readers; we were, after all, one of the first, and certainly the first in the communist movement, to announce that Stalinism was in irretrievable decay in Eastern Europe. Those who caught up late, are perhaps betraying the enthusiasm of converts, when they apply the same method of analysis to the crisis in the U.S.S.R., and to events in Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union may be in long term decline, and may never again function as a

pole of a bloc, but we see little evidence to predict that its collapse is about to mirror that of the Czarist Empire at the beginning of the century.

In the first place, it is clear that reports of the chaos in the U.S.S.R. are exaggerated from all sides. Western reports of imminent 'famine' in the Soviet Union square uneasily with the overweight Russians standing in line for rations which we see on our T.V. screens. Much of this is the old ideological structure of the Cold War and the 'evils of communism' routine. 'Radicals' in the U.S.S.R. paint pictures of catastrophe to argue the need for greater reform; conservatives, often deliberately organising shortages to 'radical' cities like Leningrad, paint the same picture to argue the need for a 'return to order'. No doubt daily life in the Soviet Union is the grind it always was, and no doubt it has got worse recently. But we find it hard to believe that the U.S.S.R. which has just had its biggest harvest in history (despite chaos in distribution) and which had the world's biggest gold reserves and oil output - benefitting from the rise in oil prices due to the Gulf Crisis by more than ten times all the Western 'aid' put together - is on the verge of economic collapse and famine. Let us remember how communists in the mid 1970's confidently predicted the imminent collapse of Western capitalism in crisis, and were proven wrong.

But even if the economic crisis in the Soviet Union were at the level where social decomposition was on the agenda, where are the social forces that are capable of overthrowing the existing regime, or any variant it develops into? The nationalities may amount to 40% of the Soviet population, but none independently amounts to more than a few per cent, and they are as bitterly divided, as they are anti-Soviet. Even those groups which have declared independence - in theory - from the Soviet Union, (the Baltic peoples, the Georgians) amount to no more than 14 million out of the 280 million who live within the boundaries of the U.S.S.R. Can anyone doubt the ability of the Kremlin to control such minorities - as indeed was shown by the military intervention in Baku?

The pro-Western intelligentsia are clearly against the regime, but who could say that this rootless, venal and sycophantic pro-market strata could pose any serious threat? They could only do so if they were to link up with the working class, from whom by tradition and policies they are cut off. The working class, we know, could overthrow the residual Stalinist regime as easily as lifting a finger - if it were conscious and organised, and if real revolutionary minorities existed in the U.S.S.R. with a communist programme. But while we think that the Russian - and here we mean Russian, the non-Russian workers having been largely disoriented by nationalism - working class may have many important words to say on the outcome of the present crisis in the Soviet Union, being virtually the last bastion of the European proletariat yet to engage in serious struggle - it would be foolish to imagine that they could forge their own programme out of nothing in this struggle. In the absence of a proletarian position - as we saw in Poland - the workers will inevitably fall in line with some already existing one. And the indications are that this is already being forged in the U.S.S.R.

STALIN'S HEIRS

Events have taken us by surprise so often recently that there is a natural hesitation to elaborate perspectives; yet any communist must do, or abandon the claim to lead the struggle of the working class, ending up in tail-ending economism.

Unlike in Eastern Europe, the state machinery of Stalinism - particularly the bureaucracy and the Red Army - is still intact in the Soviet Union. While the class interests of the bureaucracy have expressed themselves in opposition to perestroika, which they see as a threat to their privileges, power and very jobs, this strata itself cannot halt the process underway. The Red Army remains, ultimately, the guarantor of the integrity and stability of the Soviet Union; that it has not acted so far, or only acted in limited cases, indicates, not that it is incapable of action, but that it does not yet see the fundamental interests of the class it represents as being in danger of overthrow; when it does, it will act, in concert with that section of the bureaucracy which opposes glasnost and perestroika.

We are not interested in Gorbachev's psychology; he is merely a personification of Soviet capital at this time. But it is interesting to see that, as his problems have intensified, he has swung back towards the conservative bureaucracy; examples of this are legion, and verify, not alterations in his psyche, but **alterations in the balance of forces within the Soviet ruling class**. Thus the appointment of the K.G.B. to oversee food supplies, the appointment of hardliners to key posts, such as the Minister of the Interior, and the resignation of liberal bureaucrats beloved by the West, like Shevardnadze, are all indications of Gorbachev's move towards a rapprochement with the so-called 'conservative' forces. So too are the increasing - and uncontradicted - calls by Red Army chiefs and K.G.B. leaders for the restoration of 'order'.

Unlike many, we do not see such a restoration as beyond the possibilities of the Soviet authorities, though obviously, at a cost. The Red Army may have problems, eg., the well publicised draft dodging of some nationalist troops, but these are in no way comparable to the problems of the disintegrating U.S. Army in the early 70's in Vietnam. Significantly, both the nationalists in the Baltic and the metropolitan 'liberals' bemoan the fact there will be no possibility of resisting a 'crack-down', should one take place. Of course, the working class could resist; but, why should it? The conservative bureaucracy is trying to present itself as 'defending the workers' against the profiteers and black marketeers. Now, while the class may not all swallow this (though some sections will) there is no reason to feel they will act to defend the interests of the pro-western market-forces faction in the ruling class. And little prospect that they could act successfully in an independent way.

Thus some sort of slide back to overt authoritarianism is likely in the Soviet Union, though it may fall far short of a military coup. Repression in the most rebellious republics, and the militarisation of the supply system may be the form in which social relations are frozen for a period. This of course is no long-term solution to the economic crisis which gave birth to Gorbachev's policies in the first place, but it may allow the Soviet Union to re-integrate itself more fully into a new imperialist constellation. The further evolution of that depends of course on the evolution of the crisis-racked world economy itself, and ultimately on the reaction of the world proletariat.

...and in Poland

Welcome to the Free World - The IMF will now dictate the list of Ministers

In 1956 striking Polish workers forced the Stalinist stooges in Warsaw to bring in the disgraced, but popular, Communist leader Gomulka. When Gomulka tried to bring in the price reforms which the collapsing Polish economy needed in 1970 more food riots forced him to resign in favour of Gierek. Gierek was toppled by the 1980 rising which brought the Solidarity movement into existence. In all this Big Brother in the USSR seems to have interfered very little, perhaps wisely concluding that in bankrupt Poland there was nothing they could do anyway.

And so the last decade has led to the piecemeal dismemberment of the old Stalinist structure culminating in the election of Lech Walesa as President (in an election in which only half of those eligible voted). His main rival at the beginning of the campaign was the Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki. However the unpopularity of his austerity regime which had led to high inflation, plant closures and mass unemployment (see report on eastern Europe in this issue) meant that he did not even make the second round.

It might therefore be supposed that Walesa would have chosen a new Minister of Finance for his government. Not a bit of it. Not only was the former Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz confirmed in office but it emerged that he was able to veto Walesa's choice of Prime Minister, Jan Olszewski and win the right to appoint the main members of the Cabinet whilst also keeping the post of Deputy Prime Minister. The reason is that IMF representatives, including "Reagan's former adviser on eastern Europe and a senior representative of the US embassy in Warsaw" (The Guardian 8.1.91) have insisted on the retention of Balcerowicz and his free market austerity policy. No Balcerowicz, no Western aid was the message. It is heartening to see that Walesa, who once said that the unspoken assumption in Poland was that all Government action was approved in Moscow, is now under no illusion that it is Washington and not Warsaw where the big decisions about Poland's "free" market economy will be made.

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The Work of Internationalist Communists in Eastern Europe

A year ago the collapse of the so-called communist regimes in East Europe was greeted in the West by shouts of triumph. The "Peoples' Revolutions" we were told were to bring the undoubted benefits of freedom and democracy, and above all the free market which would raise the living standards of the masses. Today that triumphalism has turned to terror as the total collapse of the old order in Eastern Europe has created one of the most serious economic crises in modern history. Just before Christmas an unprecedented TV programme urged Germans (from the West naturally) to send charitable donations to the USSR where widespread famine was predicted. Nearly half a century after the attempt to strangle the USSR the German bourgeoisie was now playing Santa Claus to one of the world's superpowers.

Actually this charity was not entirely without self-interest since the German government is trying to stem the flow of refugees from the chaos in the East. Their biggest fear is that millions of impoverished people (and 3 millions are estimated from the USSR alone) will flood West to add to the economic cost of reunification.

Everywhere the story is the same. The situation in the former German Democratic Republic is described by our Austrian comrades in the report which follows this article but in Czechoslovakia 65% of firms have been shut down under the "reforms" there. Though the population is only 15.6 million, there are al-

ready 1 million unemployed. In Poland, despite the fact that wages have decreased by 40% in one year, only 30% of enterprises will

shut down. Inflation is already 20% a year and shortages have appeared in every city. Actually the USSR has enough food. The grain



survive the government's austerity package. In Hungary the situation is worse with 30% unemployed and 3 millions living below even the low subsistence level set by the government. Additionally there is a massive problem of homelessness with people sleeping night after night in public places like railway stations.

In the USSR the situation is worsening rapidly and will get still worse when the planned privatisations will see 65-70% of factories

harvest of 240 million tons was 40 million tons better than the average of the last few years. The problem is that the peasants now have the right not to sell to the state (and have little to spend roubles on) and so state granaries are actually 20 million tons short. Added to speculators hoarding to await price rises and the result is an almost complete breakdown of the system of distribution.

Politically the population of the East have shown little enthusiasm for the democracy

they have supposedly craved so desperately. Only 25% voted in the last Hungarian local elections whilst in the "most important election in Polish history" for the new President only 50% could be persuaded to vote. With the economy of Eastern Europe in tatters and workers still suspicious of "communism" which they identify with the last 40 years of state capitalism the situation will become worse before it becomes better. Nationalism, racism and other easy "solutions" are waiting in the wings for the local ruling classes to pick up. However the picture is not all gloom and doom as the report from Eastern Germany, compiled before reunification, shows.

The working class in the former GDR have not been totally passive in accepting the massive drop in living standards which the move to unification with the West has brought. As a counter to the lies and disinformation of the press here we are publishing edited extracts from a leaflet and the latest report written by the comrades of the **Gruppe Internationalistische Kommunisten (GIK)** of Austria with whom the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party has been working in our intervention towards the former Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe. As the report shows there is much confusion in the former German Democratic Republic but there is also a ferment of ideas which gives some hope that new communist minorities will emerge there in the near future.

The Struggle for a Genuine Communist Minority in Germany: Report of the GIK

July - the effects of currency unity

There were two interventions in Berlin in July just after the Deutschmark replaced the Ostmark. Prices climbed to the West German level while wages stayed at the old level. Thus the expectations of many for a better standard of living were disappointed. This led to many demonstrations and strikes both for higher wages and against redundancy. It was more and more clear that virtually the whole of the GDR's state owned industry was going to collapse due to backward productivity and lack of capital. In the first week after unity the whole of the East German agricultural sector (employing one million or 12% of the workforce) broke down and this led to protests which could only be stifled when the state agreed to pump money into the cooperatives.

Protests

This situation meant that there were protests every day in Berlin. Engineering workers throughout Brandenburg led by the union struck for a 50% wage increase as did East Berlin dustmen. Shopworkers demonstrated against redundancy and for higher wages in every town in the East and even managed to break through the one mile ban (the "holy line") around the Volkskammer (Parliament). De Maizière came out and promised personally to defend job security. Building workers demonstrated for government orders and financial support which were cut as a result of the state's bankruptcy after monetary unity. These were the main actions in Berlin but we heard from contacts that tens of thousands of people demonstrated against price rise throughout the country whilst many more took part in country-wide strikes against lay-offs and wage cuts. The agricultural cooperative workers smashed up the agriculture minister's car in their August demonstration. He was sacked the same day.

Our intervention

We distributed the Address [1] at demonstrations of striking dustmen and building workers. The building workers shouted down the Mayor of East Berlin (Schwerzina of the SPD) and, less loudly, Oskar Lafontaine, the SPD's candidate for Chancellor. When we shouted some slogans they were very interested in our Address and tore our magazine "Kommunistische Politik" from our hands in their eagerness to read it. The word "communist" in the paper's title didn't put anyone off. There were also West German workers at the demonstration and it was soon clear that their views clashed with the East German workers. They felt threatened by the East German workers demands for state aid and accused to them of not working hard enough for 40 years. Our attempts to explain that their common enemies were capital and the state against which they should fight together met with little success.

September in Halle and East Berlin

We distributed our leaflet (printed opposite) at the Leuna and Buna works which had just announced the sackings of three quarters of their workforces. The interest in the leaflet outside the factory was moderate. (The shop stewards here are members of the conservative CDU party of Chancellor Kohl). We were told that there had been strikes at both works in the summer and on the day we were there the potassium miners were already in their third week of strikes against lay-offs. Some were on hunger strikes and had been joined by office workers demanding wage increases and an end to lay-offs.

In Berlin we distributed the leaflet and sold magazines at a 50,000 strong demonstration of the "East Berlin Left" (mainly the PDS, the successor of the former Stalinist Communist Party, the SED). The people there defended the old GDR as a socialist country but "without the crimes of Honecker, Milke and Co. (i.e. the GDR minus the Stasi)..." Many of them appeared to be former

members of the SED who work in the government bureaucracies or education and will be discriminated against when full unification bites. They have been in a better position than the workers and are trying to defend their old privileges. Their fate is connected to the GDR which many of them sincerely believe to be a socialist society. A smart capitalist could make a fortune selling communist magazines to these people (with enough sellers) because they are interested in any "socialist" strategy to overthrow capitalism. We made a number of new contacts here... We also discussed with the Internationalistisches Zentrum, the organisation which signed the leaflet. They base themselves on the German and Italian Left but this will await a future report.

The Objective Situation

A massive liquidation of less productive capital is taking place. At the moment there are 500,000 unemployed, but a much bigger number of unemployed (1.5 million) is disguised behind "short-time" work which amounts to 0% of normal work. They get more money than the unemployed and this is paid by the West German government to prevent bigger social explosions (which would probably not be class struggles but chaotic, violent outbreaks) and to avoid the collapse of industry in its entirety. So no real market economy has been introduced and the old "socialist" system of paying subsidies continues until there is enough investment by West German firms. But it is more and more clear that private capital has not followed the wishes of the politicians. In a few months the short time workers will count as fully unemployed and then unemployment will be 3 millions or more (out of a total workforce of 9 millions). Wages are 40% of West German levels (despite rises after the strikes of about 30%). The unemployed receive only between 400 and 900 marks and in January rents will be increased as the old regime's subsidies will be abolished.

The Subjective Situation

There are many economic struggles but very divided (with regions and sectors isolated from each other). Also workers suffering worsening conditions hope that improvements will come in a few years through the investment of Western firms. They interpret the present crisis as the collapse of socialism which will be followed by economic improvement under a market economy. They believe in the official view of things. Most workers are anti-communist. This will be a burden which will continue for a long time and will not automatically vanish with the deteriorating material situation caused by layoffs etc. But at the same time there is a minority which is interested in communist theories, strategies, perspectives - a minority which is much bigger than in the West (at least bigger than in the countries of which we have experience like West Germany and Austria). We sell many more magazines in the East and have many more discussions of a deeper quality than in the West. There is a broader knowledge of Marxist ideas among the population, some elements of a Marxist materialist analysis are not unknown even if distorted in a bourgeois manner and mixed with a bourgeois content.

The KPD

More important than our street interventions was our single intervention in the new KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands) which was reformed in January 1990. It is not homogenous and the common element of its founders is that they want to maintain "communist ideals". They want to break with the old SED of Ulbricht and Honecker but reject the social democratic direction of its successor the PDS. Many of the KPD are ex-SED members who defend the GDR as a "socialist system with mistakes". Others have had years of underground opposition for which they were imprisoned by the SED but they too are divided between pure Stalinism and those who support the anti-Stalinist Left Oppositions (both Trotskyists and Communist Left). →

Instead of Sacrifice for the Free Market: Workers' Resistance

Workers!

In the electoral campaigns at the start of this year the West German politicians and their East German apprentices pretended to workers that the introduction of the "market economy", the Anschluß with the Western economy and German unity would bring a better life and well-being. Mass redundancies and horrendous inflation are showing workers - and it could be no different in a bourgeois democracy - were used only as voting cattle in order to bring the West German employing class's agents - the CDU (equivalent to mainline conservatives), the DSU (right-wing conservatives), FDP (liberals) and SPD (social democrats) - to power. More and more it is becoming clear to workers not only in the GDR (East Germany) but also in all the countries of the ex-Eastern bloc that the main winners in the democratic transformation are the Western firms. Through the opening up of the East they have gained a gigantic new market for their goods and new investment opportunities. The petty-bourgeoisie have also gained, and they are developing into crafty private entrepreneurs. However, in this great "revolution" workers have been deceived. The "golden West" has shown itself to be a mirage.

The phrases about "democracy" and "freedom" were and are only to trick workers and to hide the real process which is going on - the transition to sharper exploitation of workers...

Communism has not Failed

The tragedy playing itself out in the old Eastern bloc is a question of the deep crisis of a part of the worldwide system, capitalism.

The writers of newspapers, the television commentators and Western-style politicians - all servants of the capitalist millionaires - can repeat their story about the "failure of communism" a thousand times. The truth is

what is collapsing in Eastern Europe is not communism. It is only a particular form of capitalism. The ex-rulers of the Eastern bloc who called themselves socialist were spreading the most brazen lie of the whole century: they depicted as communist a system in which all capitalism's characteristics persisted:

- there existed and still exists wage labour and with that the exploitation and subservience of workers;

- a social minority - the leadership of the Party and state bureaucracy and the directors of the concerns - disposed of all means of production and hid this under the attractive title "peoples' ownership";

- and there existed commodity production and money, that is the concerns produced goods only to exchange them for money, so production served to expand the capital contained in the concerns property. But the expansion of capital through the work of wage labourers is the basic principle of capitalism.

Communism, the historic goal of the working class's struggle against exploitation and social insecurity is, on the other hand synonymous with the abolition of all these features which, despite all the talk about the difference between social systems, lie at the basis of both Western "market economy" and Eastern "real socialism."

Eastern Bloc Capitalism: Less Efficient

The problem for the "real socialists" of the Eastern bloc was simply that the way they promoted capitalism was less efficient than in its Western form. In the West the market rules whilst in the East they sought to plan the market with the help of an inflated bureaucracy. In the West the bosses were not afraid to make thousands of workers redundant and to introduce speed-ups to increase productivity to cut out their rivals. In the East, on the other hand, they tried to maintain full employment,

which in the long run - as can now be seen - is incompatible with the laws of capitalist exploitation.

As a result of low productivity the state had to spend billions subsidising daily necessities if it was to ensure their availability for the mass of the population and avoid a price explosion. All this is a handicap for a capitalist state, which doesn't exist to provide social welfare but to guarantee the exploitation of workers... The end was inevitable. The Stalinist Party bureaucracy which clung to these inefficient methods had to abdicate. The Party bosses were not obliged to leave the stage because they were incorrigible dictators but because they were unable to extract sufficient profit from workers' labour. For more efficient exploitation the productive apparatus needed to be radically changed. One worker would have to be able to produce what two had previously done. Millions of workers would have to be thrown out of work and accept an existence as far below the poverty line as possible.

The democratic petty-bourgeoisie which overthrew the Honeckers and Husaks last autumn in the so-called peaceful revolution have only - no matter what democratic fantasies haunt their minds - helped the rock-hard logic of capitalism to finally break through: Workers are only allowed a half-secure existence while their toil increases the wealth of the owners of capital, brings them profit. All the attacks on workers from which the unloved SED bosses had held back, due to fear of revolt or to maintain the appearance of the "right to work", but which were, however, necessary to maintain profits for the State and the companies themselves, will now be pushed through in a hurry by these democratic gentlemen. Companies which don't generate a profit will either go to the wall or be modernised at top speed; food and rent subsidies will be removed step by step.

For workers the much-praised 'democratic revolutions' of Eastern Europe mean: MASS REDUNDANCIES, SOCIAL INSECURITY, HARSHER WORK DISCIPLINE, WAGE REDUCTIONS THROUGH PRICE INCREASES...

WORKERS MUST TAKE UP THE STRUGGLE!

Against this enforced impoverishment workers have only one weapon: their struggle and solidarity.

July's engineers' strikes, when workers won wage increases and then suspension of redundancies for two years, shows that workers can certainly exercise influence over whether firms close immediately or are further subsidised; over, that is, how high unemployment is; over how much and for how long unemployment is paid out; over whether food subsidies are removed at once or continue to be paid; etc., etc. In line with the massive attacks, workers' resistance must be just as massive if anything is to be achieved.

The most important thing is that WORKERS MUST NOT ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE SPLIT:

- All resistance is condemned to failure from the start if everyone only thinks of their PERSONAL advantage as in a game of chance and hopes that "not me, but one of my workmates" is sacked. Clearly, workers as a WHOLE will only draw the short straw if they adhere to such ideas. Instead of being gripped by panic and fear on hearing of redundancies and short-time working it would be best to immediately take up struggle against them.

- In order to restrict protest against redundancies, the company bosses start with those who can least count on solidarity: foreign workers. But agreeing to their being made redundant is to agree to the attacks on oneself, which will be the next step. Foreign workers are just as much part of the working class. Nationalist divisions in the working class are a weapon in the hands of the government and bosses.

- The division between the employees of different firms must also be prevented.

It is not sufficient for workers in factories which are already about to be closed to take action on their own. Workers in these factories are reliant on the solidarity and support of workers in those that are still going - especially in the bigger companies. Only these workers can exercise real pressure. If you only begin to resist when, a little bit later, your "own" company is being shut down, that will be too late.

Everyone knows that there will be redundancies in every branch of every company - only they will be at different times. "Our" rulers consciously do this to split workers. Some workers will be thrown onto the street while others are encouraged to hope their job is safe. One firm is subsidised while another is closed immediately. The bosses are trying to avoid massive unrest. For them a unified workers' resistance must never happen. They want to remain in control of what happens. THROUGH SOLIDARITY STRIKES WORKERS CAN PREVENT THIS.

THE UNIONS ARE NOT ON THE WORKERS' SIDE

Decades of union wheeling and dealing with the bosses and the state against workers' interests (both on the part of unions run by the regimes of the ex-Eastern bloc and the apparently independent unions of the West) have shown:

IN THEIR RESISTANCE TO THE WORSENING OF THEIR CONDITIONS WORKERS MUST TRUST NEITHER THE UNIONS NOR THE WORKPLACE COUNCILS RUN BY THEM. These organisations certainly say they represent the workers. In reality they work closely with the government, the employers' confederations and the factory managements and have never had any intention of preventing the attacks planned against workers' living conditions. The unions and workplace councils tell workers that struggle is not necessary because they are trying to "get the best for you" through negotiation. They then try to sell us as the result of the negotiations a ridiculous softening or postponement of the attack. For example, the redundancies will occur but only some will happen immediately, some will be accounted for by early retirement, others will only happen later, and some of those made redundant "might" be found alternative work.

In order to give themselves a combative image, unions sometimes even initiate actions: preferably the kind where workers can exercise little pressure (one-hour warning strikes; demonstrations outside of working hours; isolated strikes restricted to one or a few factories).

Workers shouldn't allow themselves to be influenced by the unions' theatrical "struggle". If they want to resist the attacks they shouldn't wait until they are called out on strike by the unions or the workplace councils but must take steps to struggle themselves. If the unions do initiate something workers must do their utmost to go beyond the narrow confines of union action. This means continuing strikes instead of calling them off and trying to spread them to other companies and branches where workers are equally affected.

As well as strikes, we should strive for COMMON DEMONSTRATIONS OF WORKERS FROM EVERY BRANCH OF INDUSTRY, also including the unemployed, IN SUPPORT OF DEMANDS WHICH ENCOURAGE THE UNITY OF THE MOST VARIED SECTIONS:

- FOR WAGE INCREASES WHICH ARE IN LINE WITH PRODUCTIVITY INCREASES, BRINGING IMPROVEMENTS IN REAL WAGES AND KEEPING UP WITH PRICE INCREASES;

- IMMEDIATE AND FAR-REACHING REDUCTION IN THE WORKING WEEK SO AS TO REDUCE THE PRESSURE FOR REDUNDANCIES AND SHORT-TIME WORKING;

- AGAINST REDUNDANCIES;

- FOR A MASSIVE INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT;

- FOR A FULL WAGE FOR SHORT-TIME WORKING...

- FORTY YEARS OF EXPLOITATION UNDER THE SED REGIME ARE ENOUGH!

- NO NEW SACRIFICES FOR THE MARKET ECONOMY!

- LET'S ORGANISE AGAINST THE ATTACKS!

← There is still no agreed programme but the KPD has plunged into daily political activity. It took part in the March parliamentary elections (getting 8000 vote or 0.07%) and it discusses electoral alliances with other left organisations even though it has no position on elections yet. Their attitude is opportunist - they want to grow in a short time and become a real force in society. They want to achieve this through opportunistic activism and don't see the need for programmatic clarity. The problem (when you discuss with them) is that they believe that they already know everything about communism and the fight of a communist party does not require too much theoretical work. So the KPD is a bourgeois "party" (but still without a fixed programme) yet claims to be Marxist. But the development process is not finished, and so there are elements in this party which are of interest to us. The KPD's membership has declined from nearly a 1000 in the Spring to about 200 today with decline continuing.

The July Conference and the September Convention

We met the KPD during several interventions in the GDR and took part in a party conference in July. We were able to put forward to a certain extent the positions of the communist left among the conference participants and we offered for sale international publications of the Italian Left (magazines of the ICP in German and French, Prometeo, Battaglia Comunista, Workers Voice and Communist Review) but almost nothing was sold because nobody spoke French or Italian and there was very little knowledge of English. I think our presence was useful since at the end of the conference the participants rejected taking part in elections. But this was not the whole of the party.

At the end of September we (the GIK and the IRK[2]) took part in the KPD Convention in Berlin. 65 delegates met to discuss the politics of the party and those parts of the programme which were ready. This was a mixture of Stalinist, Trotskyist and Italian Left (from the IRK Platform) elements. A contact of ours was on the programme committee but after a few sittings he found the gulf between him and the others too great. He refused to take part in the Convention on the grounds that the KPD would take up bourgeois positions. He and two or three other KPD members in his district would resign from the party and keep in touch with the GIK

and the IRK. They are also interested in discussions with other organisations of the Communist Left.

As for the KPD its discussions go on with its magazine "Rote Fahne" (circulation 5000- 10,000) open to programmatic contributions from different organisations, including the communist left.

It seems that the KPD takes its origins from the KPD of 1946 before the foundation of the SED. They glorify the antifascist struggle of the party but reject the politics of this party as soon as it attained power and turned its programme into reality. Only a minority of members go back critically to the KPD's development between 1920 and 1945, especially with the politics of the Thälmann (Stalinising) party leadership after 1926.

The Convention also allowed us an opportunity to discuss with some party members we met in July and we are sure that we will get some new communist militants, perhaps more than we have in Austria and West Germany at the moment.

GIK (Austria) 4.11.90

Footnotes

[1] The Address to the Workers of Eastern Europe was drafted by the CWO for the International Conference held in February 1990. (It first appeared in Workers Voice 50). It was amended to become the basis of the present work and is available in several European languages including Czech and German. We would welcome assistance in translating it into other Eastern European languages. The report here should be read in conjunction with previous reports on communist work in Eastern Europe which appeared in Workers Voice 52 and 53. The GIK can be contacted by writing only as follows:

Postfach 536
A - 1061 Wien
Austria.

[2] We published the Platform of the Internationale Revolutionäre Komunisten in Communist Review 9 along with a criticism of their Bordigist and outdated formulations. We still await a response from the IRK. They can be contacted by writing only as follows: Postfach 3041, D - 7410 Reutlingen, Germany.

price: UK/Eire: £1, US: \$3, India: Rs 5

Communist Review

9

Autumn
1990

Central Organ in English of the
International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

Contents

IBRP Statement on the Gulf Crisis.
Europe 1992.
German Reunification.
Neo-Bordigism is Not the Answer - a
Response to the Platform of the IRK.

Communist Review 9 - available from the group address. Also available: Documents from the Conference on the Crisis in Eastern Europe (held in Vienna, Feb. '90), price £1.

The Fall of Thatcher and the Crisis in Britain

In the last issue of *Workers Voice*, written at the end of October, we wrote of Thatcher that "The British ruling class ... will ditch her if she doesn't take the British economy further into Europe". The suddenness of her departure is perhaps the only thing that is surprising given the fact that she was not just a leader of the Tory Party but also the longest-serving Prime Minister this century. However the Conservative Party is only a machine which exists to safeguard the interests of the traditional bourgeoisie. It is the classical "party of government", having neither fixed principles (except the defence of property) nor a programme it has developed only to win elections. The Labour Party exists to take over in abnormal circumstances where the capitalist system is under threat from an intensification of the class struggle or there is some need for social reconstruction.

Today the ruling class faces no such social crisis, despite the demonstrations and mass resistance to the Poll Tax (according to Government figures 10% have paid nothing but these don't take into account millions more who have made only one payment), and despite the acute recession facing the global capitalist economy. On the surface Thatcher was overthrown because too many Tory MPs feared that they would lose their seats in Parliament in the next General Election (which can be no more than eighteen months away). However the Tory Right Wing was furious. Denouncing their fellow Tory MPs as "Judases" they once again turned on the press, claiming that all the "serious" newspapers were anti-Thatcher and that this was a betrayal of Britain. In fact the "serious papers" do, for the most part represent finance capital (most are owned by international financial groups) and they did largely come out against Thatcher. But this only underlines that the real issue ran deeper than saving the electoral skins of a few Tory MPs.

The fact is that Thatcher lost support amongst the high echelons of the British ruling class because of her position on Europe. Her "little Englander" attacks on European institutions and her personal abuse of the leaders of the

other European states led to the dramatic resignation of her long-time collaborator, Sir Geoffrey Howe and this precipitated the fall of Thatcher. As we wrote in the *Workers Voice* article quoted above the vested interests of almost the entire British bourgeoisie lies in Europe. Thatcher was supported so long as her opposition to this was seen to be getting better terms for Britain inside the EEC. She had, in fact, signed the Single European Act which had, at a stroke, given up more British sovereignty than any other Prime Minister since Harold Macmillan abandoned the last vestiges of the British Empire in the late 1950s. But once it was clear that this was Thatcher's final position and that she really did intend to avoid integration then the ruling class had no choice but to get rid of her.

The bitterness of her overthrow is unparalleled in recent British politics and indicates that what is being overthrown is not just a Prime Minister but a series of policies. Thatcher has served her purpose for the British bourgeoisie in that under her the working class, whose struggles had brought the end of two Governments in five years, were pushed on to the retreat, fragmented by unemployment and demoralised but even her bourgeois admirers have had to admit that she left them a mixed legacy as she exacerbated rather than solved the deep rooted problems of the British economy.

When she took office in May 1979, inflation was 10.3% but in the month she resigned it was 10.9%. In 1979 unemployment was 1.5 millions. Today despite much statistical juggling which hundreds of thousands who would seek work, it is over 2 millions and still rising. Manufacturing investment is at an all time low whilst the balance of payments deficit is at an all time high. Britain is as much a low wage, low productivity (a British worker is less than half as productive as a German worker) economy today as it was in 1979. Manufacturing output actually fell by 0.5% in the third quarter of 1990. Worse is expected. According to the bosses organisation, the CBI, manufacturing output will fall by 1% in 1991. As we wrote last May in *Workers Voice* 51 the myth that

Thatcher had solved the problems of the British economy had already been exploded. Her legacy is a fundamentally weaker manufacturing economy at the mercy of international financial capital's speculations. Whilst other countries went for restructuring their nationalised industries to make them profitable in a short time (e.g. the French Government's layoffs at Renault), Thatcher went for the short-term solution of rationalising by shutting down parts of industry. Nationalised industries were brutally pruned rather than rationalised. Successful areas of British industry (microchips) were starved of the same kind of investment as their competitors and soon went to the wall. The wilful destruction of the home-based industry to achieve short term financial targets became the norm in the early 1980s. The budget may have been balanced on time but the wholesale destruction of manufacturing was a sorry price to pay for a monetarist policy which could not solve the capitalist crisis. It is perhaps not surprising that only Chile and Singapore were more enthusiastic monetarist than Thatcher's Britain. Britain is certainly more like an economy on the periphery in terms of manufacturing output and its infrastructure than it was in 1979. This has left only the European option for the British ruling class.

However it can't simply be said that Thatcher has left her successor in a cleft stick since Major was largely the architect of the latest move towards Europe. By going into the ERM on the eve of the Tory Party Conference AND simultaneously cutting interest rates Major undoubtedly won the support that got him the Prime Minister's job. But because he has taken the pound into the ERM at too high a rate he has boxed the Government into an even bigger corner than they already faced. He cannot (in theory anyway) devalue the pound for the same reason that he went in at such a high rate - the need to keep the pound attractive to foreign finance capital. For the same reason he cannot cut interest rates (which the present recession demands). Therefore the likelihood is that the British economy will be worse-hit than all the major competitors (except perhaps for Italy). Britain may have a new Prime Minister but it has the same crisis as before.

The ideas that Thatcher put forward in her Bruges speech of only two years ago that "We in Britain have not rolled back the frontiers of the state only to have them re-imposed by a European "super-state" have already been mothballed. Major may have been dubbed

"son of Thatcher" but he has already promoted more of the interventionist wing of the Tory Party whilst sacking many Thatcher loyalists (like Waddington and Parkinson). The new agenda for the Tories is clear. Regulation from Brussels will eventually be swallowed for greater security in the EEC. The Poll Tax will be modified (although this may take the form of a promise rather than action) and interest rates will be cut as soon as possible to try to (belatedly) encourage investment as well as win over millions of the British "home-owning democracy" who face crippling mortgage payments. Hardly a day goes by without some new announcement of increased Government spending (even if in small amounts) and there is now talk of the revival of a budget deficit to finance this spending.

But those who were celebrating on November 22nd were either blind or Labour supporters (same thing I hear you say). The general attack on the working class will continue and intensify. The British capitalist state has no choice whichever party wins the next election. Unemployment will continue to rise whilst real wages will be cut. The Labour Party did its best to make the Tories hang on to Thatcher (such as proposing a no-confidence vote in Parliament so that the Tories would be forced to rally round her). Now Labour has lost its best electoral asset and the chances of a Labour victory at the next election look slimmer. To workers this is, of course, a matter of indifference since the Labour Party is always, in the final analysis, the saviour of British capitalism. Today it doesn't even pretend to hold fake socialist ideas. This hasn't stopped Trotskyist groups like the Socialist Workers Party or Militant from acting as recruiting sergeants for a Labour victory at the next election. But this only confirms the bourgeois and social-democratic nature of the left in Britain today. The fall of Thatcher is the end of an era in bourgeois politics but it will be some time before the working class begins to formulate its own class agenda. The work of the CWO in Britain is to help write that agenda.

[This is a slightly up-dated version of an article, written by a comrade of the CWO, which first appeared in December, 1990 in *Battaglia Comunista* 12 (Year XLIV), organ of our sister organisation in Italy, the Internationalist Communist Party].

Obituary

Marc (MC) 1907-90

It is our sad duty to report the death, in Paris, on December 20th, 1990 of "Marc" the main founder and inspiration of the International Communist Current.

Born in Moldavia in the old Russian Empire, he came from a Bolshevik family and joined the Communist Youth when he was 13. He was expelled from the Russian Communist Party in 1923 because he opposed the policy of support for the national movements which the Communist International was by then promoting. His family was also expelled from Moldavia when it became part of Rumania. He went to France where he joined the French Communist Party but was expelled as a member of the Trotskyist Treint tendency by the Stalinists in 1928. He abandoned Trotskyism in the 1930s for the Communist Left and became a collaborator on the Italian Fraction in

exile's journal, *Bilan*. He remained true to Communist Left politics.

In 1945 he refused to join with the Italian comrades who had two years earlier formed the Internationalist Communist Party (the antecedents of the present International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party to which the CWO adheres). He considered the new party was premature since he expected a new imperialist war to break out soon after the end of the Second World War. His group "Internationalisme" stuck to this view so that at the end of the Forties they dissolved themselves and retired to Venezuela to await the outcome of this expected contest for the planet.

In 1964 Marc returned to active political work with the foundation of the group "Internacionalismo" which now argued that a revival of the proletarian movement was on the agenda. Once

in Europe he played a major role in the unification of various small French groups into Revolution Internationale. This in turn became the hub of the International Communist Current which emerged as a result of the post-1968 movement in Europe.

With Marc goes the last tenuous personal link which the internationalist and proletarian camp had with the great revolutionary wave of 1917-21 which threatened, for a brief space, to create a new world proletarian order. We owe a great debt to our predecessors like Marc, like Onorato Damen, who, through years of sacrifice preserved the revolutionary internationalist core of marxism. With the collapse of Stalinism a new chapter in history has opened up. We must all face up to its challenges. In this spirit we offer our commiserations to Marc's comrades.

Readers' Meeting Internationalists and the Fight against Capitalism's Wars

2nd February 1991

2.30

Gulliver's Bar
Oldham Street, Manchester

Pakistan

continued from facing page
talist ways (e.g. sharecropping) of exploiting the rural proletariat and peasantry. Progressive? Democratic?

For all Nawaz Sharif's promises of democracy, prosperity, and industrial revolution, the new Korea, etc. he has only one thing to offer the people of Pakistan - more of the same, austerity.

Karachi, December, 1990

*Mohajirs are the Urdu-speaking Moslems who originally came from India during the mass population upheavals which accompanied the communal riots and pogroms after the sub-continent was divided in 1947. Many Moslems moved from the Indian side of the border to Pakistan while millions of Hindus who found themselves in Pakistan did the opposite shift.

PAKISTAN: "Give Me Austerity" - A Case of Barbarism in Capitalism's Periphery

The following report is based on information received from a sympathiser in Pakistan. It concludes by saying "There appears to be no alternative to the situation as it stands." We can only agree. As we move into the last decade of the twentieth century the situation of the masses in Pakistan is deteriorating and provides a brutal testimony to the growing barbarism of life in capitalism's periphery.

In 1988, following the mysterious plane crash which killed Pakistan's General Zia, Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan from European exile. Hailed by the West as a sign of Pakistan's "return to democracy" and welcomed by the impoverished masses as a sign of better things to come, Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (at the head of the People's Democratic Alliance) duly swept to victory in the ensuing elections. Just over a year on, despite the predictions of both domestic and foreign commentators that the People's Democratic Alliance would win at least the same number of seats as it did in 1988, the recent elections have resulted in a large majority for the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI). The IJI is an amalgamation of 8 parties and the leader of one of them, Nawaz Sharif, has been sworn in as Prime Minister. They have won 105 out of 207 seats and with the support of the minor parties and independents they have a three fourths majority. Benazir Bhutto, now leader of the opposition, has claimed that over 100 results were rigged and has demanded that polls for these seats be held again. The PDA promised a White Paper on the rigging with enough evidence to prove their allegations but so far have not published anything.

The election campaign was a slanging match between Bhutto and the caretaker government of Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, supporter of the IJI and favourite of the President, and the owner of huge tracts of land in Sindh. Throughout the campaign he was never far from the "common people": who he swore to help. Bhutto, meanwhile, spent a lot of time flying between Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar where she had to appear in court to answer charges of financial irregularities and one of misusing a military aircraft. Her husband is still in jail charged with extortion and kidnapping.

The IJI led by Sharif, claiming to be the true patriotic Pakistani party, promised the people a host of wonderful benefits if they would vote for them: a million jobs, the raising of the minimum wage from 650 rupees to 3000 rupees, equal pay for equal work for men and women. In addition he also offered more dubious benefits such as the enforcement of Islamic justice and military training for each male between the ages of 18 and 45.

To make all this possible Sharif announced that an industrial revolution would take place and that the problems of the common man "would be ameliorated". In order to make Pakistan the next Japan or South Korea he has asked the people to "give me austerity". His government will work on a "war footing". His industrial policy is soon to be drawn up after meeting "prominent industrialists from all over the country".

"The oppressed of the country ... are well versed about the problems the country is facing and they want the removal of poverty for which we have worked out a big plan." Six weeks into his tenure there is no sign of a "big plan".

Altaf Hussain, leader of the Mohajir* Qaumi Movement (MQM), has welcomed all of Sharif's platitudes and said, "The transfer of power from feudals to industrialists indicates that the day is not far when power would be transferred to the middle class and the poor." Almost all the IJI National Assembly members are "feudals" - i.e. big landowners. Sharif is an industrialist who flourished with the support of his mentor Zia-ul-Haq. The government has set itself up in a very dangerous alliance with the MQM in Sindh. Altaf Hussain's demands, the cause of the rift which sealed the fate of the PPP government, include the repatriation of Biharis from Bangladesh. Sharif has promised that they will be given a home in the Punjab but it is extremely doubtful that the Punjabis themselves will take kindly to this. If the Biharis do ever make it to Pakistan they are most likely to want to be settled in Sindh along with their families already settled there. Hussain also demands the release of MQM activists, many on terrorist or murder charges, and 50 million rupees for the victims and families of the paramilitary raid on an MQM stronghold in Hyderabad. He also wants the culprits "bringing to justice" - that is the PPP government.

The fact is that for the urban working class and the impoverished rural masses there is nothing to choose between either of the two warring coalitions. Despite its democratic and populist rhetoric the PPP government proved very quickly that it was still the mere tool of the Bhutto clan - a tool for the personal enrichment of the family and the party's hangers-on.

provide protection to these dacoits. These waderas have "connections with powerful politicians of all the parties".

It is not "corruption" that did for Bhutto and the PPP - it was their increasing inability to control the disintegratory tendencies manifesting themselves everyday in Pakistan. It was on the condition that stability was maintained - and this condition alone - that the Army

was prepared to tolerate the return of Bhutto (after she had given an assurance to the United States that a PPP government would not rock the boat). Pakistan, one of the world's poorest states, is firmly in the pay of US imperialism. It has served, with China, not only as a counterbalance to India but as a base for the motley collection of Afghan guerrilla organisations fi-

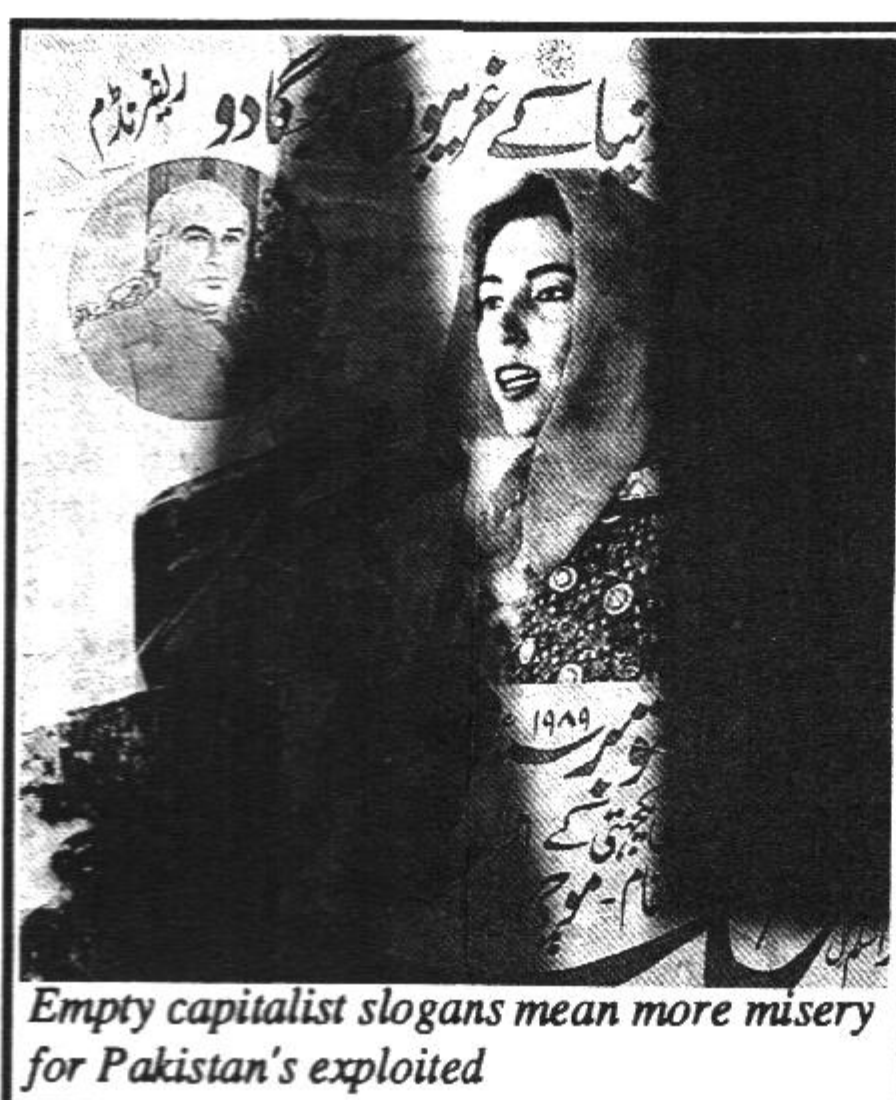
nanced by the United States during - and since - the Russian occupation. (In addition there are 2 million or more Afghan refugees in Pakistan.) For these purposes it was, until recently, enough that the United States equipped the Pakistani Army which in turn ran the country. Economic development was unimportant for either party. Still today, even after "the return of democracy in Pakistan", the Army receives over 60 per cent of the government's annual budget. Today though, with the collapse of the Russian bloc and the US trumpeting about the victory of "freedom" and "democracy" a military regime in Pakistan would be a minor political embarrassment. So the Army has had to seek a civilian alternative to the PPP. The only trouble is that the IJI, no less than the PPP, is showing itself incapable of controlling the "law and

of suspected Al-Zulfikar terrorists. (Al-Zulfikar was led by Bhutto's brother, Murtaza, who once hi-jacked a PIA aircraft some time ago.) It seems that the present government, desperate to get rid of Bhuttoism, is making a crude attempt to force the PPP to react and provide an excuse to wipe them out. Benazir, however, "sees scope for cooperation" if they drop all charges against her previous government.

What of the industrial working class (mainly in Karachi) and the oppressed rural masses? There has been no sign of the increase in the minimum wage promised in the election campaign. The government has, though, recently introduced two Islamic ordinances, in line with its election promise, the Qisas and Diyat. The result was a transport strike in Prime Minister Sharif's home province of the Punjab. The ordinances require any person whose actions result in the accidental death of another to pay "blood money" to the affected family. The fixed amount of approximately £4000 is equivalent to the value written down in the Koran. The transport owners couldn't stomach this and came out on strike throughout the country. There are nearly 3500 people killed every year on Pakistan's roads and the usual response of transport drivers responsible for accidents is to run for their lives since irate crowds have been known to stone them to death! However, there is very little proletarian unity. Workers' struggles are largely confined within the unions and the unions are in the pockets of the political parties with the largest concentration of workers, in Karachi, in the pocket of the MQM. For instance in February 1990, as part of the campaign to oust the PPP the COP (Combined Opposition Parties) called for a protest day in sympathy with the Kashmiris. The government pre-empted their protest by making it a national holiday. Consequently the MQM called for an all-out strike in Karachi against the People's Party government. Altaf Hussain called upon his workers to fire their guns in the air between 5.00 am - 7.00 am to "discourage" people from going to work. This turned into gun battles across the city - 70 dead, 500 injured. The MQM and PPP have also been kidnapping each others' workers. They have refined the knee-capping way of sorting out folk they don't like - they use hand drills! How "their" workers' grievances will now be considered by a ruling party committed to denationalisation and privatisation is not easy to fathom. The redundancies soon to be brought in will affect almost entirely Mohajir workers given jobs by the party at the expense of Bhutto supporters. Small strikes that do take place in Karachi are soon ended. A simple promise to address the workers' grievances seems to work. If not, then the high rate of unemployment and underemployment keeps the workforce in order.

There appears to be no alternative to the situation as it stands. There is no independent proletarian political force. Meanwhile the Pakistani Left only confirms the sterility and impotency of those who would ally the proletariat with the non-existent "progressive" bourgeoisie. During the elections they forlornly called for the "unity of all democratic and progressive elements" which meant in practice asking the working class to support the PDA (PPP and hangers-on). The PPP is a party which gave 70% of its seats to so-called "feudals", i.e. landowners who combine capitalist (wage labour) and traditional pre-capi-

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Empty capitalist slogans mean more misery for Pakistan's exploited

Vital Statistics

Official minimum wage: from Rs 600 (North West Frontier Province) to Rs 1000 per month. [£1 = approx. 25 rupees]
60-70% of population rural and dependant on agriculture.
71% of population without access to safe drinking water.
Adult literacy = 21%.
50% of 5-9 year olds in primary education.
17% of school age children in secondary school.
Less than 30% of population has access to health services or adequate shelter.
33% of population lives below the official poverty line.

In one of the least developed and backward areas of capitalism party politics is basically about grabbing and holding onto the spoils of office. Support for the ruling party is rewarded with jobs, land, government contracts and so on. For the opposition parties, excluded from such patronage, the game is to find their own sources of wealth (including drugs). It is an increasingly ruthless and violent game. Partly the aim is to show your enemies how powerful you are and how weak they are. In May last year, when Karachi was under curfew for the umpteenth time, 20 were shot dead in 3 days as a result of PPP and MQM feuding. The Chamber of Commerce called all businesses out on strike for a day as a protest against "the law and order situation". A stock exchange member got shot dead and robbed in his office. There is seldom any arrest. According to an article in 'Viewpoint' - a magazine from Lahore - there are at least 5000 dacoits (bandits) operating in Sindh and around 32000 kalashnikovs in Karachi alone. The 'waderas', landowners,

order situation". (Indeed it is part of the problem.)

Like the PPP, the IJI has turned to the "free world" panacea for the revival of economic well-being: privatisation and the wooing of international finance capital. But at the end of the day none of the warring factions of the local ruling class is seriously interested in "national development" - whether by state, private or international finance capital. Thus, although the provincial Sindh government is still struggling to inspire confidence in the business community and persuade them to invest in the province, the number of kidnappings, dacoit attacks and other violent crimes have not declined. This, despite the Chief Minister Jam Sadiq Ali's pledge to end lawlessness within three months. Most areas of Karachi have been vacated by the army and rangers but Lyari, one of the most deprived parts of the city and a PPP stronghold, is witnessing house to house searches and arrests

70 Years of Ulster's "Orange State" (Part One)

Against Imperialist War!

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15th drew nearer, however, they began to get out more of their support. With slogans like "No blood for oil" (Capitalism demands blood for oil every day - they seem to have forgotten Piper Alpha) they demonstrated in large numbers on January 13th (though largely ignored by the capitalist media). The pacifists have no time for the argument that it is capitalist motives which are behind wars in our epoch. For them wars are preventable simply by everybody having the correct moral vision. If only we had better leaders! Pacifism is also passivity. It attacks the idea of war but fails to acknowledge that this is only a symptom of the underlying reality of the internecine struggle for imperialist domination. To fight war you have to fight the class war to destroy capitalism. Pacifist smokescreens conceal this essential truth.

How to Fight Imperialist War

There is only one way to stop war and that is to threaten the war machine - the State. Clearly this cannot be paralysed until certain condi-

The working class has no country. No matter the national identity that confuses us; no matter the state and no matter the flag, these are only the context for our exploitation. It makes no difference to us whether we are exploited by the Iraqi, Argentinian or the Yankee bourgeoisie. Every state in the world (including the so-called socialist ones) kills or imprisons the proletariat according to the needs of capital accumulation. ... Whatever the formal reason one bourgeois state gives for declaring war on another, from the point of view of the interests of the working class this war is always AND IN EVERY CASE against the proletariat in each country (as it was in the Malvinas).

Emancipacion Obrera, Argentina August 1990: from their leaflet, To Fight For Your Country is to Die for Capital

tions are present. A start is to take advantage of the situation to demand a better standard of living and better working conditions. Capitalism has created the present recession and today can only offer us further austerity, despite all the sacrifices workers have made in the last decade. We must make no more. Offshore workers last August showed us the way when by linking their own struggle for greater safety to the "war for oil" issue. We also salute the courage of those individual reservists who have refused the call-up. But these are only pointers. We must go further because the more we accept the more the bosses will attack us and use us as cannon fodder in their wars. The national interest is the bosses' interest (here and in Iraq). We must settle accounts with our own bosses as part of the first step in a world revolution which will destroy the capitalist state and the wage labour system sustaining it. It is the only way to end all exploitation and all wars.

It is now seventy years since the de facto separation of the north and south in Ireland was formalised, with the opening of the Northern Ireland parliament. This set the seal on the partition of the island and symbolised Britain's recognition of the right of the Six Counties to remain part of the UK for as long as their representatives so wished.

In part one of this two part article to mark the anniversary, we shall briefly examine the historical basis of partition, as well as the functioning and eventual crisis of the state itself, illustrating how Marxism can help us understand the machinations of the ruling class and their political structures. It is no exaggeration to say that such an analysis has been entirely neglected by Republicanism and its left-wing hangers on, in favour of populist theories identifying English and Orange bogeymen who cheated the Irish out of independence!

Roots of Partition

The material basis for the creation of Northern Ireland has been dealt with previously in Workers Voice:

By the turn of the present century Ireland was clearly divided into two distinct economies; the north-east was fully integrated into the British economy as an industrial area, while the remainder of the island's regions were integrated as agricultural areas with only small-scale processing and manufacturing industries. Just as the wealth and power of the bourgeoisie in the north-east depended on the link with Britain and the expansion of the Empire, so too did the wealth and power of the newly emerged "national bourgeoisie" in the south, and their hopes for independent capitalist development depend on the severing of that link. In short not only were the economies of the two halves of the island different, they were NEITHER COMPLEMENTARY NOR COMPATIBLE." (Workers Voice 49 "Partition: Myth and Reality")

British capitalism, on the other hand, had no need to partition Ireland in order to protect its interests, for it was not a source of raw materials, nor a vital market for manufactured goods. As the history of the Irish Republic has illustrated, British capitalists had little to fear from the protectionism that might follow independence, because the bourgeois national revolution in the south could not alter the fundamental relations of economic independence and subordination established during the 19th century.

In fact, by 1919 the British Government strongly opposed the exclusion of Ulster from Home Rule, as the retention of authority in any part of Ireland was seen as a liability, rather than a strategic or economic advantage. It was

the Ulster bourgeoisie, not Britain, which insisted on the maintenance of the Union, and it was only reluctantly at the time that they accepted a separate legislature (later Stormont), which was forced on them by Westminster.

The lack of thrust in Britain's long-term commitment to partition meant that the maximum degree of Unionist unity was needed, along with a top-heavy repressive apparatus to secure the border. This is what led to the establishment of such obviously sectarian bodies such as the RUC and the Special Constabulary ('B Specials') which were designed to be "responsive to the needs" of the local Protestant population.

But if such forces helped to placate political and military uncertainties, they were also aimed at the complete integration of the Protestant working class into the Unionist bloc. For 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. Throughout the history of the state the Unionist party would often explicitly use the "danger to the constitution" as an ever-present reason why Protestant workers should put loyalism before class interests. The continued existence of the IRA, though for most of the time it was too

feeble to be a real threat, and the almost universal acceptance in the political culture of Eire that partition should be ended, gave some spurious basis to the 'siege mentality'.

The strength and cohesion of the Unionist movement under the leadership of the capitalist class,

was in turn reinforced by the creation of a state apparatus which institutionalised Protestant privilege in a variety of ways, and greatly increased the repressive powers of the government. 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 form 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.

Economic Decline

Although the Unionist Government succeeded in maintaining political unity and power for almost fifty years, it was continually confronted with the problem of containing internal conflicts; conflicts which reflected the

development of a fundamental contradiction which went to the heart of the state. The key to this contradiction which, with the outbreak of the "troubles" in 1969 finally destroyed the Unionist hegemony in Northern Ireland, is to be found in the changing economic balance within Ireland, and between Britain and Ireland. The continuing uneven development of capitalism, and the concentration and internationalisation which characteristic of the rise of monopoly capital, led to the decline of Ulster's traditional industrial base and, after the Second World War, to the reintegration of the Southern economy into the wider British and European markets. By the mid-1960s the two regional economies in Ireland were reduced to similar dependent status within this larger economic framework, and a central factor in the historic conflict between Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism had been eliminated.

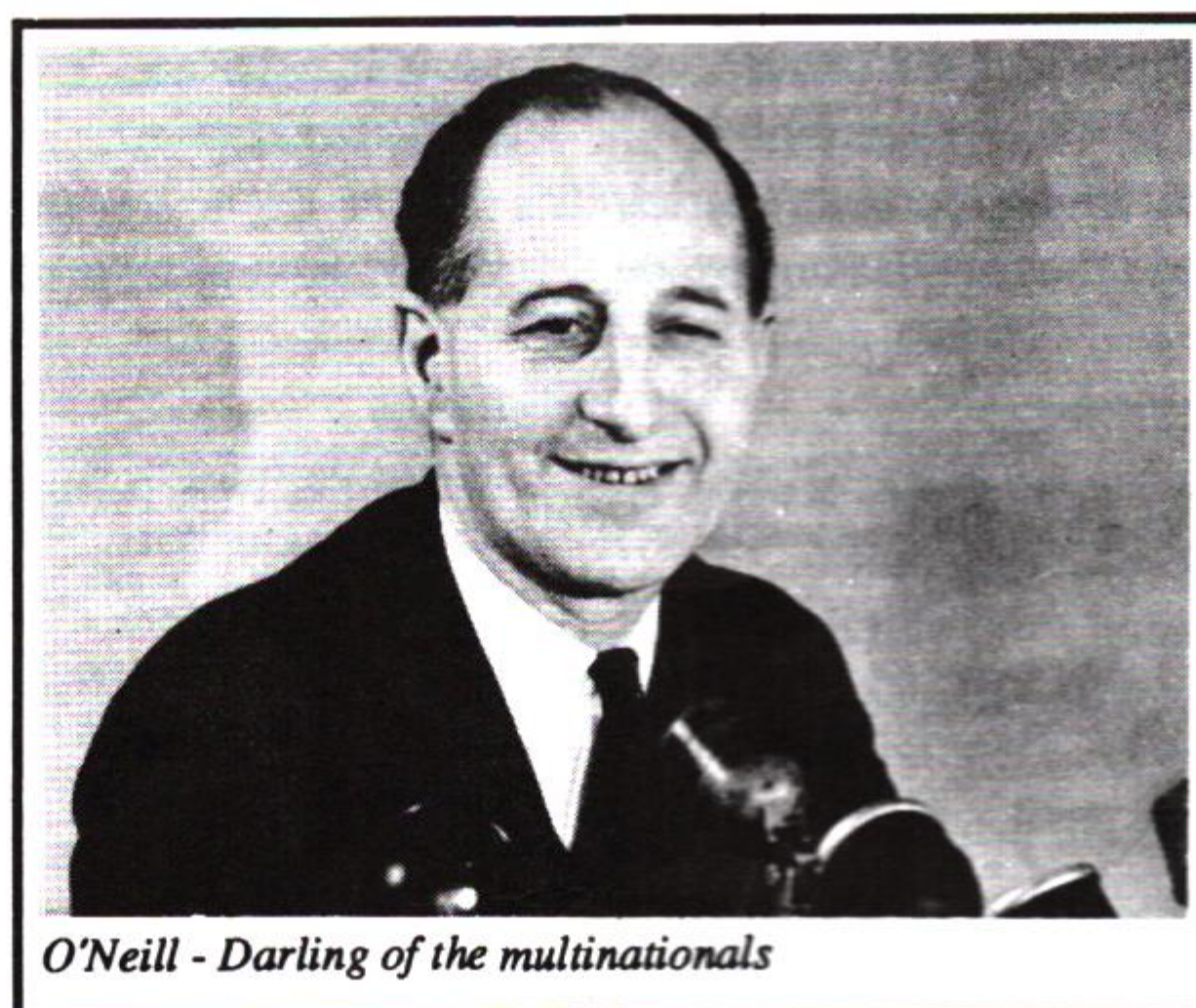
Economically this was nothing but the castration of the locally based bourgeoisie, and was mirrored politically by the rise of the "liberal strand of Ulster Unionism most closely associated with Prime Minister O'Neill. In attempting to identify with an ideology of economic modernisation and central planning, O'Neill was forced into confrontation with archaic local government, which in turn was bound up with the daily sectarian practices in housing, employment and policing.

Into the Unionist split came the petty-bourgeois Civil Rights movement, demanding an immediate end to sectarian practices in the state. It was the reaction to this movement of the Unionist neanderthal right which largely precipitated the 'troubles'. The officially sanctioned baton charges and pogroms in the Catholic ghettos, ending with the deployment of the British troops in August, 1969, ensured that the initiative was passed on from petty-bourgeois liberals to petty-bourgeois Republicans, who claimed they could protect the Catholic population.

Hence the conflict in Ulster over the last twenty years has increasingly resolved itself into one between the British state and the IRA. Republican myths, including those about the origins and history of the Northern Ireland state have come to dominate in so-called socialist circles throughout the British Isles. A few more of these will be debunked in part two of this article, which will deal with the period of Britain's direct involvement from the early seventies onward.

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O'Neill - Darling of the multinationals